

AMA

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NEWSLETTER

350

5 September 2023



EYE TO EYE

FARES CACHOUX

Art sometimes highlights the contradictions and dysfunctions of our contemporary societies, bringing us face to face with reality and ourselves. When the artist provokes this face-to-face confrontation with humor, our laughter is a sign that a dialogue has begun. This is the challenge of EYE to EYE, a series of artworks by artist Fares Cachoux.

20 Sep. / **07** Oct. 2023

An exhibition presented by **Nadine Fattouh**

at **Jacques Leegenhoek gallery**

35 Rue de Lille, 75007 Paris



COLLECTION

Jean-Louis DANIS

Paris, 26 October 2023

HIGHLIGHTS VIEWING

4 – 21 September 2023
9 Avenue Matignon
Paris 8^e

CONTACT

Alexis Maggiar
amaggiar@christies.com
+33 (0)1 40 76 83 56

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Yaure Mask (2023), Marie Diane

Courtesy Galerie Éric Hertault. Parcours des mondes

AMA

— Art Media Agency —

Direction of publication:	Pierre Naquin
Editor-in-Chief:	Carine Claude Stéphanie Perris Gilles Picard Clément Thibault
Editorial office:	Carine Claude Stéphanie Perris
Authors:	Carine Claude Antonio Mirabile Pierre Naquin Diotima Schuck
Translation:	Fui Lee
Graphic design:	Pierre Naquin
Layout:	Pierre Naquin Nadège Zeglil
Proofreading:	Stéphanie Perris Laura Archer
Image editing:	Olivier Guitton
Contact:	news@artmediaagency.com
Distribution:	260,000+ digital subscribers 1,000 printed copies

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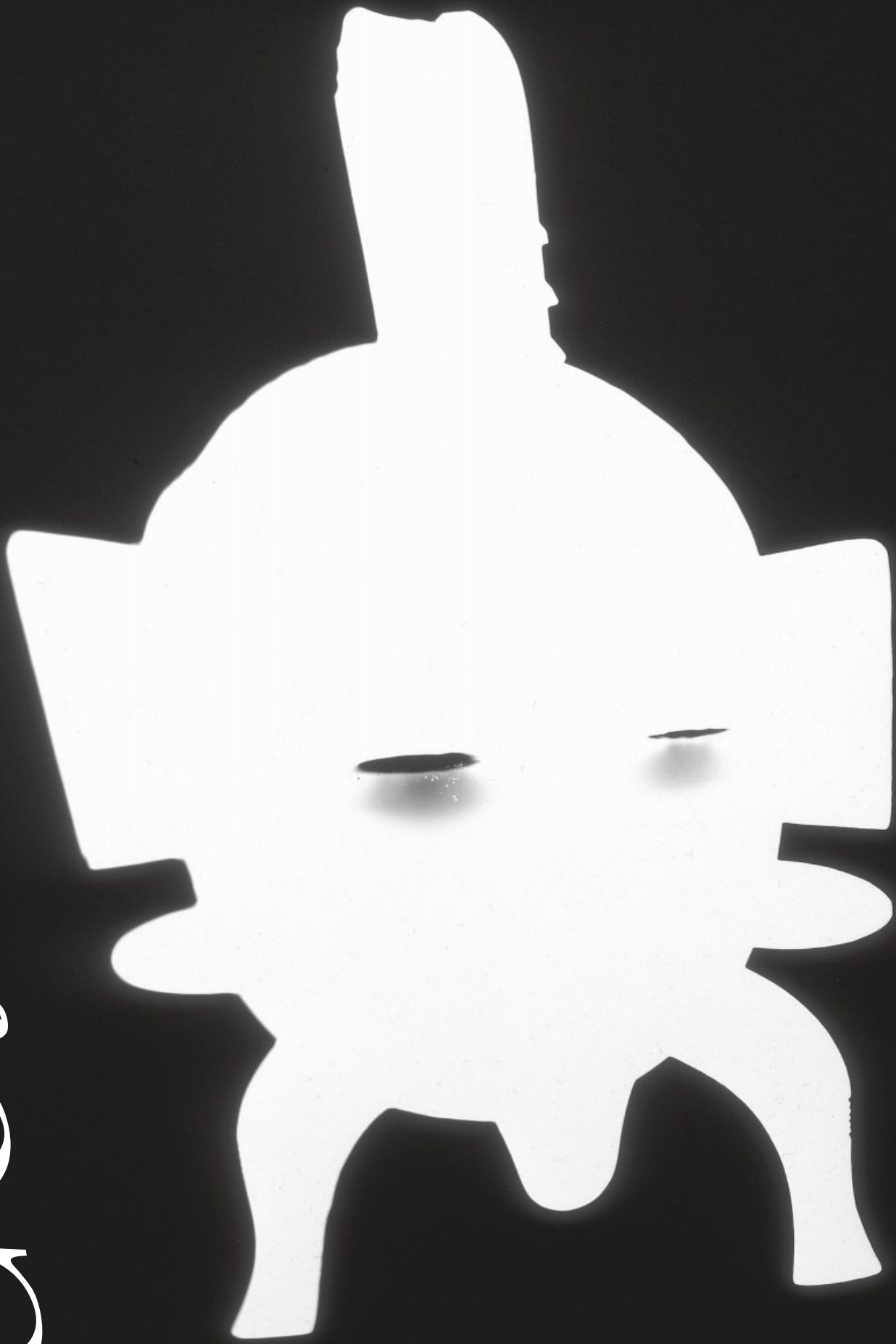
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COGNITION.



Mask (2005), Adam Fuss

© Adam Fuss. Courtesy Parcours des mondes

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Māori Wakahuia Treasure Box

© Michael Hamson Oceanic Art
Courtesy Parcours des mondes





IN PARIS, TRIBAL ART IS A CELEBRATION

From 5 to 10 September, the 22nd *Parcours des mondes* will be taking place in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. An open-air fair where intercultural dialogue is king.

Tribal art dealers are unanimous: if Paris has regained its status as the capital of primitive art in recent years, the *Parcours des mondes* has undoubtedly had something to do with it... A highlight in the international calendar of tribal art fairs, this eagerly awaited event, which takes place every September, has made intercultural dialogue its trademark for over twenty years. Celebrating the creativity of artists, often anonymous, from the ancient arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, the event readily combines ethnography and design, classical non-European art and contemporary expression. Here, an abstract painting rubs shoulders with a Baoulé sculpture, and there, contemporary Japanese basketry meets the gaze of a Nô mask. "These bridges built between peoples across continents and over time form the DNA of the *Parcours des mondes*," says Yves-Bernard Debie, the show's general manager [see p.20].

Classical Africa remains "a central axis" around which the arts of Oceania, from Polynesia to Micronesia, via Australian Aboriginal art, as well as those of North America and Asia, with Japan, India, the Himalayas and Indonesia, revolve. "This openness to new themes enriches the visitor experience, but the *Parcours* will never be an antiques or Asian art fair," continues Yves-Bernard Debie. "But it is important to be open to other practices, for dealers and the public alike." Above all, the meticulous selection of works presented by the dealers makes this fair a place renowned for the quality of the scholarly exchanges that take place there — and, of course, the fine sales that are made — attracting collectors, experts, curators, art lovers and culture enthusiasts from all over

the world every year. Last year, the Americans made a big comeback after health measures and travel restrictions were eased. "You can hear English being spoken in the streets again! Some people are even coordinating their holidays with the *Parcours*," says the show's director with delight.

For this 22nd edition, chaired by Stéphane Martin, founder and former director of the Musée du Quai Branly [see box p.22], 58 galleries from France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the UK and Switzerland, as well as from Côte d'Ivoire, Finland, the United States and Australia, will once again be inviting their colleagues from the Beaux-Arts district in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Another special feature of this fair, which is decidedly unlike any other, is that it does not take place in a vacuum, as most fairs do. The participating galleries place their masterpieces and their suitcases in the shops of this historic district for the six days of the event. Wandering freely around this open-air art trail is one of the little pleasures the *Parcours* offers its visitors.

Faithful to the event, art dealers often return from one year to the next. A few new faces have nevertheless made their appearance: Claes Contemporary and Modern, Bruce Floch, Granier Ancient, Kiyama Gallery, Guy Kuypers Spectandum, Marguerite de Sabran, Danish gallery owner David Utzon-Frank and Swiss gallery owner Dierk Dierking. Among them, a number of young galleries have caught the eye of the organisers. It is said that the *Parcours des mondes*' reputation for high standards could impress many. But the tribal art market, like the art market in general, needs to renew itself and chart a course for the future with the dealers and collectors of tomorrow. In short, it needs to find a new dynamic. That's why the 22nd edition of the fair is introducing a new sector with the launch of "Showcase", a platform open to galleries that have been active for only a few years and have never taken part in the event before [see box p.38]. "The idea is to get younger dealers off to a good start. The financial effort required of them is less substantial, because they are exhibiting in a venue on a collegiate basis," continues Yves-Bernard Debie. "It's also a question of being able to offer the public beautiful objects at attractive prices proposed by these 'young' people". Six galleries were chosen from a large number of applications. Two exhibition spaces have been set aside for these first-time exhibitors to showcase their selection: 35 rue Guénégaud will be home to the Granier Ancient, Bruce Floch and Guy Kuypers galleries, while 27 rue Guénégaud will feature works by Shâk Gallery, Pascal Vernimmen and Michel van den Dries.

In other news, *Parcours des mondes* is partnering the Mingei Bamboo Prize [see box p.27], a prize organised

by the Mingei gallery on rue Visconti to reward young Japanese designers, but not just any young designers: specialists in bamboo basketry, a delicate and ancient art that is making a comeback. "Bamboo basketry is one of the oldest traditional techniques in Japan, but today it is enjoying a tremendous revival. I wouldn't call it a craft, but an art," explains Philippe Boudin, founder of the Mingei gallery and a specialist in the ancient and decorative arts of Japan.

Through the collections

The 2023 edition of *Parcours des mondes* will feature a host of new and erudite exhibitions carefully curated by some twenty dealers [see p.20]. For the first time, Jacques Billen is unveiling his private collection of African weapons to the public in an exhibition (not for sale) specially produced by *Parcours des mondes* [see p.42]. Knives, swords, axes ... the public had the opportunity to discover the superb weapons in the Billen collection in the fine book entitled *UNÛ. Prestigious African Weapons*, published in December 2021. They will have plenty of time to see them up close and appreciate the subtlety of their engraved handles and unusual

shapes. Jacques Billen called on Bruno Claessens, former European Head of African and Oceanic Art at Christie's and founder of Duende Art Projects, to select these 80 mostly unpublished weapons. Together with René Bouchara, they have designed the scenography for the exhibition, which will be held at the Galerie Bernard Jordan on rue Guénégaud. The exhibition "Shared passion. A 21st-century collection", curated by Didier Claes, one of Brussels' leading African art dealers, delves deep into the collection of Michel Vandekerckhove and his wife [see p.48]. To accompany the exhibition, Didier Claes and Bruno Claessens are publishing a book illustrated with photographs by Hughes Dubois, offering an in-depth analysis of the pieces on show.

Tribute to Pierre Moos

Alongside nine other works devoted to tribal art, Didier Claes' book has been shortlisted for the Prix International du Livre d'Art Tribal, which is making a comeback this year. It is now called the "Pierre Moos Prize for Art Books from Africa, Oceania, Asia and the Americas", in tribute to its founder, who died last year [see box p.46]. The ten books in competition for this new prize, organised in partnership with

"Masks"

Following on from the "Soweï-Bundu" exhibition in 2022, Abla and Alain Lecomte are offering a selection of "Masks", illustrating all the aspects they can take on: abstract, realistic, animal, futuristic, gentle, aggressive... "They all attract the eye, arouse curiosity and raise questions," says the pair of gallery owners on the rue des Beaux-Arts. "For most people in Africa, dancing with a mask is a sacred act. The very definition of a mask is the second face, in other words, the spirit that inhabits it," add Alain and Abla Lecomte. Depending on the people or the performance, the mask will embody a peace regulator or an ancestor who was important to those same people, a totem animal (in the sense of forbidden, and therefore sacred) or an animal feared and respected for its strength, bravery or intelligence.



