



Welcome

Welcome to the last issue of 2017 where we're in reflective mood: looking back on the year that was and ahead to what 2018 might have to offer. With Christie's New York's eye-popping £304m sale of Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*, the year most definitely went out with a bang. Exactly what it will mean for the art market we'll have to wait and see. Will it spark a return to favour for Old Masters? Probably not, its success being more a triumph of the marketing department than the market itself. Also, oddly,

Christie's chose to put the work – thought to have been painted in early 1500 – in its post-war and contemporary sale, rather than in less predictable Old Masters sale. These sales mash ups will definitely be something we'll see more of in 2018. Before you know it, local auction houses will be swapping their trusty 'antiques and collectables' for celebrity-curated 'luxury' sales. For more predictions on the year ahead, turn to page 48.

Antiques, as we all know, is a broad church. This month's issue covers everything from timepieces the UK's leading clock experts would like to wake up to on December 25th (page 14) to props once owned by the Hollywood special effects legend Ray Harryhausen (page 58).

Along the way we're looking at the history of the Christmas card (page 42) and preview one of the most remarkable sales of studio pottery to go under the hammer in recent years, on page 28. We're also celebrating the 200th-anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley's gothic masterpiece *Frankenstein* on January 1, 2018, on page 45, with a guide to collecting volumes of the work. And – ahead of next month's BRAFA fair in Brussels – we dig out the must-visit venues for collectors in Brussels, on page 24. Finally if you have a friend or relative who enjoys antiques as much as you do, don't miss our Christmas subscriptions offer on page 40.

Enjoy the issue and have a peaceful and merry Christmas.

Georgina

Georgina Wroe, Editor

PPS As ever, all the latest, breaking news is on our website www.antique-collecting.co.uk which is continually updated with must-read guides and profiles that we don't have room for in the magazine.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Write to us at Sandy Lane, Old Martlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4SD, or email magazine@accpublishinggroup.com. Visit the website at www.antique-collecting.co.uk and follow us on Twitter and Instagram @AntiqueMag

Cheers to

Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*, which sold for £304m at Christie's New York. (It sold for \$45 at Sotheby's in 1958.)



In this issue



TRACY BORMAN
reveals her favourite
clock, page 14



AXEL JANSSON
on his vintage watch
collection, page 53



AN JO FERON
celebrates abstract
Belgian art, page 20



MAX HASLER
on collecting *Frankenstein*
editions, page 45

The Team

Editor: Georgina Wroe, georgina.wroe@accpublishinggroup.com

Online Editor: Richard Ginger, richard.ginger@accpublishinggroup.com

Design: Philip Design, james@philpdesign.co.uk

Advertising: Jo Lord 01394 389950, jo.lord@accpublishinggroup.com

Subscriptions: Sue Slee 01394 389957, sue.slee@accpublishinggroup.com

Antique Collecting subscription
£32 for 10 issues annually, no
refund is available.
ISSN: 0003-584X



ABSTRACT Thinking

Belgium's artistic legacy takes centre stage next month, with the prestigious BRAFA art fair. Often overlooked by its neighbours, Belgian artists are today creating a stir

Belgium is a country of great cultural diversity, rich history and complex national psyche. As a result it enjoys a unique art history stretching back more than a millennia: from the finery of the Mosan goldsmiths

Above Joseph Lacasse (1894-1975), *Verite*, 1960. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Right Clive Barker (b. 1940), *Magritte's Hat*, 2008. Bronze with black patina polished bronze. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

art of the 11th century in Liège, to the unparalleled technical skill of the Flemish Primitives in the 14th to the 15th centuries, as well as the renowned Old Masters such as Rubens (1577-1640) and Van Dyck (1599-1641). During the 19th century, Belgium was at the forefront of the Symbolist movement. No other country has such a rich artistic ground over such an immense period of time.

At the beginning of the 20th century the inimitable James Ensor (1860-1949) was revered by young artists all over Europe. During the 1930s, Magritte made Belgium synonymous with Surrealism. The post-war period saw the country's artists develop their unique contribution to the Zero group, including lyrical abstraction and hard-edge abstraction (from the Belgian constructivist Guy Vandenbranden), as well as 'matter' (with the work of Bram Bogart) and pop art (seen in the work of Marcel Broodthaers).

