

Arts & Culture

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Masterpiece London 2016

Royal Hospital Chelsea

No sooner has the turf been re-laid after the RHS Garden Show, then along comes a bigger tent with carpeting, proper lighting, air-conditioning and swanky outpost restaurants like *The Ivy*, *Le Caprice*, *Scotts* and the *Mount Street Deli*, which were doing brisk business in customers who cannot get into the 'real' ones back in Mayfair. Masterpiece is a great place for people-watching: the *jeunesse-dorée*, perma-tanned Eurotrash, chancers, *arrivistes*, *parvenus*, bounders, cads, elegant ladies tottering about on 4-inch heels, swarthy Italian dealers in sharp Armani suits and rough diamond Russians jewellers. Amongst the shiny trinkets, crystal, silverware and general bling, are some real gems. *Valencia, Dos Ninos en una Playa* by Joaquin Sorolla y Bastida on Gladwell & Patterson's stand was a rare treat to see this Spaniard's work, but you would have needed \$5.5 million to take it home and hang it over the fireplace. Another exceptional painter, the Italian Giovanni Boldini, was an artist whose styles and diverse range of subjects is staggering, from portraiture to landscape, conversation pieces to bucolic studies, nudes to dancing. The one for sale, for a cool million euros on the elegant Bottegantica stand, was a stunning portrait of a South American society beauty. Tullio Crali, an Italian Futurist artist had a dramatic painting entitled *Nose Diving on the City*, a view seen from behind the pilot inside the cockpit, but Agnews were very coy about what the buyer ultimately paid for it. The Fine Art Society were up-front with their prices: £135K for a charming Walter Sickert oil of Tipperary; £150K for Gilbert Brockhurst's *Woman in Black*; £120K for *Shingle Street* by William Nicholson. There were five shapely and languid naked ladies in Tamara de Lempicka's alluring group portrait, *Le Rythme*, one playing the double bass, on the *Kunstberatung* stand, but the gallery from Zurich were less than forthcoming about the price. Crane Kalman had a vibrantly colourful set of pictures, including Alexander Calder, Anthony Caro, Frank Auerbach and Mary Newcomb, but a Lowry spoiled the party with his own brand of gloom.

The Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation is a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 2009 in Madrid, working alongside its sister company, *Factum Arte*, a multi-disciplinary workshop dedicated to digital mediation in contemporary art and the production of facsimiles. Iconoclastic destruction, mass tourism, war, natural disasters, imperfect

restoration and commercial exploitation all pose serious threat to the preservation of many great works of art and culture, particularly in the Middle East. There were some extraordinary examples of ancient Egyptian art, with a fragment of a pharaoh from circa 1900 BC and another monumental fragment, comprising a foot and a leg from a standing male statue from Rome in the 2nd century AD on the Axel Vervoordt stand. One wonders where all these

artifacts from the ancient world come from. Katie Jones had some interesting Japanese pieces, including a series of most tactile spun stainless steel *Air Balls* by Kyoko Kumai for a few hundred pounds each. The recently deceased Zaha Hadid had examples of her works other than her architectural projects in a Commemorative Salon, including a *Liquid Glacial Chair* made of clear acrylic and an asymmetrical smoked acrylic coffee table. Blain Southern had only

one work on their stand, the edgy and angular *Howling Wolf* by Lyn Chadwick, which would sit uncomfortably almost anywhere. Once again, the most stylish, charming and witty stand was Robert Young Antiques, who had a gloriously eccentric collection of Folk Art objects, including a Butcher's Shop for £25,000 and a very unscary French marble lion for £12,500, both of which prompted a contagion of red dots.

Don Grant



Above:
Tullio Crali, *Nose Diving on the City*, Agnews.
Left:
Robert Young Antiques' stand
Photos: Don Grant.