Masque Vuvi (Gabon)

© Vincent Girier Dufournier. Courtesy Galerie Abla & Alain Lecomte. Parcours des mondes

Mbulu Ngulu reliquary guardian,
Kota Ndassa (Gabon, 19th siècle)
Courtesy Dalton Somare. Parcours des mondes





Christie's, are: *Shared passion. A 21st-century collection* under the direction of Didier Claes ; *Bamigboye. A Master Sculptor of the Yoruba Tradition* by James Green; *The Language of Beauty in African Art* curated by Constantin Petridis; *Pathways of Art. How objects get to Museums* by Esther Tisa Francini; *Power and Prestige: The Art of Clubs in Oceania* by Steven Hooper; the collective work *Résonnance : Jean-Michel Basquiat et l'univers kongo* ; *Polynesian Art* edited by Kevin Conru; *Agiba and the Head Cult of the Kerewo* edited by Jonathan Fogel; *The portable universe: Thought and Splendor of Indigenous Colombia* edited by Julia Burtenshaw and *Textiles of Indonesia* by Thomas Murray. Verdict will be announced on 7 September at Christie's Paris.

Contemporary views

In recent years, the selection of works at the show has taken a more contemporary turn, a trend that has been confirmed by the multitude of contemporary works on offer, in dialogue with the classical arts of Africa, Asia and Oceania. "There's a wonderful continuity between ancient creations and the work of contemporary artists. More and more gallery owners are keen to open up this dialogue between yesterday's and today's practices," notes Yves-Bernard Debie, General Manager.

Representing Beninese artists, the Vallois 35 gallery [see box p.35] is showing works by two young artists for the first time: Youss Atacora, a self-taught painter born in 1988 in Djougou, and Achille Adonon, a visual artist born in 1987 and winner of the Sculpture prize at the last Dakar Biennale in 2022. At 41 rue de Seine, Galerie Vallois will be showcasing the latest poetic and

colourful creations by young ceramist King Houndekpinkou, as well as works by Franck Zanfanhouédé. Aboriginal art expert Stéphane Jacob is unveiling bark paintings by Australian Aboriginal artist Peter Maralwanga (1916-1987) and M' Wukun Wanambi, while Finnish gallery Tischenko is exhibiting a new series of works by French artist Coco Fronsac set against objects from the Far North [see p.30]. At Éric Hertault, the artist Marie Diane uses Indian ink to reproduce Yaouré masks, delicate and finely sculpted works emblematic of the aesthetic of this ethnic group from Ivory Coast [see box p.35]. The Claes Contemporary & Modern gallery, for its part, will be showcasing Vitshois Mwilambwe Bondo, a visual artist, curator, founder and director of the Congo Biennale and Kin ArtStudio, who has played a key role in the development of a new Congolese generation over the last ten years. In September, he will be taking up a residency at Villa Albertine, the ultimate in artist residencies in the United States. And it is this continuity between the genius of classical tribal art and contemporary talent that *Parcours des mondes* intends to perpetuate.

Himalayan treasures

Tenzing gallery is presenting a selection of antique objects and works of art from the Himalayas dating from the 11th to the 18th centuries in its exhibition "Kingdom of myths, legends and divinities". These include exquisite manuscript book covers from the 11th and 15th centuries, renowned for their intricate illustrations and delicate craftsmanship, which offer a glimpse of the literary treasures that once adorned Himalayan monasteries. They stand alongside vibrantly coloured *thangka* paintings and sculptures that demonstrate the mastery of Himalayan artists. The exhibition also features a series of delicate *tsakalis*, ritual Buddhist initiation cards used during the apprenticeship of young monks or during Tibetan ceremonies. These watercolour miniatures serve as a support for concentration and visualisation of the divinities. They are very old — the *tsakalis* on display at *Parcours des mondes* date from the early to late twelfth century — and represent the *Eight Precepts of Lama Nyang ral*.

Parcours des mondes 2023

Until 10 September
Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Paris
www.parcours-des-mondes.com





Disintegrated Bamboo Daruma, Tanabe Chikuunsai IV
Winner of the Mingei Bamboo Prize 2021

Courtesy Galerie Mingel, Parcours des mondes





View of the Parcours des Mondes 2022

Photo Cerise Laby. © © Roar Atelier. Courtesy Parcours des mondes

INTRODUCTION



Untitled II (2022), Vitshois Mwilambwe Bondo

© Valentin Clavairolles. Courtesy Claes Contemporary, Parcours des mondes

A QUIET FORCE

Following in the footsteps of the late Pierre Moos, his friend and lawyer Yves-Bernard Debie, who assisted him on previous editions, has taken over the reins of the *Parcours des mondes* this year. A new direction with continuity.

Pierre-Yves Debie is a man of two minds. A lawyer specialising in art and cultural property law, he is also a fervent art collector. This passion for beautiful objects stems from his childhood, growing up in an artistic environment, surrounded by passionate collectors like his father and grandfather. His first acquisition, a pendant from the Solomon Islands, marked the start of an eclectic collection, made up of encounters and stories. Pierre-Yves Debie does not see himself as a methodical collector, but rather as a lover of works that engage in dialogue with distant cultures. His collection ranges from African art to dinosaur fossils and Neolithic relics. In his Brussels home, he creates dialogues between works from different eras and continents. For him, humanity is the link that binds these pieces together, with the imagination doing the rest. As a lawyer, he is involved in the delicate issues of the art world: he defends the position of museums and the market, arguing that today's thinking is distorted by questions of ideology. For him, the issue of restitution should not be rooted solely in colonial repentance. He is also critical of the increasing constraints imposed on antique dealers, particularly with regard to the ivory trade and verifying the origin of funds. He considered that some of these constraints were based on misconceptions and were detrimental to the dynamism of the art market. Following in the footsteps of his friend Pierre Moos, he is now at the helm of a *Parcours des mondes* that he intends to continue to develop ... with continuity.

The Showcase sector is the new feature of this year's *Parcours des mondes*...

This is a platform dedicated to first-time exhibitors, offering them the opportunity to showcase their work in two specially equipped galleries. This

approach has several objectives. Firstly, it aims to make it easier for young dealers to enter the art world, by reducing the financial hurdle. Secondly, it aims to diversify the artistic offering, by introducing new voices and perspectives. Finally, it allows us to offer the public quality objects at more accessible prices, making art more democratic, but also more varied. It's a way of revitalising the *Parcours des Mondes*, while remaining true to its fundamental values of quality and authenticity.

Some dealers are reluctant to take part for fear of "not being up to the job". How do you address this concern?

The reputation of the *Parcours des Mondes* is undeniable, and it is understandable that some dealers may feel a certain apprehension at the idea of taking part. This apprehension often reflects a desire for excellence and a deep respect for the event. However, we encourage all dealers, whether established or just starting out, to see their participation as a unique opportunity for exchange, learning and networking. Each merchant, through their experience and vision, brings inestimable value to

the whole. The *Parcours des mondes* is a place of welcome, discovery and celebration of artistic diversity.

Do you see a generational shift coming among dealers?

The art world is constantly changing, and galleries are no exception. In the face of contemporary challenges, it is essential to think about renewal and succession. I am deeply optimistic about the future of the galleries in the *Parcours des mondes*. Many of the assistants trained at these institutions have the passion and expertise to ensure a smooth handover. These young professionals, steeped in the history and values of their galleries, are ready to take over, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of these spaces dedicated to art.

There are also new merchants...

Absolutely. This new generation, wherever it comes from, brings a breath of fresh air to the art market. These young professionals, armed with new ideas, modern technologies and a renewed vision, are essential to the vitality of the sector. *Parcours des mondes* has always sought to include them, so as to remain at the cutting edge of practices and themes. What's more, these younger dealers are quite naturally in tune with current trends, attracting a new and more diverse public. They are the future of the art market, and their early involvement in major events like the *Parcours* is crucial to their professional development and to the evolution of the market itself.

Are collectors also changing?

In my opinion, the passion for collecting transcends generations. While methods and motivations may change over time, the essence of collecting remains unchanged: a relentless quest for beauty, history and uniqueness. Today's collectors, despite living in a digital and globalised world, continue to value these fundamental principles. They are looking for pieces that tell a story, that evoke emotions and that represent both a financial and an emotional

investment. For them, the *Parcours des mondes*, as an international crossroads for art from outside Europe, is the ideal place to exchange ideas and celebrate this passion.

Has the typology of collectors also changed?

I would say that since Covid, fewer 'collectors' seem to be interested primarily in the financial aspect. The *Parcours des mondes* has always stood out for its commitment to authenticity and passion. The notable absence of collectors motivated primarily by profit is an affirmation of these values. Here, art is celebrated

for its beauty, its history and its emotional power. It is a place where true enthusiasts come together, sharing a common admiration for the objects and their creators [see p.42].

Foreign collectors — especially from the United States — seem to be making a comeback since the pandemic?

Exactly. We already saw this last year. The presence of buyers from the United States, but also from other countries around the world, is certainly the best proof of the event's international reputation. They bring a cosmopolitan dynamic, enriching

3 questions to... Stéphane Martin

Stéphane Martin is Honorary Chairman of this year's *Parcours des mondes*.

What made you want to be Honorary Chairman of *Parcours des Mondes*?

My relationship with the event goes back a long way. It goes back to my interactions with Rick Gadella, the initiator of this event, with whom I struck up a friendship when he was managing *Paris Photo* and I was in charge of a cultural project in Monaco. What's more, my close relationship with Pierre Moos, who took over the *Parcours*, strengthened my attachment to this event. The Saint-Germain-des-Prés district has a special place in my heart, having walked through it for over forty years. I've always been an active participant in the *Parcours des Mondes*, so when the opportunity to become Honorary President arose, I was delighted to seize it.

What do you think makes the *Parcours des Mondes* so special?

Paris is internationally recognised as an art market stronghold, particularly for art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Many renowned galleries are based in Paris, Brussels and, to a lesser extent, San Francisco. I still remember the time when European dealers tried to establish themselves in New York, but they soon came back, because collectors from all over the world are attracted to the French capital. The genius of *Parcours des Mondes* lies in its ability to transform local galleries to welcome foreign dealers for the duration of the fair. It's an open-air event, spread over several days, offering a warm and friendly atmosphere that sets it apart from other fairs.

How did you start collecting and what impact has this passion had on your career?

My love of African art was awakened during my travels in Africa as a teenager, particularly in Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and Angola. My father's friend in the forest gave me my first piece of art, a small stool, when I was 14. This passion has driven me to hunt for bargains, visit galleries and collect art throughout my life. It has also influenced my professional career. After my studies at Sciences Po, I dreamt of working in Africa. Although I eventually joined the *Cour des Comptes*, I had the opportunity to work in Senegal for four years. Later, thanks to my interest in culture, I joined the Centre Pompidou, then became chief of staff to the Minister of Culture, Philippe Douste-Blazy, appointed under Jacques Chirac, which is how I came to play a role in the creation of the Quai Branly Museum.



Yves-Bernard Debie
Courtesy Parcours des mondes

Sepik *Bero kandimbong* (Papua New Guinea)

Courtesy Franck Marcelin. Parcours des mondes





Senoufo Kafiagelejo (Ivory Coast)

Photo Vincent Girier Dufournier
Courtesy Olivier Castellano, Parcours des mondes

exchanges and discussions. Their presence also underlines the relevance of the Parcours in its field. Finally, it's a reminder that art is universal, transcending borders and cultures. We are delighted and extremely proud of this.

