

Arts&Collecting

The highs of the tiger

The Art Market | Modernist Iraqi art; Tipu Sultan

auction's roaring success; deals in Doha; artist

leaving Gagosian; new talent at the Other Art Fair;

Cologne collectors. By *Georgina Adam*

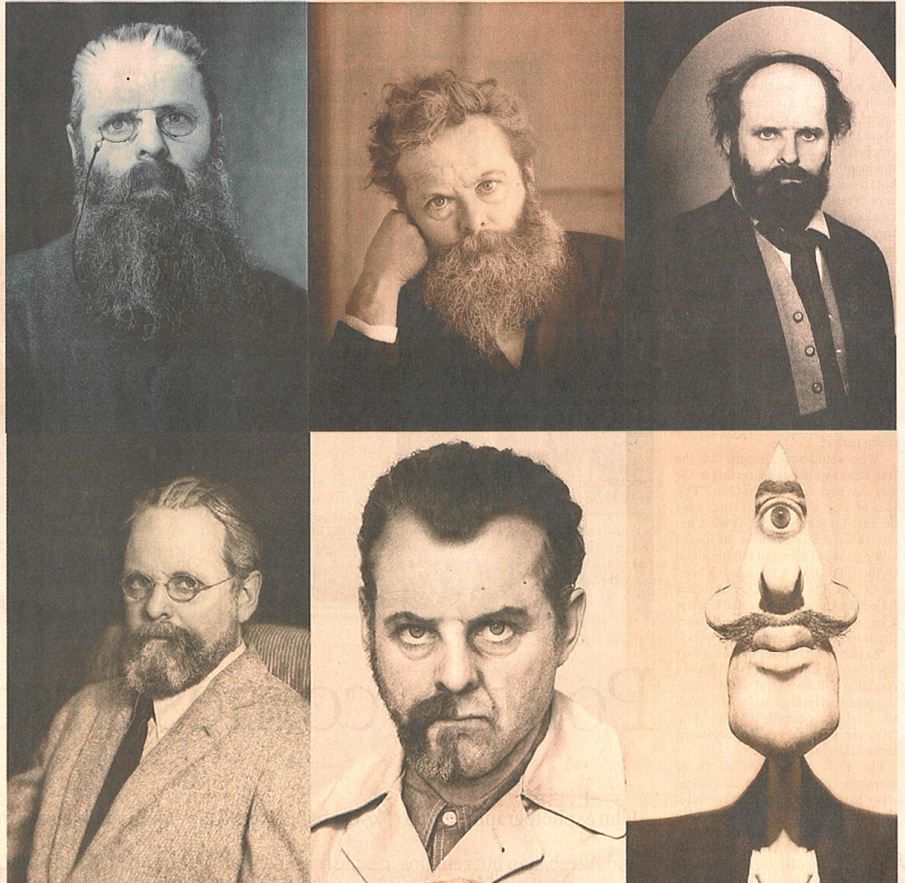
Islamic art was on the agenda in London this week, with something for everyone – from Indian miniatures or Ottoman embroideries to contemporary Arab art. Bonhams broke new ground by holding the first dedicated sale of modernist Iraqi art on Monday. It racked up a healthy, if modest, £1.2m with most of the 36 lots on offer going well above estimate: for instance, £194,500 was given for "Cubist Cockerel" (1955) by Shakir Hassan Al Said (the estimate was £25,000-£35,000; final prices do not include fees but estimates do). A portrait of the Iraqi poet and academic Lamea Abbas Amara, by Al Said's teacher, Jewad Selim, (1919-61) made £176,500 (estimate £70,000-£100,000).

"Until now, Egyptian and Iranian artists have figured more in our sales," says the firm's specialist Nima Sagharchi, "but we have always had a close relationship with Jewad Selim's family, and I was able to source a lot of material in Jordan, where the Iraqi elite moved after the Iraqi war [of 2003]." While many buyers were in town for Islamic Art Week, telephone bidding was also brisk, particularly from the Gulf. Asked whether Bonhams would consider restarting Dubai sales – abandoned in 2011 – Sagharchi said: "If anything this [sale] proves that the location is not important, buyers will find us." But he is thinking of further themed sales from other countries in the region.