BRAM BOGART

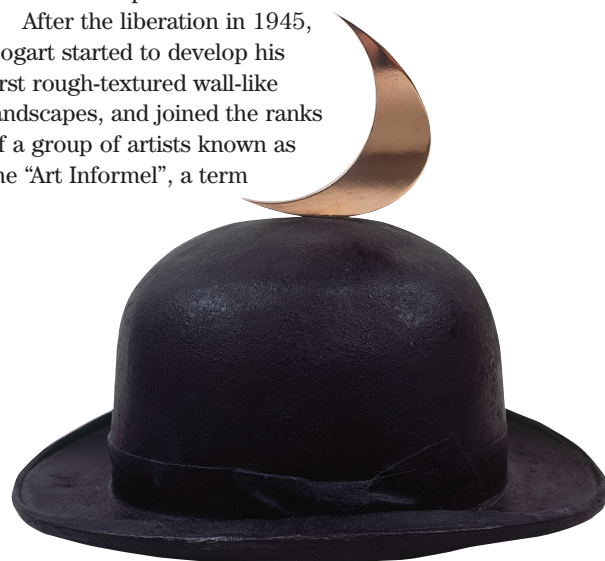
In many collectors' eyes, Bogart (1921-2012) is one of the hottest artists of the moment. Dutch born, Bogart became a Belgian citizen in 1969, and is known as the pioneer of "matter" painting. In 2012, the Cobra Museum in Amsterdam paid a long-awaited tribute to the "Master of Matter", with a large retrospective show. Today, following the acquisition by Tate Modern of four of his paintings in 2014 (and a sell-out show at the Saatchi Gallery earlier this year) the market is showing a renewed demand for Bogart's works from the '50s and '60s. Whitford Fine Art has dealt in Bogart for more than 30 years and will exhibit some important pieces at next year's BRAFA.

EARLY YEARS

Abraham van den Boogaart was born in Delft, the son of a blacksmith. His parents did not welcome their son's desire to become a painter and sent him to a technical school to become a decorator.

During 1937-1939, having taken a correspondence course in drawing, Bogart worked as a commercial artist for an advertising agency in Rotterdam. During WWII he went into hiding to avoid forced labour for the German army, and managed to paint a series of low-key Dutch landscapes.

After the liberation in 1945, Bogart started to develop his first rough-textured wall-like landscapes, and joined the ranks of a group of artists known as the "Art Informel", a term

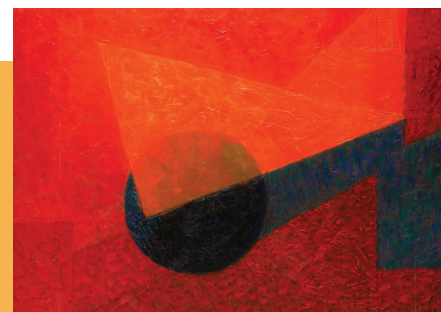
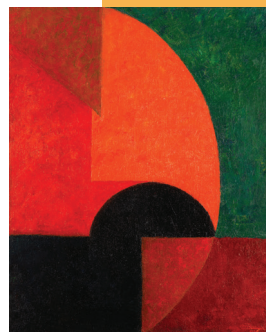




Left Bram Bogart (1921-2012) *Gelen en Blauwen*, 1962, mixed media on canvas. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Right Joseph Lacasse (1894-1975), *Balancement*, 1949. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Far right Joseph Lacasse (1894-1975), *Balancement*, 1949. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art



Joseph Lacasse

While Bogart pioneered matter painting, fellow Belgian, Joseph Lacasse (1894-1975), was one of most influential artists of the European lyrical abstraction movement. Lacasse was born in 1894 into a poor working class family in the quarry town of Tournai, Belgium. Lacasse's childhood experiences, working in the local limestone quarries (1905-1910) shaped his future as a staunch socialist and a defender of the proletarian cause.

During his early teenage years at the quarry, Lacasse took home small pieces of limestone sketching them on cheap black paper – which was the only paper he could afford. He drew the stones close up, using chalk to recreate the light glowing from within. Full of child-like honesty, Lacasse's juvenile work, dating from 1909 to 1914, showed his leanings towards abstraction.

France and the UK

In 1925, Lacasse settled in Paris, two years later he met Robert and Sonia Delaunay, whose influence on his colour palette would be profound.