Can price transparency improve the visitor experience?

In a world where information is at our fingertips, transparency has become a fundamental public expectation. Bernard Dulon successfully experimented with this a few years ago, and it seems to me that it removes certain taboos that no longer really apply. It demystifies the buying process and makes art more accessible. It removes a psychological barrier and establishes a climate of trust between the dealer and the visitor. Having said that, each gallery owner is free to decide what he or she wants to do in this area, and I think it's just as important to respect individual choices.

Speaking of price, doesn't a dealer's reputation contribute to the price of a work?

It goes without saying that a dealer's reputation plays an important role in the perception of a work's value. An established gallery owner with a solid reputation and recognised expertise can naturally command higher prices. However, it is essential to understand that this reputation is often the result of many years of work, dedication and integrity. At Parcours des mondes, we value above all the quality, authenticity and provenance of our works. Fame is an asset, but it cannot replace the importance of authenticity and quality.

International exhibitors have always been important to the Parcours des mondes...

International is at the heart of the Parcours' identity and even its history. International exhibitors bring an invaluable richness to the event, introducing unique perspectives, techniques and stories. Every country, every culture has its own way of expressing, creating and celebrating art. Each territory has a particular

Mingei Bamboo Prize

Japanese bamboo basketry, an ancient and delicate art form, is enjoying an impressive revival, particularly among young designers. For the second edition of the Mingei Bamboo Prize, Parcours des Mondes is backing the event financially, demonstrating its commitment to the vitality of this unique production. Organised by the Mingei Gallery, a pioneer in Europe for the recognition of this art form, this biennial prize is an open invitation to all Japanese artists who use bamboo as their main medium. The aim? To encourage contemporary creation while paying tribute to a tradition that is deeply rooted in the country's culture. This year, the call has been heard and 23 artists are taking part, with 13 works already selected by the gallery. Three of the artists are women, reflecting the growing diversity and inclusivity of this traditional practice. These exceptional works will be on show at the Mingei Gallery, 7 rue Visconti, for the duration of Parcours des Mondes. The jury, chaired this year by Stéphane Martin, Honorary President of Parcours des Mondes 2023, will select the winner. The winner will receive a prize of €5,000, entirely funded by the Mingei Gallery, and will be invited to Paris. But 2023 brings a whole host of new features with the introduction of the Parcours des Mondes-Mingei Public Prize. Visitors will be able to have their say thanks to an innovative voting system based on QR codes affixed next to the works. The prize, co-funded by the gallery and Parcours des Mondes, is worth €2,500. In 2021, Tanabe Chikuunsai IV was awarded the prize for his Disintegrated bamboo Daruma, which was exhibited at the Musée Guimet along with the other finalists. The Guimet-Mingei Public Prize went to artist Yonezawa Jirō for his Red Fossil 20-3.

Mingei Bamboo Prize

Until 10 September

Galerie Mingei

7 rue Visconti, Paris 6th

www.mingei-arts-gallery.com

history with the distant. By welcoming exhibitors from every continent, Parcours des mondes has positioned itself as a truly global crossroads for primitive art, offering visitors a rich, diverse and unforgettable experience.

Many exhibitors also come from the provinces...

It's true! And I think that beyond the Parcours alone, France is lucky to have a network of experts in non-European arts that covers almost the entire country.

The traditional arts of the Far North are particularly well represented this year...

The art of the North is a treasure trove that is often overlooked. These works, although often smaller in size, are of remarkable finesse and beauty. They reflect an adaptation to a specific

environment and resources, testifying to the creativity and ingenuity of the artists. These pieces offer a refreshing alternative to more conventional works, and their presence at Parcours des mondes is an invitation to discovery and wonder. Several galleries are also dedicating thematic exhibitions to this geography.

Contemporary African art is gaining increasing prominence among the exhibitors at the Parcours...

It's also true. Contemporary African art is a vibrant celebration of the continent's creativity and diversity. It links ancestral traditions with modern expressions, testifying to the richness and dynamism of all art forms in Africa. At Parcours des mondes, we are proud to introduce these works, showing the continuing evolution of African artistic expression.

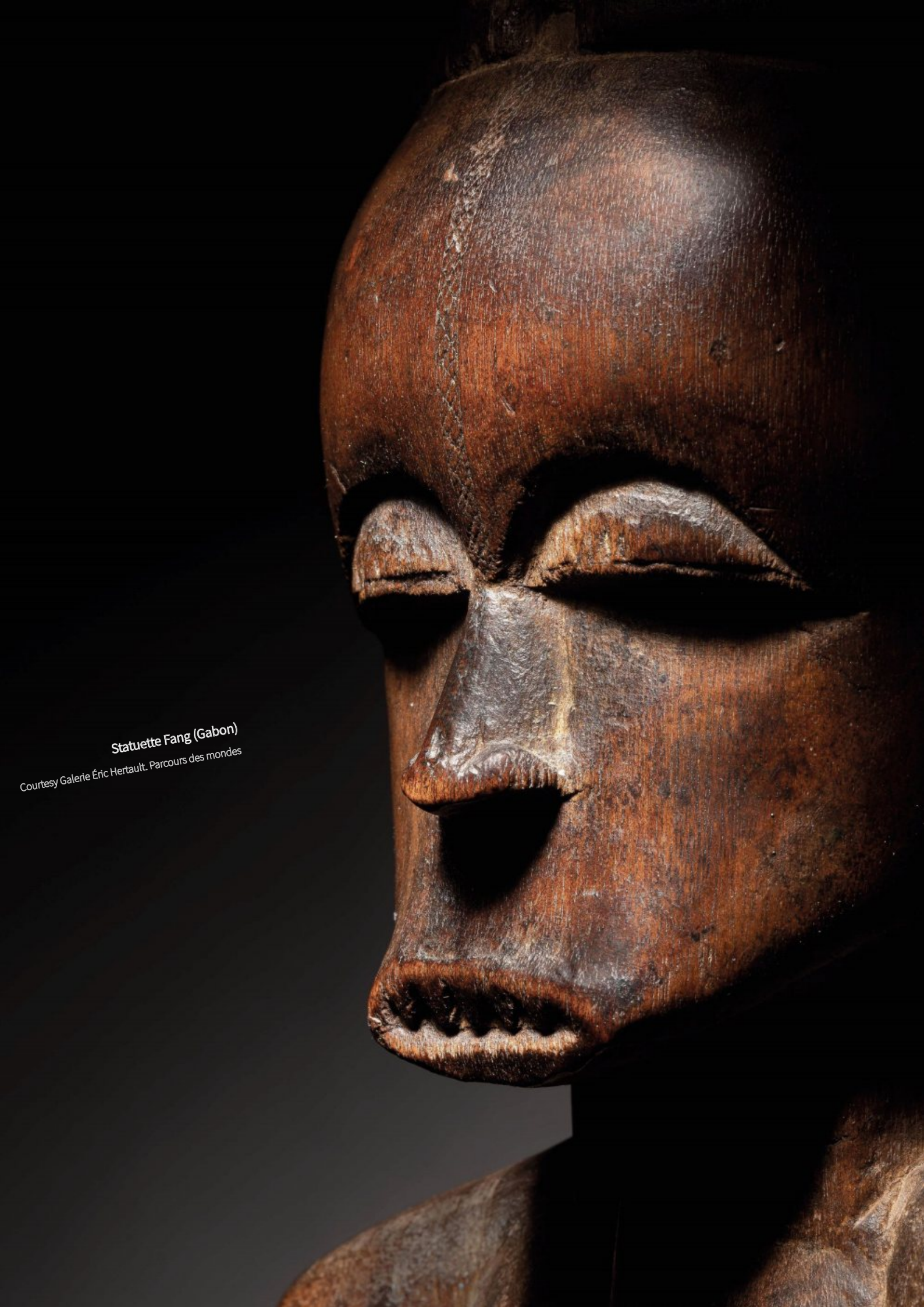
INTERVIEW

The Parcours also continues to give pride of place to Asian art and antiques...

As with contemporary African and Oceanic art, our approach to Asian art and antiquities is above all one of openness and diversification [see box p.27]. The works on display bear witness to ancient civilisations and faraway cultures, offering visitors a plunge into the history and beauty of human production. While the Parcours remains true to its roots — African and Oceanic art — this opening up to other themes enriches the visitor experience, inviting them on an artistic journey through the ages and across continents.

Pierre Moos, your friend, sadly passed away at the end of last year.

Pierre was much more than just a figurehead for non-European art; he embodied a passion, vision and dedication that shaped and influenced the dealer landscape of our speciality. His deep understanding of art, coupled with his business acumen, enabled him to build bridges between historians, dealers and collectors, making the Parcours a global benchmark. I was privileged to witness his insight, integrity and unwavering commitment to the quality and authenticity of objects. Our discussions were often profound, going beyond reflections on market trends to delve into the true essence of art and its role in society. Pierre had that rare ability to see potential where others saw only obstacles. He envisioned the future while deeply respecting the past. His death was a shock to everyone, but his legacy lives on [see box p.46]. Every aspect of the Parcours des mondes bears his imprint, from the rigorous selection of works to the warm and welcoming atmosphere he insisted on creating. Today, as we continue to move forward, every decision we take is a tribute to his vision. Pierre Moos was not just a leader, he was a mentor, a friend and an inexhaustible source of inspiration. In honouring his memory, we strive to perpetuate his dream and continue to make the Parcours a space for discovery, wonder and celebration of art in all its forms.



Statuette Fang (Gabon)

Courtesy Galerie Éric Hertault. Parcours des mondes

NO. 1 FERRANDIN



Shinzo deity figure (Japan)

Courtesy Yann Ferrandin. Parcours des mondes

A WORLD OF EXHIBITIONS

Like every year, the exhibitors at the *Parcours des mondes* invest a great deal of energy in selecting the works they are going to present. And like every year, some of them go the extra mile to theme their exhibitions. A year of research for five days of exceptional exhibitions. Here's an overview.

“Eskimo and Polynesian objects”, “Papua New Guinea”: Franck Marcelin. *Double dose*

This year, Franck Marcelin has chosen to thematise each of the two rooms in his gallery at 35 rue Seine: one is devoted to Eskimos and Polynesians, the other to Papua New Guinea. A very fine Fijian club will capture visitors' attention from the very first room. Extremely fine and over 1m20 long, this heavy Cali mace was certainly more a weapon of war than an instrument for dancing. “Of the 108 Cali clubs auctioned since 1985, we know of only one other of this size,” explains Franck Marcellin. “It's an exceptional object. From Papua New Guinea, the highlight of the exhibition is undoubtedly the imposing Sepik *bero kandimbong* collected by Father Georg Höltker between 1937 and 1939.” *Bero kandimbong* literally stands for “sacred figure with loincloth”, referring to the cover-up worn by young adult men after they had undergone their first initiation ceremonies. This was originally made from beaten wood bark, but has unfortunately disappeared from the figure. *Waikor*, an ochre pigment typical of the Sepik region and present throughout the sculpture, bears witness to the custom of coating the body with burnt red earth mixed with coconut oil. In all, some forty pieces are on show. A catalogue has been published for the occasion.

“Eskimo and Polynesian objects”

“Papua New Guinea”

Until 10 September

35 rue Seine. Paris 6th

www.franckmarcelin.com

“Austronesia and Beyond”: Martin Doustar. *Mini*

The *Parcours des mondes* 2022 exhibition, featuring 110 objects, highlighted the impact and influence of the Austronesians in South-East Asia. This year, Martin Doustar is going further, or rather “Beyond”, by widening his field of exploration to include the South Seas: Papua, Melanesia, the Solomon Islands and other regions are featured, with around thirty objects carefully selected to illustrate this theme. “This year, the exhibition has been set up in a smaller gallery, giving us the opportunity for a more intimate presentation. The majority of the objects on display are smaller in size, with the exception of one exceptional piece from Borneo,” explains Martin Doustar. Alongside his Austronesian treasures, the dealer is also presenting other pieces, mainly African art and ethnography.

