

PRESS RELEASE – 2021.02.03

## 'BRAFA in the Galleries': a real breath of fresh air!

The first chapter of the new 'BRAFA in the Galleries' initiative finished last Sunday on a very positive note. The concept clearly appealed to a large number of collectors and art-lovers who could rediscover the gallery trail for a few days, while keeping to the rules currently imposed. The story continues as the event extends not only into next weekend but beyond, both in Belgium and abroad, and of course on the BRAFA website.



Reactions included the following: *'Like taking a breath of fresh air'; 'a rediscovery of the pleasure of gallery presentation, exchanges and conversations'; wonderful to 'welcome the public back to our galleries'.* These are just some of the comments made during the event, both by visitors *'thrilled to see art in the real again after so long'* and gallerists *'fed up with viewing rooms and other online initiatives!'*. *'This initiative really boosted our morale, providing motivation at the most difficult period of our gallery's history'*, said one gallery owner, while another couldn't believe that *'no other international fair had thought of creating a similar event so well-adapted to the circumstances!'*.

The main aim of this initiative was to support the galleries that participate in BRAFA by re-establishing their connection with the public, which has suffered a lot in recent months. This aim has been reached,

the more so because as one participant said *'it enabled BRAFA to remain visible and active, and to set itself apart in a creative way from its competitors'*. A colleague in London said: *'I was immediately taken with this initiative, which didn't settle with transposing the fair into digital space, instead creating an additional, far warmer dimension, and a strong feeling of community among organisers and participants'*.

It is clear that after long months of cultural drought, there was a widespread desire to reinstate vital dialogue between people bound by the same passion and rekindle the emotion that only direct contact with physical works of art can inspire. In many domains, the current crisis has clearly benefited the digital world, but in the art world, it seems to have highlighted the latter's limits: the atmosphere of a fair or gallery simply can't be transposed into pixels, however many are involved...

To mark this ongoing event, BRAFA's blue has been in evidence in windows and on shopfronts in the form of stickers and banners placed as invitations to draw people in. Indoors, several participants used the event as a reason to repaint their gallery, change their lighting, reorganise their set-up or re-display their artworks in order to highlight the star pieces they had selected especially for the classic 'Tour & Taxis' version of BRAFA. A real spring clean – in midwinter!

Some proposed a thematic exhibition and others opted for a temporary move to Brussels, to draw new visitors there (Dr Lennart Booij Fine Arts & Rare Items) or reconnect with clients (Brame & Lorenceau; De Jonckheere; Univers du Bronze; Whitford Fine Arts).

### **Lucky clusters**

Without a doubt, the towns with a large number of participants attracted the largest numbers of visitors to the galleries, because they could be visited on the same 'tour', notably thanks to the maps available on the BRAFA website. Visitor numbers were high wherever permitted. Elsewhere, and particularly in towns or countries going through a lockdown, the event principally played out on the BRAFA website, which offered far more material than during previous editions, with over 950 artworks viewable, and which was also restructured to simplify use and navigation.

### **Good sales and new contacts made**

So despite current restrictions and limited expectations there were successes worth noting (though as Jan Muller (Ghent) said: *'nothing can replace the impact and energy of a physical fair'* despite the fact he made sales each day, at prices up to 30,000 €!).

In Brussels, Philippe d'Arschot made about ten sales including that of an Audenarde chocolate pot from 1765, *'sold to a new client thanks to the BRAFA website'*. Meessen De Clercq also reported about ten sales including the wax artwork by José María Sicilia (° 1954), *La luz que se apaga*, dated 1998, and works by Benoît Platéus: *'we intentionally created a show mixing historical artworks and more recent creations in order to appeal to a wider public, which, if everything comes together, works wonderfully'* said Olivier Meessen, who added: *'we welcomed visitors every day from the start and worked non-stop: what a good feeling!'*. Large numbers of visitors also flocked to Costermans & Pelgrims de Bigard (Sablon) who were hosting their colleagues Francis Janssens van der Maelen (silverware) and Jean Lemaire (antique pottery and porcelain), who sold several pieces, including a terrine in Brussels pottery in the shape of a turkey dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In African art, Serge Schoffel made four sales, including that of his star piece, a very rare, museum-quality, feminine Mende figure in wood from Sierra Leone (late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century) and Didier Claes sold several pairs from his series of Ibeji twin statues in wood made by the Yoruba people in Nigeria. Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke sold about ten artworks including his watercolour and ink on paper by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944), a preparatory study for 'L'Ivrogne' ('The Drunkard') from the Little Prince. Lin Deletaille (Deletaille

Gallery) reported welcoming several foreign clients who purchased an important piece. Whitford Fine Art's show in a private apartment proved both original and fruitful, for they sold a number of paintings by Joseph Lacasse, Caziell and Paul Van Hoeydonck and several sculptures by Clive Barker. Gokelaere & Robinson recorded *'several significant sales, for prices ranging from 1,500 € to 80,000 €'* across their two sites in Brussels and in Knokke-Heist, where Patrick De Brock had an encouraging start with four sales and a negotiation underway in the first weekend. His colleague Patrick Berko was also delighted with his sale of several paintings from his exhibition *'Travels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century'*, and Véronique Bamps, temporarily hosted by his gallery, also sold a number of pieces of vintage jewellery.

