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Dealers keep calm and carry on in the face of challenges as TEFAF Maastricht kicks off

Despite the apparent loss of some major international buyers due to fears over Coronavirus, the 33rd edition of TEFAF Maastricht hosted more dealers than ever, many of whom stayed cool and made sales.



TEFAF Maastricht 2020.



Frances Allitt
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The event had 282 exhibitors after three cancelled: Wildenstein & Co, Fergus McCaffrey and Galerie Monbrison. The other major effect of Covid-19 fears was the non-attendance of representatives from major museums, especially from the US, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) and The National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC)

A representative of the AIC said: “The museum has suspended travel to medium and high risk locations (as defined by CDC) and we are encouraging staff to reschedule non-essential international travel.”

The fair has historically been a feeding-ground for such major institutions and their loss was felt by some dealers who have sold to them in the past. However, most were happy to attend.

“We’re hoping it’s full of visitors and so far are pleasantly surprised,” Erin Donovan of Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books told *ATG*. She added that the decision to go ahead “shows great courage on the part of the organisers”.

Positive and pro-active

While some dealers judged the opening to be quiet, it was undeniably attended by a well-heeled, mask-free crowd of buyers. Possibly adding to the sense of a quieter opening was the fact that this is the second year the fair has had a double opening: Thursday is reserved for a highly-select crowd of high-rollers and dedicated clients selected for invitation by the galleries. Friday is also invitation-only but open to a wider group of visitors.

Benedict Tomlinson of Old Master and modern dealership Robilant + Voena was among those remaining positive.

“What you’ve got to remember is you don’t need a million people to sell paintings. Some regulars aren’t coming, especially American collectors, but that could open up the space for new buyers,” he told *ATG*.

First-time exhibitor Galerie Chastel-Maréchal in the design section said that, in the face of Coronavirus concerns, it tried to secure sales before the event kicked off.

The gallery’s Aline Chastel said: “Clients got in touch weeks ago saying they wouldn’t attend so we did some pro-active pre-sales. We were careful to send catalogues to collectors. We know their tastes so we knew what would appeal.”

Exhibitors also faced the challenge of new money laundering regulations brought in by the EU earlier this year. In addition to offering an internal talk to exhibitors on the issue on Wednesday, TEFAF provided dealers and visitors with a handout of information about the regulatory updates. (Read the latest on anti money laundering rules [here](#)).

Sales

Despite these issues – and the regular challenges around exhibiting at a major international fair – many dealers reported good sales during the opening hours of the event.

Among the highlights in terms of Old Master sales, Nicolás Cortès found a new home for a *The penitent Magdalene* by Roman artist Agnolo Caroselli (1585-1652), which was offered for €150,000.



📷 'The penitent Magdalene' by Agnolo Caroselli (1585-1652), was among the early sales at Nicolás Cortès where it was offered for €150,000 at TEFAF.



Showcase dealership Caretto & Occhinegro reported selling their stand highlight, a monumental painting by Dutch Old Master Frans Francken II, to a private international collector “very quickly” on the opening day.

Tribal art dealer De Grunne also got off the mark quickly with the sale of two Banda statues. One was offered for the price in the region of €150,000, and the other for around €200,000.



📷 Bernard de Grunne sold this Banda statue by the Master of Mobaye for a price in the region of €200,000 at TEFAF.

Meanwhile, TEFAF Paintings exhibitor Antonacci Lapicciarella reported a very strong opening, with around 5 paintings from their exhibition of Giovanni Battista Camuccini selling in the first few hours. They were priced from €30,000-50,000. The gallery also sold a *Capri dal Monte Solaro* by Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, which was offered for a price in the region of €40,000.

“We were all very worried, so we are very happy, maybe even more so than this time last year,” said the gallery’s Damiano Lapicciarella.

Other sales in the first day included a drawing by Kees van Dongen, *Au café concert* (c.1905), which Stoppenbach & Delestre offered for €60,000. It went to a Dutch couple living in Belgium. H Blairman and Sons parted with a cabinet by Scottish designer Bruce Talbert (1838-81), which was offered for a five-figure sum. It went to an existing client.

J Kugel sold its star piece, The Rothschild Orpheus Cup made in Augsburg c.1600, to a museum during the opening minutes of the event.

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