“Austronesia and Beyond”

Until 10 September

23 rue Guénégaud. Paris 6th

www.martindoustar.com

Happy birthday!

Philippe Ratton holds an important place in the world of Primitive Art, with a career spanning fifty years. His eye and rigour are unanimously recognised. Two objects from his collection are on display at the Pavillon des Sessions in the Louvre Museum, and others have been acquired by the Fondation Dapper and the musée du Quai Branly, to which he also regularly lends works for their exhibitions. His father, Maurice Ratton, was a renowned primitive arts antique dealer based on the rue de Grenelle. His uncle, Charles Ratton, a world-famous dealer who also specialised in archaeology and the Haute Époque, was one of the first experts in what was then known as “negro” art. Following his father’s advice, Philippe Ratton joined the Ader firm in 1967 as a clerk, attended the École du Louvre and began his career as a dealer at the flea market. It was there that he met Daniel Hourdé, whom he had met as a young amateur at his father’s shop. In 1971, Philippe Ratton was 21 years old. His youth and his desire to get out in the field led him to undertake a long trip to Zaire, in search of objects and adventure. In 1973, his father died. Philippe Ratton took over the gallery at 28 rue de Grenelle in Paris, and within ten years had made a name for himself. In 1990, he went into partnership with Daniel Hourdé. They opened the Galerie Ratton-Hourdé on rue des Beaux-Arts. That same year, Philippe Ratton was also appointed Expert to the Syndicat Français des Experts Professionnels en Œuvres d’Art et Objets de Collection and became head of the Primitive Art department at the Tajan auction house. For several years, Galerie Ratton-Hourdé presented major thematic exhibitions such as “Tiywara” in 2001, “Kota” in 2003 and “Dogon” in 2005. The gallery then moved to rue Bonaparte, where it presented exhibitions that were always exceptional, such as “Fang” in 2006 and “Maternity” in 2010. Since 2011, Philippe Ratton has run the gallery alone (now at 33 rue de Seine), continuing to organise regular flagship exhibitions such as “Gabon” in 2017.

“50 years of the gallery”

Until 10 September

Galerie Ratton

33 rue de Seine. Paris 6th

www.galerieratton.com

“Power & Elegance” **Adrián Schlag**. **Contrasts**

This year, Adrián Schlag and his gallery Tribal Art Classics present “Power & Elegance”, an exploration of the aesthetic contrasts of tribal art: between strength and elegance. Adrián Schlag, a specialist in tribal art from Africa, Oceania and South-East Asia, has been taking part in the Parcours des mondes exhibition since 2004. In this exhibition, he aims to highlight the stylistic differences present in primitive art. “On the one hand, there are sculptures imbued with great power, such as this important nail fetish, and on the other, objects of refined

elegance, such as a Baule figure or surrealist Oceanic objects,” explains the gallery owner. Visitors can only stand in awe of this large Bozo ram mask (Mali). In addition to these tribal objects, the “Bouquinerie de l’Institut” — home to the Belgian dealer — will be exhibiting major works of classic modern art, including pieces by Picasso, Léger and Miró. All in all, a plunge into the aesthetics of modernity!

« Power & Elegance »

Until 10 September

3 bis rue des Beaux-Arts. Paris 6th

www.tribalartclassics.com

“Frozen Magic” **Grusenmeyer & Woliner**. **Glagla**

Siberia, that vast icy expanse, is the cradle of an ancestral magic that manifests itself through a mystical bestiary. It’s a world where ancient values and primordial desires take shape, creating a backdrop for a wild array of identities, all linked by a shared belief system. As Karim Grusenmeyer and Damien Woliner, the two dealers presenting the “Frozen Magic” exhibition, point out: “In the icy solitudes of Siberia, an ancient magic thrives. It manifests itself in a mystical bestiary, where ancient values and primordial desires take shape.” Some sixty bronze objects, spanning a vast period from the Iron Age to the present day, are on show at the Maxime Flatry gallery, which is hosting the two Belgian dealers for a special exhibition. Although the majority of these pieces are ancient, they bear witness to the continuity and persistence of these beliefs throughout the ages. Galerie Grusenmeyer opened its doors in Brussels in 1980 and is now run by the second generation of this family of antique dealers. Since 2016, in association with Damien Woliner, the gallery has focused on quality and diversity — from tribal to archaeology to Asian art — reflecting their passion for the ancient arts and their desire to share these treasures. “Shamanic art serves as a reflective mirror, capturing past dramas and preserving relics of tradition and untamed nature, preserved from the rationality of scientific thought.” The invitation is extended!

“Frozen Magic. The Ancient Art of Shamanic Siberia”

Until 10 September

33 rue Guénégaud. Paris 6th

www.grusenmeyer-woliner.com



Bozo ram mask (Mali)

Courtesy Adrian Schlag, Tribal Art Classics, Parcours des mondes



Majnoun warrior (2022), Youss Atacora

Courtesy Vallois 35. Parcours des mondes

Atacora

“Magic or religion”**Arte Primitivo. Cabinet**

The Arte Primitivo gallery, under the direction of Fernando Pujol, returns to Parcours des mondes for the third time with an exhibition entitled “Magic or Religion”. Located on rue de Seine, every year Arte Primitivo makes an effort to present an exhibition with a strong identity, in the form of a cabinet of curiosities. For example, the exhibition “Ancestors and the Future” featured tribal artworks alongside pieces from NASA collections and other major technological advances. “Magic or Religion” is not limited to a single belief or practice. On the contrary, it embraces a multitude of eras and cultures, from the earliest representations in caves to the medieval period, via the world’s great monotheisms. Fernando Pujol points out that “the tribal world has striking similarities with these periods, in particular a great dependence on sorcerers”. Visitors are greeted by an eclectic collection of objects: masks from the Congo, Dan, M’Bebe, Luba and many others sit alongside religious objects such as ancient caliphs, crosses and even a representation of Jesus Christ. This profusion of artefacts is complemented by photographs, adding a contemporary dimension to the exhibition. One of the aspects of the exhibition — over and above the intellectual approach — lies in the aesthetic associations of the objects on display. As Fernando Pujol points out, “objects such as bells or representations of angels show how different cultures and eras have interpreted similar themes through their art”. The Arte Primitivo gallery specialises in primitive art, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on regions such as Mali, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This expertise is clearly reflected in the selection of objects

in the exhibition, as evidenced by this magnificent Punu mask and this elegant little figure of a Fang ancestor, both from Gabon. You’re sure to be amazed.

“Magic or religion”

Until 10 September
53 rue de Seine. Paris 6th
www.arteprimitivo.es

“Marie-Diane and Yaouré people”**Éric Hertault. Ivory Ink**

The Yaouré people, originally from Ivory Coast, are renowned for their rich artistic heritage. Their works, imbued with spirituality and mysticism, have stood the test of time, captivating collectors and fans of tribal art. Galerie Éric Hertault, a specialist in this geography after working with Philippe Ratton [see box p.32], has already had the opportunity to highlight this ethnic group through themed exhibitions, such as “Yaouré, Visages du Sacré”

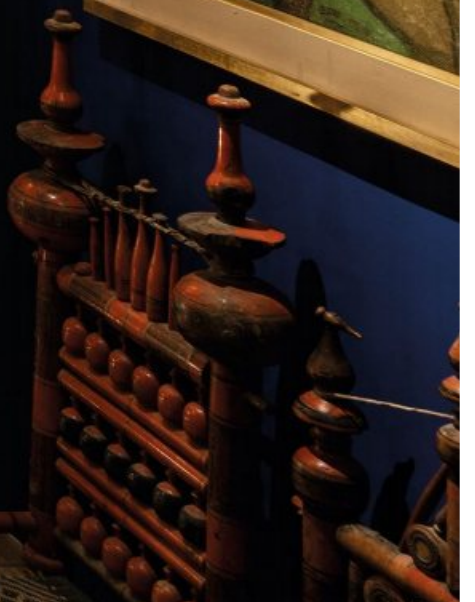
in 2019. This year, the dealer is combining his objects with Chinese ink drawings by visual artist Marie Diane. Marie Diane is a talented artist who has captured the hearts of collectors and the public alike. Her work has been exhibited in prestigious venues such as the GX Gallery in London, the Galerie Lee in Paris and the Galerie Mingei [see box p.27]. “I discovered her on the Internet and immediately found her work beautiful, fine and impressive. I offered her a first exhibition of her drawings to coincide with my participation in Paris Tribal two years ago, and realised that she was selling more drawings than I was pieces! Marie Diane works with surgical precision on the first line and on photographs — the perception of Yaoure objects changing with the light during the day.” In addition to her work on paper, Marie Diane is also a painter, and has exhibited in a number of European galleries, including a 4-5 month show in Barcelona. “Many collectors, seduced by her work, regularly ask her to paint a portrait of the masterpiece in their collection... or of a work that has eluded them!” The artist’s links with distant arts are well established:

Contemporary African art at Galerie Vallois

At Rue de Seine 35 and 41, the Vallois gallery’s two spaces are showcasing Beninese art through the work of four artists. The “Modern and Contemporary Art” section, at 35, features works by Achille Adonon, a visual artist and winner of the Sculpture prize at the last Dakar Biennale, as well as the colourful paintings of self-taught artist Youss Atacora. In the Art Deco space at 41, the spotlight is on the ceramics of King Houndekpinkou, who combines traditional heritages with urban inspiration. Superimposed on these pieces is the work of Frank Zanfanhouédé, a visual artist and tattooist who places the body and its representations at the heart of his work. The exhibition thus opens up a dialogue between the classical arts of the Parcours des mondes and more contemporary forms, weaving intercultural and intergenerational links. Opened on 5 September at the start of the show, the exhibition runs until 30 September.



Courtesy Spectandium. Parcours des mondes



in addition to her collaborations with the Mingei and Éric Hertault galleries, Marie Diane has also worked with the Musée Guimet, for whom she produced the invitation card for the “Toshimasa Kikuchi” exhibition. “She has real talent,” concludes Éric Hertault with admiration.

“Marie-Diane and Yaouré people”

Until 10 September
Galerie Éric Hertault
3 rue Visconti. Paris 6th
www.eric-hertault.com

“AURA” Tischenko Gallery. Dialogue

A lover of non-European art, Coco Fonsac, who trained in the applied arts in Paris, is a multi-faceted visual artist. She uses portraits and photographic images, often anonymous, as the medium for her

work, creating a unique pictorial universe. In “Aura”, the artist explores the obliteration of the image, proceeding by erasure to create a second, dreamlike and sometimes disturbing reality. “With this series of works, in which all figurative elements are absent, she gives the impression of venturing into a new field”, explains Andrey Tischenko of the eponymous gallery. “The circular shapes of her works, criss-crossed by long drips of bituminous tar, invite reflection. What universe do these drips seem to veil?” This exhibition is an invitation to discover the work of Coco Fonsac, an artist who plays with our vision of time and our relationship with others, while engaging in a dialogue with objects from the Nordic regions presented by the Galerie Tischenko, a Helsinki-based specialist in art from the Far North. An artistic experience not to be missed.