In Paris, Napoleon's manuscript relating his victory at the Battle of Austerlitz proposed by the gallery Arts & Autographes was still being negotiated by two collectors, one French, one Swiss. Christophe Hioco made several sales, notably that of a standing Buddha in shale from Ghandhāra (3rd century AD) *'for a six-figure sum'*, and the Galerie des Modernes also reported four sales. At the AB-BA Gallery, things took off with the sale of *'two sculptures by our artist Etienne Viard, one more important work, a lot of interest and further sales on the horizon.'* In Marseille, Pentcheff Gallery also made several sales including *'a painting by Manguin, one by Lebasque, one by André Lhote, one by Henri Martin and several by René Gruau.'*

Elsewhere in Europe, Paolo Antonacci (Rome) is hoping to finalize the sale of a painting; his Milanese colleague Robertaebasta made three sales of pieces of furniture; the Grand-Rue Gallery (Geneva) had the same result with sales from their exhibition *'Sir William Beckend's Grand Tour'* composed of gouache landscapes of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe; Stern Pissarro (London) recorded *'several requests for works by Paul Jenkins, Christo and Kusama'*.

### **New exhibitors' results**

Good sales were also reported by several new participants such as Dr. Lennart Booi Fine Arts & Rare Items (Amsterdam) who sold *'two pieces including a rare engraving by Picasso from 1922'*; Artimo Fine Arts (Brussels) sold fifteen works for between 10,000 and 90,000 € including an important sculpture in bronze entitled *'Le Trésor Caché'* ('The Hidden Treasure') by Charles van der Stappen and *'also sold a work for over 50,000 € online for the first time to a new client!'*. Finally, Nao Masaki, established in Nagoya in Japan, reported having *'made several sales, including one of our most important pieces, a screen with screen-prints made by our artist, Lintalow Hashiguchi, (Nagasaki, 1985), titled 'MINOR MAKER WLIGHTE'*.

### **'BRAFA in the Galleries' continues!**

The large majority of participating galleries will of course continue to welcome clients and visitors wherever this is possible, but the event itself continues this weekend (the 6 and 7 February from 11 AM – 6 PM) in Knokke-Heist, who are bringing contemporary art to the fore at the following eleven galleries: Baronian Xippas; Boon; Patrick De Brock (collective exhibition: *'Jingle Bells IV'*); Gokelaere & Robinson (exhibition: *'Rio de Janeiro : between everyday life, art and design'*, a selection of emblematic pieces of mid-century Brazilian design); Rodolphe Janssen; Maruani Mercier; Guy Pieters; Samuel Vanhoegaerden (who will notably be presenting a work by Panamarenko, *'Pepto Bismo II'* not seen on the art market for a long time) and Maurice Verbaet. Not to forget the family duo at Berko Fine Paintings (exhibition *'Travels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century'*) or their sister Véronique Bamps from Monaco, who is exhibiting her antique jewellery with them.

In Brussels, Costermans & Pelgrims de Bigard, Francis Janssens van der Maelen and Jean Lemaire will continue to welcome clients this Saturday 6 February from 11 AM – 6 PM at Costermans & Pelgrims de Bigard's gallery (Place du Grand Sablon, 5). The exhibition of Ibeji twin statuettes by the Yoruba people of Nigeria will continue at Didier Claes' gallery (14 rue de l'Abbaye) until 27 February, and the

unprecedented exhibition *'From Man Ray to Marien - An Idea of Surrealism'* at the MARUANI MERCIER Gallery (Avenue Louise, 430) will continue until 20 March. In Ghent, the exhibition *'Pierre Clerk – Paintings & Sculptures'* presented by Francis Maere Fine Arts (Hotel Falligan – Kouter 172) will continue until 28 February. In Frankfurt on Main, *'BRAFA in the Galleries'* will be prolonged in an original way as *'BRAFA @ Home'* at DIE GALERIE (Grüneburgweg, 123) until 17 March. In Paris, the exhibition devoted to Xavier Le Normand at the Scremini Gallery (99 rue Quincampoix) will continue until 13 February.

All the galleries' news can be found in the **'BRAFA Community'** section of the BRAFA website, which is retaining its current set-up with over 950 artworks viewable, plus full information about the galleries and the 85 videos created for this event in the new **Video Library** to discover.

As Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke, the President of BRAFA said: *'This event has been an incredibly creative exercise, requiring the fair and the galleries to call all sorts of things into question. This enabled us to question ourselves and reflect on the best ways to keep in touch with our clients, without letting the digital world win. Some paths deserve further exploration, you're never through with thinking!'*

#### **A reminder!**

**BRAFA Art Fair kindly asks all visitors to respect the rules relating to COVID-19 in place in their area.**

#### **An event organised by BRAFA Art Fair**

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