

## Fair Trade: Behind the scenes at Masterpiece London 2013

July 29, 2013

It's hard to believe that Masterpiece London is only four years old, such is the fair's presence in the social calendar. Fair Director **Nicola Winwood** talks us through the back-stage machinations that go into making it such a major cultural event...



This year was the fourth edition of Masterpiece London, perhaps one of the most fulfilling yet, and one which we feel has secured a well-deserved place for the fair at the centre of the international art calendar and London's art season. This year, it's been about museum quality pieces in all disciplines, for their innovation or for their provenance – our goal for 2013 was for Masterpiece to

be a serious collector's fair at which real business is done, not simply a luxury event to "see and be seen", yet still offering an exceptional visitor experience. Our visitor numbers were up 20% which marks our success this year.



Nicola Winwood with the Chelsea Pensioners outside Masterpiece London 2013

As Fair Director I get to work on all aspects of the event and become familiar with many of the intriguing objects brought to the fair by our galleries and workshops which are spread across the globe – from the historic Mary Tudor pearl exhibited by Symbolic & Chase, to the contemporary bespoke piano by Based Upon, the new to market “Puzzle Portrait” by Roy Lichtenstein exhibited by Geoffrey Diner Gallery and the classic 1964 Riva Tritone boat. What I love about Masterpiece – and what I know our visitors enjoy – is the breadth of disciplines, eras and styles represented under one roof. Old Masters next to American Masters, Ancient Greek jewellery besides jewellery made exclusively for the fair, centuries old commodes next to newly handcrafted desks, restored limited edition Jaguars next to vintage photography.





Playing the Twisted String Piano at Based Upon



The Riva Tritone boat

The Preview day saw over 6,000 people through the door – press, collectors and curators from all over the world – an impressive number of people for just our fourth year. Sales were made from the word go and throughout the fair dealers saw their pieces selling well, everything from Warhols (Dickinson) and Lowrys (Crane Kalman) to Paolo Buffa chairs (Gordon Watson) and Feliciano Bejar Magiscopias (Sebastian & Barquet). In addition, the exhibitors were excited about the calibre of the visitors and many were confident in sales post the fair. All are exciting but particular sales of note include new exhibitor Leila Heller selling a Hadieh Shafie piece to the British Museum, Symbolic & Chase selling two pieces by new jewellery designer SABBA for approximately £250,000 each, and Philip Mould selling The Cholmondeley Hilliard miniature for £200,000.

We weren't short of high profile visitors to keep our photographers busy (and the celeb spotters amongst us happy), in the shape of Anna Wintour, Ronnie Wood, Sarah Jessica Parker, Uma Thurman, the Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice with their mother, Hugh Grant and Eddie Redmayne. Of course the Masterpiece Midsummer Party in support of Marie Curie Cancer Care, hosted by Heather Kerzner, brought in a whole host of celebrities and society figures, and we are really pleased to have raised over £840,000 for the charity. A record for our charity event!

One of the more unusual perks of working on the fair is the chance to wear beautiful



Portrait miniatures on display with Philip Mould Gallery



jewellery from our jewellery

exhibitors, who together represent the best of the top end jewellery market. For the Midsummer Party I was privileged to be lent a beautiful Van Cleef & Arpels turquoise and diamond suite from Symbolic & Chase for the evening – it comprised a beautiful necklace, earrings and ring. Hancocks Jewellery were tasked with adorning our press team for the night, in glittering diamonds mostly.



The Mary Tudor  
Pearl Exhibited  
by Symbolic &  
Chase

A significant amount of work, as you might imagine, goes into the creation of such a high profile and high standard fair, with planning starting over a year ago in earnest – there is so much to think about such as planning permission, licensing, exhibitor applications, fair design and layout, new marketing initiatives, editorial planning for our magazine... the list goes on. Our thoughts have already turned to 2014 (and in some cases 2015!) and how we can build on the success of this year's fair. The running of the fair involves the very best fair builders (Stabilo), caterers (Caprice Holdings), front-of-house staff and security (The Event & Exhibition Partnership), communications teams (Gong Muse and Cultural Communications), and of course my excellent colleagues at Masterpiece HQ. Let's not forget, essentially, the dedicated exhibitors creating and running such a variety of exceptional stands – and our hosts, the Royal Hospital Chelsea, which delivers some charming visitors in the form of the Chelsea Pensioners in their famous scarlet uniforms.

Quite apart from the fact that this year's Masterpiece London received the widest praise yet, from exhibitors and visitors alike, for its clearer focus, top quality execution, and electric atmosphere, I like to think that the 2013 fair has carved a niche as an extraordinary exemplar of exactly what the global art, antiques, and design market has to offer here in London. It proudly proclaims London as the enduring trading hub of the best in arts and design, a position that looks set to remain for the foreseeable future.