“Coco Fonsac. AURA”

Until 10 September
15 rue des Beaux-Arts. Paris 6th
www.tischenko-gallery.com

“Adventure & Erudition” Galerie Meyer. Collecting stories

“With this exhibition, I wanted to talk about provenance. Not necessarily those of the great collections, but the way in which objects left their area of creation to end up in the West. Many objects left under legal conditions... others in a much more ‘rocky’ way,” explains Anthony Meyer of his “Adventure & Erudition” exhibition, which he is presenting at this year’s Parcours des mondes. “It’s a very big piece of research and writing... but I love it.” The presentation focuses on objects from Oceania and the Arctic — the gallery owner’s speciality — most of which date from the 19th century. He readily admits that this is a first approach, and that for many “smugglers”, information is still very patchy... “Finding is good, but the most exciting part is the research. I can devote days and nights to it! When you’re looking for something, you discover something completely different that leads you into a new field of study. Working on a bone dagger, for example, has taught me a lot about human anatomy. The dealer also cites the example of a European-style knife with Fiji markings on the blade that he acquired many years ago. Intrigued, he undertook research that led him to conclude that a European had settled there, opened his workshops and made a name for himself before becoming a political figure capable of turning around the country’s economy...” There will also be two book signings: one for the second volume of *Fish Hooks of the Pacific Island* by Daniel Blau and Klaus Maaz, a work in which Anthony Meyer is very involved — since he was responsible for the discovery of most of the hooks on display — and another with Virginia Lee Webb for her book on Kathleen Haddon and her view of society — particularly women’s society — in New Guinea at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Showcase

Parcours des mondes is breaking new ground with the launch of its new “Showcase” sector. The aim of this initiative is to provide a platform for emerging gallery owners, enabling them to benefit from the international visibility that the Parcours brings. Six selected galleries will have the opportunity to present their finest works to the public. Showcase is divided into two spaces, both located on rue Guénégaud. Number 35 will host the Granier, Bruce Floch and Guy Kuypers galleries. Number 27 will host the Shåk, Pascal Vernimmen and Michel Van Den Dries galleries. Pierre-Yves Debie, director of Parcours des mondes, underlines the importance of this initiative: “The idea is to give younger dealers a foothold. The financial effort required of them is less, because they are exhibiting in the same venue on a collegiate basis. It’s also about being able to offer the public beautiful objects at attractive prices from these ‘young’ dealers”. Among the exhibitors, Laurent Granier stands out with a selection of eighteen works from Africa and Oceania, featuring “archetypal” objects dating from before 1930, such as this Baoulé portrait mask and a Kota reliquary that once belonged to renowned collectors. Granier is also collaborating with Remix Gallery, which specialises in designer furniture from the 1980s. Bruce Floch, for his part, is banking on “love at first sight”: “I love them all and try to get them to talk to each other. Congo, Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon should get along just fine...”



M'Bembé statue (Nigéria)

Courtesy Pablo Touchaleaume. Parcours des mondes



Chu doll, Hubei Province (China, c.500-200 BC)

Courtesy Martin Doustar. Parcours des mondes

Visitors come to the Parcours des mondes to see many — very different — objects. It is up to us, the exhibitors, to find the right balance between thematic exhibitions and showcasing the widest variety of objects.

— *Éric Hertault*

“Adventure & Erudition”

Until 28 October

Galerie Meyer Oceanic and Eskimo Art

17 rue des Beaux-Arts. Paris 6th

www.meyeroceanic.art

“M’Bembé Ancestors” Pablo Touchaleaume. **Hélène...**

Pablo Touchaleaume, with his passion for primitive art, archaeology and Asian art, has earned a reputation for himself. Having worked with such iconic figures as Anthony Meyer [see p.30] and Bernard Dulon, as well as collaborating with the primitive arts department at Sotheby’s, his knowledge and expertise are undeniable. This year, his exhibition “M’Bembé Ancestors” refers to a famous exhibition by Hélène Kamer dating from 1974. Although necessarily more modest in size, it features no fewer than five M’Bembé pieces, objects of exceptional rarity rarely seen on the market. As Pablo Touchaleaume points out, “Hélène Kamer described these objects as a kind of log used to torture or decapitate people. These pieces, though different in nature, are all linked by their origin and cultural significance.” The exhibition also explores the influence of the M’Bembé — originally from Nigeria, and more specifically from the Bayway River — on other ethnic groups such as the Idoma and Korubo, as well as on several cultures

in Cameroon. A particularly remarkable piece from Cameroon is presented here, even though Touchaleaume does not directly consider it to be M’Bembé. “This really isn’t a commercial exhibition. My main goal is to design exhibitions that interest me, that allow me to keep discovering objects,” explains the gallery owner. “All the pieces in this presentation come from the very fine Max Itzikovitz collection, with three of the objects published in major works.” In addition to the main presentation, the dealer has brought together other objects, mainly centred around other Nigerian cultures, in particular the Ijaw. A digital catalogue will be distributed by *Tribal Art* in one of their forthcoming newsletters.

“M’Bembé Ancestors”

Until 10 September

3 rue Jacques Callot. Paris 6th

www.pabloutouchaleaume.com

“Nyama, the art of West African savannahs”

Olivier Castellano. **Stylistic unity**

For this year’s Parcours, Olivier Castellano is unveiling an exceptional exhibition centred on the theme of “Nyama”. The exhibition features a group of works, mainly from Mali and Burkina Faso, patiently assembled by the gallery owner over more than two decades. The term “Nyama” evokes a notion that is central to several West African ethnic groups. It refers to the energy released at the moment of

death, whether human or animal. This force can be dangerous, but it can also become positive if harnessed through specific objects. Sacrifices were made to control this energy. The exhibition reveals the historical links and stylistic similarities between the arts of the different peoples of this vast region.

“This common aesthetic stems in part from the history and migrations that have marked these territories. Blacksmiths, as holders of invaluable knowledge, play a crucial role in this history. It is they who, through their know-how, sculpt and shape the objects, and in effect control the energies,” explains Olivier Castellano. Many of the objects on display have never before been presented on the market, although they have been published in various works. They come from various ethnic groups, including the Dogon, the Bambara and the Sénoufo of the north. Among them is this magnificent Bambara mask, which belonged to the Schoeller and then Rasmussen collections. The 150-page exhibition catalogue features no fewer than fifty pieces, not all of which are on display in the gallery. The texts are by Jean-Paul Colleyn, Ferdinando Fagnola and Ibrahima Poudougiou. “This research also provides an opportunity to question certain attributions,” says Olivier Castellano, “such as these Bambara objects, which may in fact be of Senufo origin.”

“Nyama, the art of West African savannahs”

Until 10 September

Galerie Olivier Castellano

34 rue Mazarine. Paris 6th

www.oliviercastellano.fr

Pair of Mangbetu knives (Democratic Republic of the Congo, early 20th century)
Photo Alain Speltdoorn. © Jacques Billen

FROCCUS





UNÛ: SPLENDOURS OF AFRICAN WEAPONS

They symbolise the virtuosity and creativity of African blacksmiths. On show at the *Parcours des mondes*, the sumptuous weapons in the Jacques Billen collection tell the whole story of African art and history. Discover them.

They met through a discreet shared passion. Jacques Billen, a respected figure in Egyptian archaeology, whose Harmakhis gallery is located in the famous Sablon district of Brussels. And Bruno Claessens, former European Head of African and Oceanic Art at Christie's and founder of Duende Art Projects, an atypical online and off-site gallery combining ancient and contemporary African art. For over twenty years, the former has been collecting the continent's finest weapons with exacting discretion. As for the latter, he has always marvelled at the creativity of African craftsmen, particularly blacksmiths, to whom he has devoted numerous exhibitions. "Few people know that Jacques is a great collector of African weapons. It's a bit like his secret garden," says Bruno Claessens. "A mutual friend put us in touch, knowing that we both had the same passion for African weapons. When I discovered Jacques' collection, I was struck by the incredible quality of the objects he had assembled. In my job, I meet a lot of collectors, but in this case, we're dealing with the eye of a highly experienced antique dealer with a taste, approach and knowledge that mean he's only selected exceptional pieces."

Jacques Billen took his time building up his collection, which now includes almost 200 weapons. In the Sablon District, stronghold of the tribal art market in Brussels, African art dealers spread the word. "In this small milieu, everyone knew that he was looking for the most beautiful weapons," confides Bruno Claessens. "Jacques didn't want to build up an encyclopaedic collection, but to bring together the finest specimens, choosing them according to their refinement, balance, ergonomics and the skill of their creator. And finding masterpieces takes patience and money."

Their discussions soon gave rise to the idea of publishing a book bringing together the weapons in the Billen collection. And so, in 2021, *UNÛ. Prestigious African Weapons*, a beautiful art book presenting 106 prestigious weapons carefully selected by the two experts. An anthology of the continent's finest weapons presented as works of art. "Our first step was to identify what was missing, because there is an abundance of scientific literature on the subject," continues Bruno Claessens. "But most of the time, these are didactic, encyclopaedic works aimed at a target audience of specialists. Our aim was to present these weapons as works of art or pieces of design. That's why we chose to focus on the photographs, with few explanations, as captions are often distracting. It's about appreciating the object, not necessarily its origin." Enhanced by QR codes linking to online 3D videos, the book allows you to discover some of these weapons from every angle. A way of detaching them from their ethnographic context and celebrating them as timeless works of art.

Passion and erudition

The book is not, however, devoid of research testifying to the erudition of the two experts. There is a chapter devoted to Songo, a Zande chief who lived in the north of the DRC at the beginning of the 20th century and who left precious evidence about the weapons used in his time, and a linguistic study of the engraved inscriptions on the weapons used during the Mahdist epic in Sudan, which is the subject of an addendum by the specialist Dominique Métral. These blades, calligraphically

inscribed with what are known as “pseudo-Arabic” inscriptions, are still a little studied and refer to historical events linked to the Mahdi, a man of Nubian origin announced in 1881 as the defender of Islam who had repulsed the Ottoman forces. “Very elaborate classifications have already been made of weapons, and here again we have looked for what was missing to shed new light on subjects that have never been covered before. We’re making our own modest contribution to these studies,” explains Bruno Claessens.

Drowned in the mass

There is no denying it: African weapons abound, both in museums and on the market. They are particularly well documented, both in academic research and in public collections. But the masterpieces are often buried in the typological inventories compiled by institutions since the 19th century. “Museums are full of weapons that are often very simple and utilitarian, like spears. You need to see thousands of them to spot the exceptional pieces and identify the genius of the craftsman who created them. That’s how Jacques built up his collection, often turning down objects that were offered to him because the quality wasn’t there.”

Following the example of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, now called the Africa Museum following its recent reopening after extensive renovations, many European institutions preserve myriads of weapons collected across the continent during the colonial period by missionaries, merchants and civil servants. Many objects were also collected during military campaigns, such as those organised in the Congo. “The aim of these campaigns was to subjugate the population, draw borders and establish the authority of the colonising power,” explains the Africa Museum in its presentation of its collections. “The objects collected were often weapons and other trophies obtained as spoils of war during violent confrontations.”

Moving away from ethnographic accounts, some museums have gradually highlighted the virtuosity

The Jacques Billen collection in the spotlight

For the first time, Jacques Billen is unveiling his private collection of African weapons to the public in an exhibition (not for sale) specially produced by Parcours des mondes. Knives, swords, axes ... the superb weapons from the Billen collection on show at Parcours des mondes are an in vivo echo of his book *UNÛ. Prestigious African Weapons*, published in December 2021.

Jacques Billen called on Bruno Claessens, former European Head of African and Oceanic Art at Christie’s and founder of Duende Art Projects, to select the 80 pieces, most of which were previously unseen. Together with René Bouchara, they have designed the scenography for the exhibition, which will be held at the Galerie Bernard Jordan on rue Guénégaud. “Enthusiasts discovered the weapons in the book, but we wanted to present them ‘in real life’ so that they could appreciate them in all their dimensions”, says Bruno Claessens. “Because a love of art means having the experience of seeing the works up close to understand what differentiates an exceptional object from a more common one. That’s what this exhibition is all about.”