In 1934 Lacasse founded his own gallery called l'Equipe, an exhibition space where painters, writers, philosophers and musicians met to discuss aesthetics, literature and science. They united under the common denominator of solidarity and belief in the proletarian cause. It was here that Lacasse encouraged the young Sergej Poliakov to drop music in favour of painting.

Lacasse spent WWII in England and taught art in Stoke-on-Trent. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lacasse often travelled to London to oversee exhibitions of his work at Halima Nalecz's Drian Galleries. Lacasse's influence is incalculable on both sides of the Channel. He practiced the French variety of abstract expressionism known as "tachisme", as well as lyrical and geometric abstraction, a style opposing Cubism and Surrealism.

referring to a loosely-knit group practicing different forms of abstraction.

During the 1950s, Bogart settled in Paris and it was his Parisian dealer who suggested the name Bram Bogart.

MOUNTING SUCCESS

In 1957, Bogart showed for the first time in the UK, as part of an Arts Council touring exhibition. He more than held his own among a group that included Jean Dubuffet, the Canadian abstract expressionist Jean-Paul Riopelle, the French tachiste Pierre Soulages, and Karel Appel, Bogart's compatriot and member of the Cobra group (the name is taken from the first letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam). In 1958, Bogart had his first solo show in London, at the Gimpel Fils gallery off Grosvenor Square.

In 1960 Bogart moved to Belgium, first to Brussels, then to Ohain, in the province of Walloon Brabant, before taking Belgian citizenship in 1969. During these years, Bogart's paintings became incredibly thickly built up with layers of pigment mixed with water, varnish, siccative and powdered chalk, to resemble building blocks. They were so large that Bogart had to devise his own metal stretchers to bear the weight of his work.

ZERO GROUP

As well as Bogart, Whitford Fine Art will be exhibiting work by Belgium artists from the hugely influential Zero group, including fellow countrymen Walter Leblanc and Paul Van Hoeydonck.

In 1957, the German artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, both graduates of the Düsseldorf Academy of Arts, founded the Zero group, which was joined by Günther Uecker three years later. It was born as a reaction to the post-war gloom and a growing desire to embrace the technological progress of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (Germany's economic boom). Artists pursued what they termed a "lightness of being", or an easygoing way of life.

The movement epitomised a desire to move on from the more emotional, subjective, expressionistic art of the early 20th century. By renouncing all previous artistic traditions they experimented with new forms,



Above Guy Vandenbranden (1926-2014), *Abstract Composition*. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

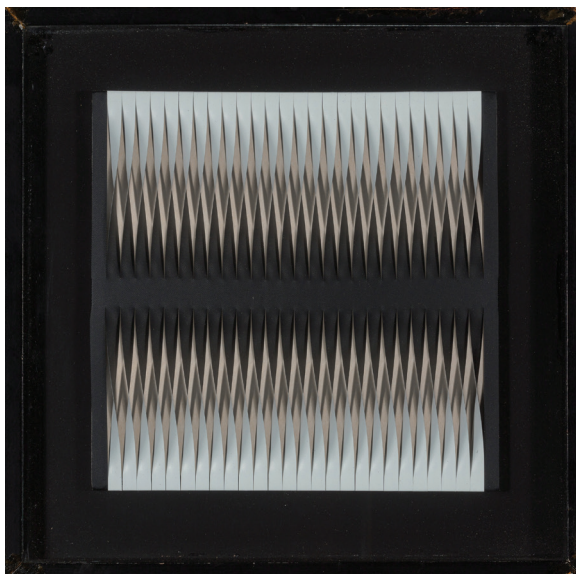
materials and content: smoke paintings, kinetic art, rotating installations made of nails, glass or aluminium, black-and-white grid-like patterns and artificial light.

In the process, the Zero artists became pioneers of a movement that became one of the most influential of the last century.

Interest in Zero artists has seen an extraordinary resurgence in recent years. In 2010, a Sotheby's sale of a collection of its works far surpassed their estimates and the movement achieved more recognition with the *Countdown to Zero* exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 2014.

Van Hoeydonck who, from an early age had a great interest in space, is the only artist to have created a piece of work on the Moon. His miniature aluminum

sculpture called *Fallen Astronaut*, was taken on the Apollo 15 mission to the Moon and left there along with a plaque honouring the 14 American and Soviet space travellers who had previously died.