Almost anything associated with the 18th-century Indian warrior, poet and ruler Tipu Sultan tends to do well in the salerooms. Celebrated as the "Tiger of Mysore" and the implacable enemy of the East India Company, Tipu is strongly identified with the tiger, the motif incorporated into his weapons

and furnishings. All this was looted after his defeat and death at the battle of Seringapatam in 1799, including his magnificent golden throne, which was broken up and the pieces dispersed. The British Royal Collection has a tiger's head from the throne and other parts appear at auction from time to time. Bonhams included 30 Tipu Sultan lots, mainly weapons, in its Islamic and Indian art sale on Tuesday, including a carved wooden foot from the throne. All the lots had previously been sold at Sotheby's in a dedicated Tipu sale in 2005, which made £1.2m for 59 items at the time. At Bonhams, everything was snapped up: a bronze cannon from Tipu's palace sold for £1.4m (it made £66,000 in 2005), a quilted helmet made £188,500 (£43,500 in 2005), while a sword bearing a tiger's head fetched a swashbuckling £2.2m – well up from the £60,000 it made in 2005. In total, Bonhams made just over £6m for the Tipu material – certainly something to roar about.

Sotheby's held its yearly sale of contemporary art in Doha, Qatar, this week, making a lower-estimate \$7.5m for 43 lots sold. The bidding was dominated by the telephones with Asian, American and European buyers accounting rather bafflingly for most of the top lots. Asked what was the point of selling western artists to westerners in Doha, Sotheby's said it "sets out to attract an international spread of bidders and buyers". A painting by Kour Pour, the hot young US-based artist whose work is inspired by carpets, sold for \$162,500, well over its \$70,000-\$90,000 estimate, going to a US buyer. The sale was not without its bumps: on Bharti Kher's "I'm Going This Way" (2006), a telephone failed and auctioneer Alex Rotter declared:



From top: artist Gavin Turk posing as, clockwise from top left, Rodin, Morris, Cézanne, Dali, Man Ray and Matisse; sword with tiger's head from the Tipu Sultan sale
Ester Knebel/courtesy of Gavin Turk/Bonhams



"I'm going nowhere until we sell this." But despite re-establishing the link later, the work failed to find a buyer.

For many artists, being taken on by Gagosian is a sign of having arrived, as one of the stable of more than 120 artists, dead and alive, the mega-gallery represents or shows. But the painter Cecily Brown is now going the other way, moving to the smaller but influential Thomas Dane Gallery, where she will have a solo show next year. "Cecily felt that a London gallery in London, not a branch, not a humongous space, was a better fit for her," says Thomas Dane. "I think this also shows how artists are feeling freer to resist the corporatisation of the art world; the landscape is changing and she wants to be part of that."

Brown is not the only artist to be making such decisions, and there are plenty of moves at the moment: photographer Catherine Opie has joined Lehmann Maupin in New York. "I spoke to a number of galleries but chose Lehmann because I really like their programme," she said. "They are ambitious for their artists and I want to be part of that as well."

London hosts The Other Art Fair in Bloomsbury this weekend, an event for unrepresented artists. The organisers say it offers the chance to find "exciting new talent" among the 130 participants. Often quirky, and inevitably a bit of a bran tub, the fair, nevertheless, offers fresh blood and is supported by the now-not-so-young YBA Gavin Turk, who has made a special photographic edition as himself posing as various notable artists including Dali and Man Ray. The poster of all the images costs just £50 (edition of 250); a limited edition of the individual portraits (20 of each) goes for £350 – and the good news is that sale proceeds go to children's charity The House of Fairy Tales.

"It went much better than expected," was director Daniel Hug's verdict on the last edition of Art Cologne, which finished on Sunday. Art Cologne is one of the world's oldest modern art fairs and marks its 50th anniversary next year; Hug was brought after the slump of 2008 to revitalise the event. This year he reduced exhibitor numbers and spread them on to three floors. "The response has been

overwhelmingly positive," he reported. One problem is tax: Germany increased sales tax on art to a swinging 19 per cent, although this only applies to the dealers' share of the sale price, generally 50 per cent. "It's a bummer and can scare away buyers," admits Hug. Nevertheless, most galleries seem to have made sales.

"This is not a smash-and-grab fair. Collectors here are more considered, and they aren't speculators," said Andrew Renton of Marlborough Galleries. "Coming back, I have nostalgia for my youth, when I attended the fair to learn about contemporary art."

Among the happy exhibitors was Contemporary Fine Arts, showing works from the collection of the German photographer FC Gundlach, including Albert Oehlen and Martin Kippenberger: the gallery will be selling the collection this year. And it did well with the US artist Borden Capalino, whose large mixed media canvases were tagged at €20,000: five out of seven sold.

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