“UNÛ. Prestigious African Weapons” will also present a small selection of the very high quality pieces featured in a forthcoming volume currently in preparation and previewed at this 2023 edition of the Parcours des mondes. This will be an opportunity for the public to discover the finesse of some of the carved details and the use of these weapons.

“UNÛ. Prestigious African Weapons”

Until 10 September
12 rue Guénégaud. Paris 6th
www.duendeartprojects.com



Fang throwing knife (Gabon, late 19th century)
Photo Alain Speltdoorn. © Jacques Billen

Weapons are an expression of the creativity of African artists. But a knife is still a knife. Take the medieval period in Europe: weapons are all the same. In Africa, in the Congo alone, there are over a hundred peoples who have each developed their own style of weaponry. No two are alike. The variations of these tools are infinite, in their shapes, materials and decoration. It's all very inspiring.

— Bruno Claessens

of African blacksmiths in exhibitions celebrating the diversity and complexity of the weapons produced on the continent over the last 2,500 years for warlike, symbolic or ritual purposes, testifying to the prestige and prosperity of the powers that be. In 1992, Crédit Communal de Belgique staged an exhibition of traditional weapons from Central Africa entitled "Beauté fatale", with a richly illustrated catalogue describing 506 Central African weapons written by eminent specialists such as Jan Elsen, William Dewey and Marc Felix. A few years later, Jan Elsen took up the pen again in *De fer et de fierté*, an art book devoted to the collection of African-edged weapons in the Barbier-Mueller Museum in Geneva, which was the subject of an exhibition at the Musée du Président Jacques Chirac in Sarran in 2003. Most recently, the travelling exhibition "Striking Iron: The Art of African Blacksmiths" organised by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and presented in 2019 by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art in Washington and the musée du Quai Branly under the title "Striking Iron: The Art of African Blacksmiths" revealed the inventiveness and technical sophistication of African blacksmiths, particularly in the field of prestige weapons. "Nowhere else in the world are forged iron forms as varied and accomplished as in Africa," the Fowler Museum said.

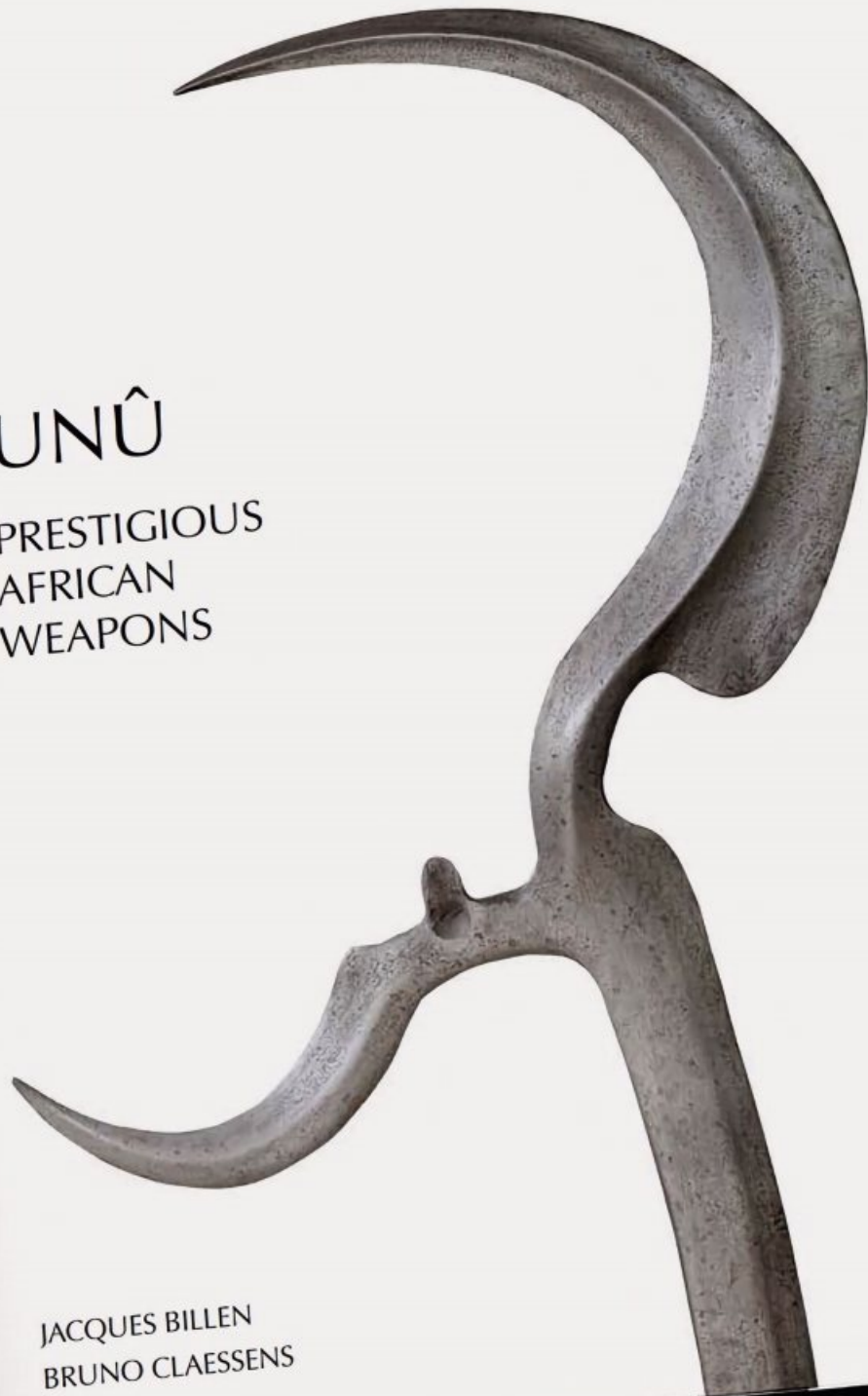
Prestige. This is the common thread running through the Billen collection, which will be on show at the Parcours des mondes [see box p.44]. "Unû does not mean weapon," explains Bruno Claessens. "It's a Teke term from Congo Brazzaville that means 'object of prestige' and can be applied to jewellery, weapons or ornaments. In short, luxury objects, markers of social differentiation and intended for the elite. It's a universal concept. We chose this term because the weapons presented in the book were already considered exceptional when they were created. What we are showing is the best of the best."

Pierre Moos Prize

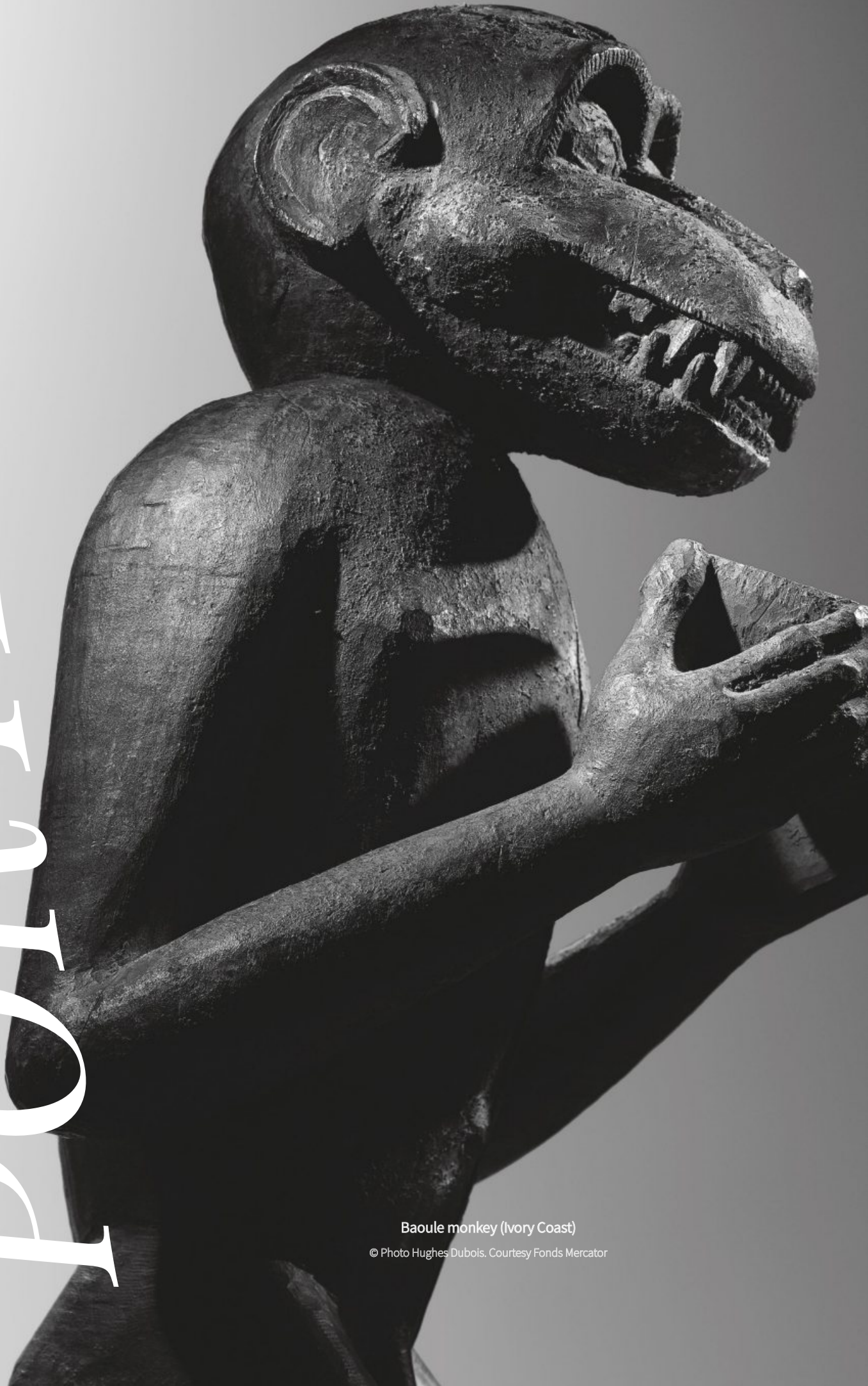
The International Tribal Art Book Prize will be making a comeback in 2023, and will now be known as the "Pierre Moos Prize for Art Books from Africa, Oceania, Asia and the Americas" in tribute to its founder, who passed away last November. Launched in 2009 by *Tribal Art Magazine* at the instigation of Pierre Moos, a major collector of primitive art who took over as director of Parcours des mondes in 2008, the prize, which was suspended for a time during the health crisis, has been revamped in partnership with Christie's. Ten books on tribal art published between 2021 and 2023 in French or English are in the running this year. Shortlisted by the organisers, they will then be judged by an international jury of experts and art historians during the Parcours des mondes. The winner will be announced at Christie's Paris on Thursday 7 September at 8pm. Visitors to the show will also have the opportunity to award a special mention to the best catalogue published by a gallery. It's a fitting tribute to the wealth of specialist publishing in the field of primitive art. And to the memory of Pierre Moos, whose death last year shook the world of tribal art.

UNÛ
PRESTIGIOUS
AFRICAN
WEAPONS

JACQUES BILLEN
BRUNO CLAESSENS



PORETRAIT



Baoule monkey (Ivory Coast)

© Photo Hughes Dubois. Courtesy Fonds Mercator

MICHEL VANDENKERCKHOVE: SHARED COLLECTION

In 2005, Michel Vandekerckhove met Brussels art dealer Didier Claes. It was from this meeting that a collaboration was born that blossomed over two decades and led to the genesis of a collection of African art, presented to the public for the first time at this edition of *Parcours des mondes*.