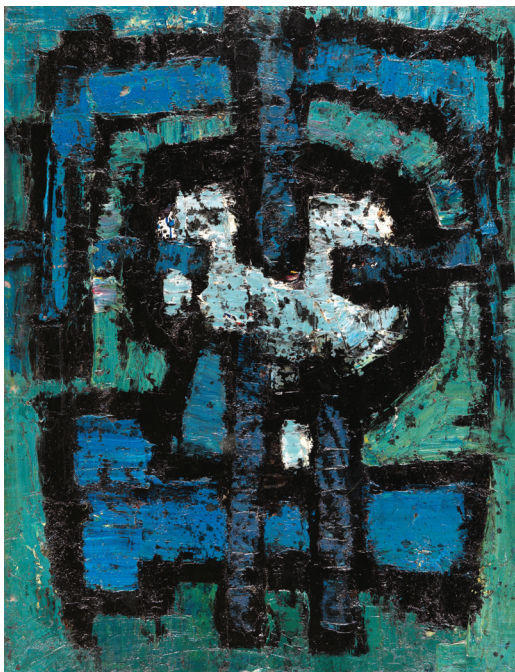
Left Walter Leblanc (1932-1986) *Torsions*, 1963-70. Polyvinyl on masonite in artist's frame. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Below Frank Avray Wilson (1914-2009) *Talisman*, 1954. Oil on hardboard. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

British influence: FRANK AVRAY WILSON

Whitford Fine Art will also present works from the 1950s by the newly-rediscovered artist Frank Avray Wilson, (1914-2009), dubbed Britain's only abstract expressionist. Avray Wilson has a strong connection with the Belgian public having shown a number of times in Brussels and Liège while he was alive. During the 1950s and the early 1960s he enjoyed a celebrated status alongside Jean-Paul Riopelle and Pierre Soulages, with no less than 12 one-man shows, held at prestigious galleries in London, Paris and Brussels.

While exhibiting in Brussels at the end of the 1950s, Avray Wilson became acquainted with Bram Bogart. Avray Wilson's 1957 show at the Galerie Helios in Brussels was a huge success. Today, at a time when the London art world is rediscovering American abstract expressionism (with an 2017 exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts), Avray Wilson is fast becoming recognised as a leading proponent in his own right. He painted in the style developed by Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning in the 1940s and 1950s, using the same technique of spontaneity from gestural brushstrokes, marks and dripping.



Right Clive Barker (b.1940) *Chariot*, prototype, 1974. Chrome-plated brass and bronze. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Belgian influence: BRIT POP ART SCULPTOR CLIVE BARKER

The Belgian surrealist painter Rene Magritte had a considerable influence on the British pop artist Clive Barker (b. 1949), whose ideas – including the love of disguise and surprise – and techniques have positioned him as the heir to Marcel Duchamp and the forerunner of Jeff Koons.

Barker's 1960s works celebrated the instant possibilities and freedoms of modern society. He used chrome-plated bronze casts to capture the everyday, even banal, elements of our culture. His choice of materials and their finishes was largely determined by his experience of working with leather and chrome at the Vauxhall Car factory during 1960-61.

Whereas the leather directly inspired a group of works during a relatively short period 1963-65, the influence of chrome was a lasting one, leading Barker not only to apply chrome finishes but also to work primarily in polished cast metals for the rest of his life.

Barker first visited New York in April 1966 where the dynamic American youth culture and the country's entrepreneurial spirit struck an immediate chord. Barker stayed with Jenny and Gerald Laing, who in turn introduced him to Tom Wesselman who then introduced him to Roy Lichtenstein and the New York art crowd.

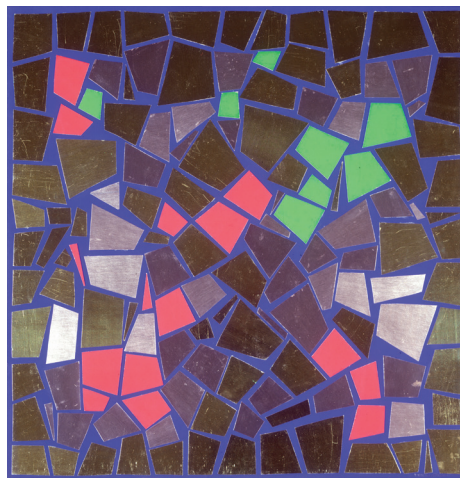
During the 1960s, Barker's work was collected by Paul McCartney, Brigitte Bardot and Marianne Faithfull. His friendships with Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, Francis Bacon and David Hockney are well known. Barker's work has made an important contribution to art history on both sides of the Atlantic and is highly collectable today.



