

Interview with Klaas Muller, Chairman of BRAFA



Klaas Muller © Guy Kokken

1. BRAFA 2026 is fast approaching. What can visitors expect to discover at this 71st edition?

The previous edition was a resounding success, yet the Board of Directors made a conscious decision not to rest on its laurels. Rather than simply celebrating this achievement, we resolved to build upon it and further develop the event. As a result, several exciting new features have been introduced.

First of all, the Fair will be welcoming an unprecedented number of exhibitors: nearly 150 galleries from 18 different countries, including a host of prominent international names, some of whom will be taking part in BRAFA for the first time. Visitors have some wonderful surprises in store. However, three essential elements remain at the heart of the Fair: the exceptional quality of the galleries, the diversity of specialities, and the fact that BRAFA remains on a human scale.

Secondly, we have an additional space this year: adjacent to Halls 3 and 4, Hall 8 will be devoted entirely to catering. This new area will provide a more varied and interesting selection of food and drink for both visitors and exhibitors, creating an inviting and sociable culinary experience. Meanwhile, Halls 3 and 4 will remain focused on art, serving as the main venue for exhibitors, our sponsor Delen Private Bank, and the King Baudouin Foundation—the guest of honour for this edition.

Finally, as in previous years, special attention will be paid to the staging and decoration, with a small difference at the entrance to the Fair. But I won't say any more, so as to keep it a surprise for visitors.

2. This is your second year as Chairman of BRAFA. What are your priorities for this edition?

My main priority is to safeguard BRAFA's identity, whilst simultaneously fostering its evolution. It's a delicate balance: our Fair is and remains an event conceived by art dealers, for art dealers, where professionalism and the highest standards of quality are non-negotiable. At the same time, we must remain receptive to new ideas and embrace innovation. The art world is undergoing rapid transformation, and it would be a risk to ignore these changes.

In concrete terms, my ambition remains twofold: to offer exhibitors an effective platform for meeting new collectors and selling under the best possible conditions, whilst providing visitors with an exceptional experience, with the guarantee of a rigorous selection of works.

3. The King Baudouin Foundation, a long-standing partner of the Fair which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, will be the guest of honour at the 2026 edition. Can you tell us more about that?

We are honoured to be celebrating this anniversary with the King Baudouin Foundation. For the occasion, the Foundation will be occupying a larger stand than usual, displaying iconic works from its collections. This year, it will also offer a series of lectures on various topics, in addition to the BRAFA Art Talks which are held every day at its stand at 4 p.m. I have no doubt that its participation will be worthy of the event.

4. Belgium is often regarded as a nation of passionate collectors. How do you explain this tradition?

This tradition can be explained by our country's history. Since the Middle Ages, Belgium has been considered an artistic crossroads for Europe and the world. Throughout history, major Belgian artists have left their mark on art history by producing works that went against the grain: Van Eyck in the Middle Ages, Brueghel in the Renaissance, Rubens in the Baroque period, then the nineteenth-century movements through the Group of XX, Ensor, etc., Magritte in the twentieth century, and up to the present day. These artists were able to flourish thanks to the support of visionary patrons and collectors. Art is part of our DNA: we are naturally curious and receptive to beauty.

5. What role can BRAFA play for younger generations of collectors and those who are new to the art market?

An interesting phenomenon is taking place: our audiences are getting younger. In the past, our visitors were seasoned collectors, aged over 50, who devoted years to building collections centred around a particular area of expertise. This profile still exists, but more and more young enthusiasts are now coming through our doors, with more eclectic tastes. This is precisely BRAFA's strength: its diverse offering. This diversity attracts a curious audience eager for new discoveries. We must continue to nurture and celebrate this eclecticism.

6. On a more personal note, what does BRAFA mean to you?

BRAFA is a crucial moment, both professionally and personally. It is an opportunity for me to present carefully selected works, finalise my research, reconnect with loyal clients, meet new contacts from the museum world and share two intense weeks with my colleagues. The energy and excitement are unique, almost addictive. After each edition, I feel a sense of emptiness... before I start looking forward to the next one!

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