A discreet collector, Michel Vandekerckhove grew up in a milieu of art lovers. Like him, his parents were already collecting a multitude of objects that made him aware of contemporary and classical art from near and far. “I grew up in modern architecture, surrounded by contemporary furniture, Tibetan bronzes, precious stones, agates, modern paintings, porcelain and a few pieces of Oceanic art,” he recounts in the forthcoming book, *Shared Collection*, dedicated to his collection [see box p.50].

This environment led him to build up his collecting practice and to colour his own home with eclectic pieces, vintage and craft objects, modern and contemporary paintings and sculptures ... and tribal art. It’s a collection that he has built up with the help of his wife Anne. The collection has been built up gradually over almost thirty years, through their shared vision, and is marked by a series of key moments, acquisitions and decisive encounters.

A revelation

“If I look back over my career as a collector of tribal art, I can distinguish three periods. The first, the beginnings, was marked by the acquisition of two objects: 28 years ago, a Sakalava statue [from the Sakalava ethnic group in Madagascar], then, five years later, an Ogoni mask [from Nigeria],” explains Michel Vandekerckhove. Vandekerckhove’s real discovery of African art came in 2001, thanks to contemporary art dealer Xavier Hufkens, who guided the collector through the “Mains de maîtres” exhibition at the Espace BBL in Brussels, dedicated to African sculpture and its creators. “I immediately loved the diversity, strength, refinement and beauty of this art,” says

Michel Vandekerckhove. The second period then began with a frantic search for new pieces, punctuated by occasional errors of judgement in the face of a complex market and “without having either the knowledge of prices or the necessary expertise to judge the authenticity of the pieces”, analyses the collector.

The turning point came in 2005, when Michel and Anne Vandekerckhove met Didier Claes, a Belgian art dealer and expert in African art. Having come to the dealer to enquire about a Songye statue from the Congo — which had already been sold — the couple ended up leaving with a Yaure mask from Ivory Coast. This exchange marked the start of a collaboration that would last for more than twenty years.

Shared collection

From then on, the collection grew at a rate of around fifteen acquisitions a year, the collector’s choices supported by the expertise of Didier Claes, intermediary and mentor. “Didier helped me to perfect my taste and my knowledge, introduced me to new horizons and,

Michel Vandenkerckhove is very eclectic. He has a very large collection, but he lives with his art. — Bruno Claessens

above all, gave me the opportunity to acquire many important pieces, as well as some less important ones, which I still enjoy today,” comments Michel Vandenkerckhove.

The year 2011 was marked by a decisive purchase, that of a collection and a life: that of a Nkisi Nkondi studded statuette, an anthropomorphic wooden fetish with a strong spiritual evocation for the Kongo people from whom it originates, and highly prized by Western collectors. “The large, communal nail fetish is the object that all collectors and public institutions dream of acquiring,” explains Didier Claes in his book *Shared Passion*. Together with the collector, they acquired it: “I think that today, this nail fetish is the object that best symbolises our relationship,” he adds.

It was with this fundamental purchase that Michel Vandenkerckhove affirmed his legitimacy as a collector and his desire to build up a genuine collection of African art; a “collection not of trophies, but of passion”, as Didier Claes defines it. A collection guided by the eye of its owner, sensitive to the aesthetics of the forms and their proportions, as much as to the symbolism of the objects brought together, whose value also relates to the frequency of their ritual use. It is also a collection shared with his wife, Anne Vandenkerckhove, whose support and involvement accompany every discovery ... and every acquisition.

Unveiling the collection to the public

Although Michel Vandenkerckhove prefers to keep a low profile, he has now agreed to reveal his collection on the occasion of *Parcours des mondes*

and the publication of *Shared Passion*, due out at the end of September. It’s a way of celebrating the collaboration between the collector and the art dealer, but also of bringing the pieces to the general public. Bruno Claessens, art historian and co-author of the book, explains: “This is an art book, aimed at a public that is not necessarily familiar with classical African art, but also at new collectors. It’s about revealing the aesthetics of the objects to pay tribute to the works and artists who created them.”

In its thirteen chapters, the book presents a varied collection of objects of all sizes, both large and small, grouped under specific themes: origins, ancestors, spirits, Kota, fetishes, Minkisi Kongo, secret societies, Lega, masks, prestige objects, ornaments, Gikhoko and forms. There are statuettes, masks and all sorts of small objects, from spoons, pins, combs, necklaces, whistles and amulets to a stone monolith from the Bakor of Nigeria, over two metres high!

Carefully selected, each piece reveals something of the richness and creativity of artists from the sub-Saharan region of the continent. “Every country is represented,” says Bruno Claessens, “but the emphasis is obviously on Gabon, Ivory Coast and Congo, because these countries contain many important objects.” The latter, too, because it’s a Belgian collection and Didier Claes is a specialist in it. He adds: “It’s not an encyclopaedic collection; the choices are very personal. But what’s also very special is that it contains large groups of objects, like the Kota reliquary statues from Gabon, or the ivory pendants of the Pende from Congo, which is very rare for a private collection.”

An invitation to discover the cultural and artistic practices of the African continent, the forthcoming book also looks at a collection that began 22 years ago and is still growing. The passion that drives the collector couple and Didier Claes remains unchanged. As the art dealer himself says: “When you’re passionate about something, it’s for life.”

Collection, passion

*Shared passion. A 21st-century collection, to be released at the end of September, presents 227 objects, the fruit of the collaboration between collector Michel Vandenkerckhove and dealer and expert Didier Claes. The ambition behind this art book project is to show that it is “still possible, in the 21st century, to build up a significant collection of classical African art,” explains historian Bruno Claessens, co-author of the publication. “People often think that all the great pieces already belong in private collections. But there are still many masterpieces on the market. The most recent purchase was made a month before the book went to press.” Covering the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, the book reveals the symbolism and particularities of the objects in this collection to both novice and experienced readers, under the eye of photographer Hughes Dubois. For this year’s *Parcours des mondes*, Galerie Philippe Jousse is offering visitors the chance to discover these pieces, which include masks, sculptures and prestigious objects.*







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MARTEL

Songye statue (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
Sold €390,600 by Christie's Paris on 20 October 2022

TRIBAL ART MARKET 2022: A YEAR OF STABILISATION

With €60m to be raised at auction in 2022, the tribal art market is back to pre-crisis levels. Christie's is confirming its dominance, while France is asserting its position as a major centre for primitive art.

It's almost a relief. According to the latest report published by Artkhade, a database specialising in the analysis of public sales of primitive art [see box p.57], 2022 marks a return to "normal" for the tribal art market, with overall auction sales of €60m. This is more or less the same level as before the health crisis (€76.3m in 2018 and €58.5m in 2019). The figures are stabilising and the frenzy in the auction rooms is calming down, with the number of lots down by a quarter (6,690 lots were offered at public auctions this year) for an average price of €13,755 (-19%). It has to be said that 2021 proved to be an exceptional year in more ways than one, with sales of €107.6m despite the latest waves of health restrictions, a result propelled by Christie's Périnet sale, which, with its €66m, accounted for 61.4% of total sales.

Already observed in recent years, the polarisation of the market is becoming more pronounced, with an increase in the number of exceptional objects sold at auctions dedicated to exceptional collections, to the detriment of the mid-range market. The market favours "fresh" works with impeccable provenance and high artistic value, while the mid-range market, which is sensitive to unsold items, is losing ground. However, in 2022, the overall rate of unsold works stabilised at around 34%, meaning that a relatively large number of works are finding buyers at auction, at prices that are reasonable if not spectacular.

Paris is increasingly asserting itself as the capital of the tribal art market, and France's dynamism in the field of primitive arts is being confirmed with sales of €37.6m, followed by the United States (€18.9m), which is regaining its colours after a gloomy 2021, Belgium (€1.7m) and the United Kingdom (€737,330).

While Christie's is well ahead of the pack, with sales of €26.4m for its tribal sales, Sotheby's has recorded a decline in its results to just €8m, losing 18.5% of its sales compared with 2021 despite its four annual auctions devoted to primitive art (two in New York in May and November, and two in Paris in June and December). The surprise, however, came from Bonhams: with sales of €6.8m, the company's tribal art department achieved three-and-a-half times its 2021 result. It was a banner year for the venerable auction house, founded in London in 1793, which is rolling out its expansion strategy in the United States and Europe.

The best sale of the year took place in France at the Montpellier-Larzac auction house in the Hérault region, where a Fang mask from the Ngil secret society in Gabon fetched €5.25m on 26 March. The announcement of its (re-)discovery caused quite a stir. Only a handful of other specimens are known to exist in Western museums and collections, the traditional customary justice rites of the Ngil society having been abandoned in the 1920s. As a result, only a handful



Fang Ngil mask (Gabon, 19th century)
Sold €5,250,000 by Hôtel des ventes Montpellier-Languedoc on 26 March 2022

Courtesy Hôtel des ventes Montpellier-Languedoc

Oceania is selling a little more easily today. It remains a niche market, but its community of collectors is solid and information circulates well between them. It's a solid market, although it's difficult to touch the important objects that are still in private hands. — *Victor Teodorescu*

of specimens have turned up at auction. One of the most recent, from the Vérité collection, sold at Drouot in June 2006 for €5.7m. This mask is an indisputable masterpiece, the closest copy of which is in the Denver Art Museum in the United States.

With the exception of the Fang mask and the exceptional circumstances surrounding this sale, Christie's has captured the entire top 10 for tribal art in 2022, all specialities combined. Three of the 9 lots in the 29 June sales were included: a Yipwon statue from the Middle Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, which fetched over €5m against a high estimate of €2m; a Moai Papa statue from Easter Island, which fetched €2.8m; and a Nkisi N'Kondi Kongo from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which fetched €1.96m.

With sales of €29.6m at public auctions, twice as much as Oceania (€14.5m), Africa is undoubtedly the leading category, with an average price of €15,265 per lot. "By definition, there are more lots in circulation for African art, so it is the most difficult sector to work with in terms of selection," admits Victor Teodorescu of Christie's Paris. "Today, there are no real rules about tastes and trends; there are undeniably fashion effects. A few years ago, Fang art fetched good prices, as did Nigerian art. Baoulé, which often sell very well, have sometimes had a harder time selling more recently. The classics are still Gabon and Congo. As long as the quality is there

and the estimate is not aggressive, good prices can be achieved."

However, the best prices were achieved by Oceanic art, with an average price of €24,590 per lot, despite a largely lower overall result – the Oceanic records of the Périnet sale had pulled it up in 2021. With an unsold rate of 31.6% (compared with 38.2% for African objects), Oceanic works continue to exert their power of fascination in auction rooms, although certain iconic objects such as puzzles are a little behind the high results achieved a few years ago. It is worth noting the consistency of this speciality, which is no longer the micro-market it was just a few years ago.

For the first time, North American art came third, with sales of €8.4m and an average price per lot of €8,560, ahead of Asia (€3.7m, average price €10,900) and South America (€3.4m, average price per lot €8,785). Long prized by major collectors, re-Columbian art from Latin America is struggling to find its audience. This historic market, which straddles the border between primitive art and archaeology, has long been established in France, but young collectors are missing out. The unsold high rate for South American objects (42.2%) can also be explained by the pressure exerted by certain Central and Latin American governments on sales of pre-Columbian objects. This may make some collectors a little cautious.