Q&A



An Jo Fermon from Whitford Fine Art on the importance of Belgian art and its legacy



Left Paul Van Hoeydonck (b. 2025) *Composition*. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

Below Bram Bogart (1921-2012) *Loop*, 1964, mixed media on canvas. Image courtesy of Whitford Fine Art

! What tips would you have on starting a collection of Belgian art?

A Train your eye by visiting the permanent collections of museums to get a feel for things; then try and build up a relationship with a good and trusted dealer. As an art historian working for a commercial gallery, it is my duty to present a programme which is historically important. Of course, collecting has changed over the last few decades. Whereas people used to collect in what I call a vertical way, building up collections of depth, now they collect in a horizontal way: getting one example of each. This leads to a certain level of superficiality.

! Which galleries would you recommend visiting in the UK and abroad?

A I highly recommend visiting the permanent collections of the large museums worldwide. Some of my all-time favourites are: The National Gallery, London; Courtauld Institute, London; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Musée du Louvre, Paris; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. These places give one a good overview of our cultural inheritance, and also give an insight into the future.

! Which artists should we look at?

A One should definitely not look at artists in terms of value, investment or fashion. Artists give us a chance to view our everyday realities from a different angle. Depending on our own cultural backgrounds and experiences in life, certain artists appeal more than others. We should be looking at the artists who appeal to us and are able to communicate a message to us. Art should always be a vehicle for communication!

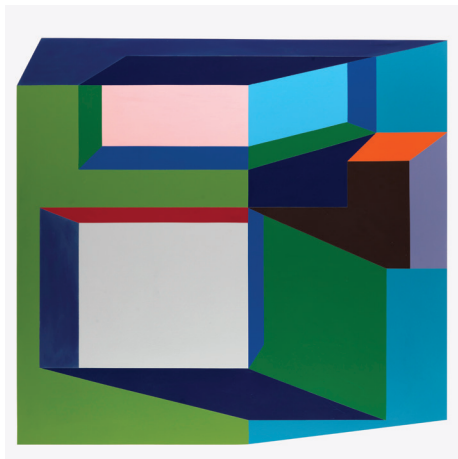
! What under-the-radar artists are worth looking at?

A For me, the under-the-radar artists I appreciate the most are those who I have researched. One is the British pop artist Clive Barker, who was an inspiration to the much better known Jeff Koons. Also Frank Avray Wilson, the British abstract expressionist who can more than hold his own against the American exponents. The Belgian early abstractionist Joseph Lacasse was an inspiration to the much better-known Serge Poliakoff, and Bram Bogart, who was the father of matter painting.

! Are there any points at which UK and Belgian art meet?

A During WWII, many known Belgian artists lived in London and throughout the 20th century, Belgians and Brits met at art schools in Paris. Surrealism was a French-Belgian enterprise to which some British artists subscribed during the 1930s.

I recently curated an exhibition at Whitford Fine Art called *Trans-Channel Crossing* which highlighted Joseph Lacasse's exhibitions in London in the 1960s and the one-man shows by British artist Frank Avray Wilson in Brussels in the 1950s.



! Which artists working today might be stars of the future?

A To be an artist with a star quality that will last depends on many factors. Personality, appeal to the zeitgeist of both the present and future, the presence of a good gallery behind the artist's career and a willingness on the part of the artist not to give into purely commercial demands. Today, Jan Fabre, Luc Tuymans, Berlinde Debruyckere and Michaël Borremans continue to illustrate the excellence of the Belgian tradition.

! Which UK artists currently appeal to Belgian collectors

A Belgian collectors have always collected outside their own borders. British pop art is omnipresent in Belgian modern art collections. Today, Belgian collectors are buying good examples of Belgian and British 1950s abstract art, as well as cutting-edge contemporary. In contemporary art national borders have become more fluid.

London-based gallery Whitford Fine Art, which has specialised in Belgian art for more than 40 years, will be showing work by many Belgian artists at the BRAFA art fair in January 2018. For more details visit www.whitfordfineart.com, or www.brafa.com

'During the 1930s, Magritte made Belgium synonymous with Surrealism. The post-war period saw Belgian artists develop their unique contribution to the Zero group'