

London, England

# Masterpiece London

by Lita Solis-Cohen

**M**asterpiece London is a destination. It's more than an antiques fair. The word "antique" does not appear in any advertisements or press releases. There is no date-line; no category is banned. Masterpiece is an experience for all the senses, a treasure hunt for excellence, a library of information, a "please touch" museum of masterpieces from antiquities to the present day—objects and art from all parts of the world and every century plus wine, fashion, perfume, jewelry, cars, a plane, and food.

Organized by three London dealers, Harry Apter (Apter-Fredericks Ltd.), Simon Phillips (Ronald Phillips Ltd.), and Thomas Woodham Smith (Mallett), and by Harry van der Hooen (the stand-fitting specialist business Stabulo), it filled a very large purpose-built marquee, June 29-July 5.

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Larger this year—159 exhibitors as compared with 118 at the inaugural fair in 2010, which was held on the adjacent Chelsea Barracks site—Masterpiece built its sprawling marquee on the South Grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea this year. The marquee's façade was printed with digital images that

This year there were nine American dealers. In addition to Schaffer, they were Elle Shushan (portrait miniatures); Michele Biény Harkins (European porcelain); Adam Williams (old master paintings); Arlie Sulka of Lillian Nassau (Tiffany lamps and glass); Kentshire (English furniture and jewelry); Carole Thibaut-Pomerantz (historic wallpapers); Hans Kraus (early photography); and Donald Heald (rare color-plate books and maps).

Masterpiece opened on June 29 with a press preview at 10 a.m., followed by the preview with 5000 invited guests, twice the number of last year. They arrived continually from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. It was a long day for exhibitors but well attended by shoppers. It took more than ten hours to see it all.

Ruinart champagne and small bites were passed continuously all day long, as well as refreshers of soda, elderberry, lime, and mint. More substantial food and drink was for sale at Harry's Bar, which ran out of food by 3 p.m., and at Le Caprice, a comfortable restaurant with modest prices that had a two-hour wait for lunch. Many made early dinner reservations. The Mount Street Deli, in business the following day, could have functioned at the opening. But who wanted to stop looking to eat?

Masterpiece was a feast for the eyes. It offered everything you can think of that improves the quality of life—fine wines, cars, an airplane, jewelry, perfume,



Head, stone, by Emily Young (b. 1951), offered by The Fine Art Society, London.



There were some celebrities and plenty of royals. Elton John (shown) came to the preview on Wednesday morning. Oprah got in early with her decorator but had to leave her dog outside. Reportedly, she did some buying. Prince Harry came and looked at paintings and sculpture.



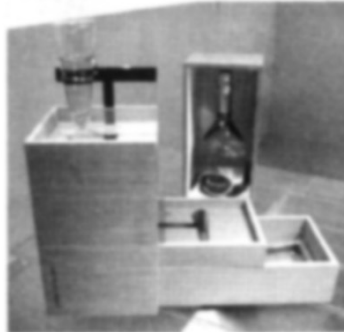
Donald A. Heald, Rare Books, Prints and Maps, New York City, offered this Karl Bodmer *Reise in das Innere Nord-America, in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834*, published by Coblenz (J. Hoebner), 1839-41, from the renowned Schinborn-Buchheim Library, the deluxe issue with plates hand colored. The greatest of the illustrated books devoted to American Indians, this masterpiece was \$1.2 million.



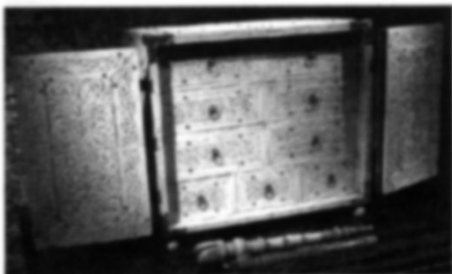
This bear's head Chinese export porcelain tureen with an associated stand was \$272,000 from Jorge Welsh of Lisbon, Portugal and London.



Michele Biény, New York City, specialist in antique European porcelain, offered this large five-piece Meissen garniture made in 1730 for Augustus, Elector of Saxony. Its large size, dazzling color, robust form, and pristine condition made it a masterpiece. The price was \$5 million. "We owned them since before," said Michele Biény Harkins, who said she sold across the board to Australians, Europeans, and Americans living in London.



Ruinart supplied its champagne for the 12-hour preview party. Founded in 1729 during the Age of Enlightenment, Ruinart is now also committed to contemporary art, besides making champagne. Ruinart commissioned Nendo, a renowned Japanese design firm, to create a *kotou* (a picnic/gift box, named for the Japanese word for "little bird") for Ruinart and to design its stand at Masterpiece.



Alvaro Roquette and Pedro Aguiar Branco of AR-PAR, Lisbon, Portugal, offered a collection of Afro-Portuguese art. Works in ivory from the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Benin were made for export to the Portuguese with motifs taken from engravings. Among the cabinets was this 16th-century costador (traveling desk) from Ceylon, reflecting the rich Portuguese trade in gold, woods, and spices.



Robert Young Antiques, London, a dealer in British and European folk art, sold very well on opening day from his well-designed stand. By the end of the day, the large pond boat was gone. Arie Kopelman, chairman of the Winter Antiques Show in New York City, bought an iron and brass rushlight holder. A group of game boards sold as a collection, among other sales.