Arthade reports

Each year, Arthade, the international database dedicated to the tribal art market, publishes an analysis report (online and free of charge) reviewing the key figures and major trends of the past year. The report examines the results of public sales of ancient art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, and provides a host of graphs and tables to illustrate how the market has evolved. "When we published our first report on tribal art in 2015, our aim was to identify how, in the space of fifteen years, this niche market had structured itself in the face of the growth in public auctions and an unprecedented surge in prices," explains Aurélien Cuenot, the founder of Arthade. Since then, there have been many structural changes, because although the tribal art market is still a niche market, it has undergone the same changes and revolutions as other auction house specialities: the emergence of a new generation of collectors, changes in their tastes and buying habits — the famous cross-collecting, the digital wave, the prestige of collector's auctions, etc. "We felt it was important to study this market in depth. We felt it was important to study the impact of these trends at a time when the proliferation of digital platforms is making information increasingly transparent and accessible, but when the challenges of this still little-understood market need to be deciphered from a distance."

FULL COCOA FUDGE



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OR DEGROWTH

Faced with an ecological emergency, the world of conservation restoration of cultural property is at a crossroads. Between the UNESCO conventions and the new approaches to sustainable development, how can heritage professionals combine the preservation of works of art with environmental protection?

In 1972, UNESCO signed a convention for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage. The most original feature of the 1972 Convention is that it brings together in a single document the concepts of protecting nature and preserving cultural property. The Convention recognises the interaction between human beings and nature and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. In 2014, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Institute for Conservation (IIC) agreed on common environmental guidelines: the conservation of collections should be carried out without heating, ventilation or air conditioning (HVAC), with passive solutions that are easy to maintain and low in energy consumption.

More recently, the term sustainable development has been opposed by terms such as degrowth, frugal abundance, prosperity without growth, convivialism, post-growth, etc., which propose a project for an alternative society involving the transition from a growth society to a post-growth society and a fundamental change in values summarised by the virtuous circle of the 8 Rs (re-evaluate, re-conceptualise, restructure, relocate, redistribute, reduce, reuse, recycle). It is from this virtuous circle of the 8 R's that the 3 R's rule (reduce, reuse, recycle) is extracted, sometimes used in conservation-restoration. This strategy has a more detailed variant, the 5 Rs rule, which forms one of the foundations of the zero waste approach.

It is in this somewhat contradictory context that the growing awareness of ecological issues is beginning to shake up professionals in all sectors

of cultural heritage. They are calling behaviour into question and conditioning new public policies. What is the situation in the specific field of conservation and restoration of cultural property? How can heritage preservation be combined with environmental protection? How can practices be adapted to better meet the pressing need for sustainable development? The majority of French conservator-restorers (75%) are self-employed, working in preventive, curative and restoration conservation. Like everyone else, they consume energy and resources, and generate a certain amount of pollution and waste. But what is the environmental impact of conservation and restoration work, and what can be done to become eco-responsible? What is the world of conservation of cultural property in general and restorers in particular doing? It is still impossible to answer the first question.

The workshop of the conservator-restorer

The integration of eco-responsibility is an essential stage in the life of a conservation-restoration workshop whether institutional or private.

It must be taken into account right from the architectural design stage of the building, so that work processes, the choice of equipment and the provision of collective protection can be adapted as effectively as possible. Retrofitting workspaces is never easy.

Reducing energy consumption can be achieved through major building renovation, but other levers for action can also be mobilised. These include adapting premises and raising occupants' awareness of energy savings, working on the building envelope, installing efficient heating and ventilation equipment and optimising equipment operation. Purchasing energy-efficient laboratory equipment to reduce electricity consumption is also a good strategy. The issue of programmed obsolescence must also be taken into account, and since January 2021 there has been a reparability index, which applies to certain equipment, the aim being to buy durable and repairable.

As far as lighting is concerned, however, improvements have already been made, as follows incandescent lamps have been banned since 2012, followed by fluorescent lamps in 2017 and halogen lamps in 2018. All that remains are compact or low-energy fluorescent bulbs and light-emitting diodes, which are highly energy-efficient. Also of great interest is the research carried out by the American aeronautics industry into air purification, which has identified the decontamination properties of certain plants that absorb formaldehyde, toluene, ammonia and benzene vapours.

Commitment and training

According to the results of a survey on professional commitment to the environment conducted in 2019 of 64 conservators and restorers, more than one in two respondents already consider themselves to be committed to adopting environmentally friendly

practices, and they also feel that they waste and harm the environment in their professional practice. Still more than one in two respondents said they had already looked for or implemented alternatives to the two materials considered the most polluting, namely plastics and solvents. One of the difficulties in this field is the lack of information on ecologically responsible methods or materials directly applicable to the professional practice of conservation. References are often scattered and searches using key words often lead to nature, town planning and architecture. What we have here, then, is a group of professionals who are aware of the potential impact of their activity on the environment, but who need to develop their knowledge and skills on subjects related to the ecological transition and how this relates to the practice of their profession.

As far as conservator-restorers are concerned, the principle of respect for the environment is not yet an integral part of the code of ethics. Nor is it really yet part of the training process, but in fact the same applies to other conservation professionals.

Plastics, cellulose and gloves

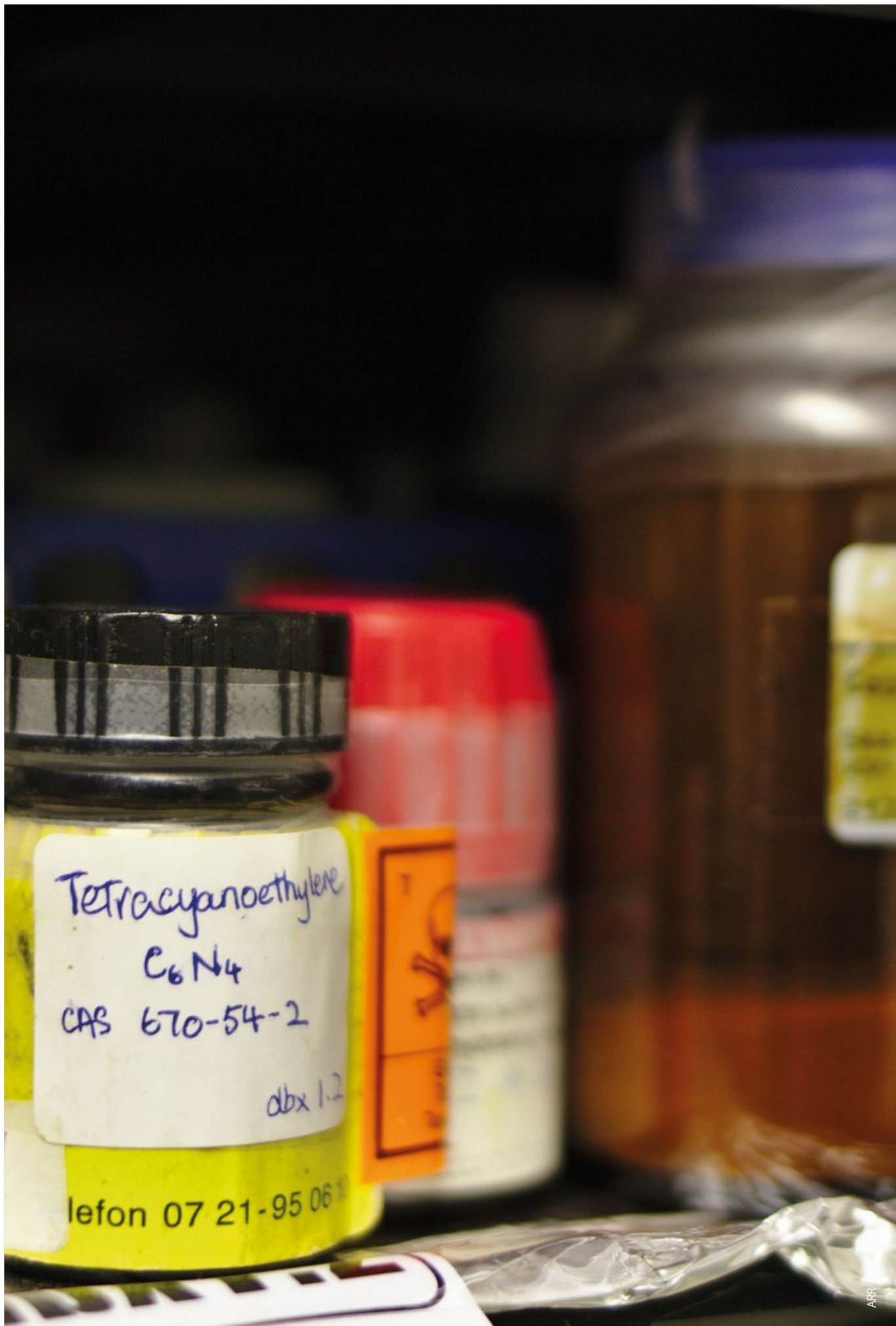
Before looking at the materials used in conservation-restoration, we need to talk briefly about life cycle analysis, which is a method whose main objective is to measure the impact of a material on the environment, in other words, to assess the environmental cost of a product. The cycle takes place from the search for raw materials to the end of the material's useful life. It covers extraction of the raw material, transport, manufacture, installation, maintenance, demolition (if applicable) and recycling. The intertwining of these processes often makes it difficult to determine the sources and destinations of the flows. This is particularly the case for multifunctional processes where a single process will generate several products, or where a product has a large number of components and

there is opposition to manufacturers withholding information.

Paper, cardboard, plastics and gloves are materials widely used in restoration activities, they are used in the temporary or long-term packaging of works of art or for personal protection, they are all recyclable, but the production of cellulose involves high costs for wood, water and energy, generating chlorinated and sulphurous pollutants. As for cotton, which is used every day, growing it requires massive water consumption and the use of toxic fertilisers and insecticides. All these materials, including gloves and plastics, can very often be recycled, but it is not possible to reuse and recycle everything indefinitely, because the material inevitably degrades. And let's not forget that the raw material for plastics is oil, derived from non-renewable sources that are slowly running out.

Solvents

Since the 1960s, conservation-restoration practices have become increasingly professional, and there has been a significant increase in the use of organic solvents, with toxicological and ecotoxic risks that are often poorly assessed and managed. Unfortunately, the precautions taken to treat works of art are not without effect on health and the environment. Many of these solvents affect the nervous, endocrine and reproductive systems, and can also affect organs such as the liver and kidneys. To date, polychrome restorers are the most exposed, despite a fairly recent rise in awareness to which new methods and products are attempting to respond. Replacing a solvent normally used in the profession with another is encountering a great deal of reluctance on the part of professionals. The two main arguments against this are, on the one hand, that we do not know the effect on the works of the replacement solvents that may be proposed and, on the other hand, that we are not used to using them.



Tetracyanoethylene

C_6N_4

CAS 670-54-2

dbx 1.2

lefon 07 21-95 06

ECOLOGY

The European REACH programme is a major step forward in this area, aiming to assess over 30,000 chemicals on the basis of their toxicity to health and the environment, in order to eliminate the most dangerous. But there is a shortage of experts to assess chemicals, and a lack of resources to pass on information. The implementation of developments through legislation, i.e. regulations on exposure limits, is even slower, and current standards often lag behind scientific knowledge. Regulatory limit values are therefore indicative: they are a tool to help assess risks, but must be supplemented by other sources.

Some green methods have nevertheless been developed in conservation restoration. One of these involves applying charged solvents in a gel, which not only increases control of the cleaning process, but also reduces the volume of solvents used and the amount evaporated. There has also been research into the use of essential oils as a preventive air treatment or as a biocide.

What's next?

It is possible to become a more eco-responsible conservation-restoration professional after a radical change in behaviour and lifestyle. This change must first take place at a personal level before it can be professional. Without persuasion in personal life, it won't work in professional life. There are many obstacles to change: human inertia, the lack of research into alternative products, the very status of conservator-restorers, who in France are independent professionals, dispersed units outside the institutions for which they work. Ecology must be included as an additional reference in the profession's Code of Ethics. Today, researching, collecting, conserving, restoring, interpreting, exhibiting and transmitting tangible and intangible cultural heritage must be an ecological, accessible and inclusive process.





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