

MARCH 2014 £5.95

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

TEFAF
SPECIAL
ISSUE

All eyes on
the new
Mauritshuis

Plus • Bill Viola • The Renaissance Labyrinth • El Greco



THE ART MARKET

Upcoming highlights this month include a collection of 20th-century decorative art in Paris and an archaic Chinese bronze in New York. January saw strong sales at Old Masters Week in New York, and Americana too performed well. **Susan Moore**

MARKET PREVIEW

Who knows where the purchase of a work of art might take one? In 1967, the Belgian-born Félix Marcilhac bought a 1926 bronze sculpture by Gusztáv Miklós entitled *Femme* in Paris. Two years later, he opened a gallery on the rue Bonaparte specialising in 20th-century decorative arts (now run by his splendidly named son Félix-Félix), using that first acquisition as the yardstick to judge every subsequent purchase. His pioneering scholarly research has not only contributed to the revival of interest in – and even the rediscovery of – many artists and designers, but has also underpinned the modern market for art nouveau and, particularly, art deco. A first, general book on art deco was followed by a host of monographs on the likes of Jean Dunand, Chana Orloff, Edouard Sandoz, Jacques Majorelle, József Csáky, Paul Jouve and Lalique glass.

Marcilhac was involved in the creation of some of the most renowned art deco collections of the mid 20th century – including those of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, Karl Lagerfeld, Andy Warhol, and Simone and Claude Dray – and, as an expert, was involved in their dispersal too. Now, aged 71, he is selling his private collection, through Sotheby's Paris in association with Artcurial. The two-day sale, on 11 and 12 March, offers a wide range of work including furniture, glass, ceramics, sculpture, paintings, metalwork and textiles, with a slew of masterpieces not seen on the market for decades.

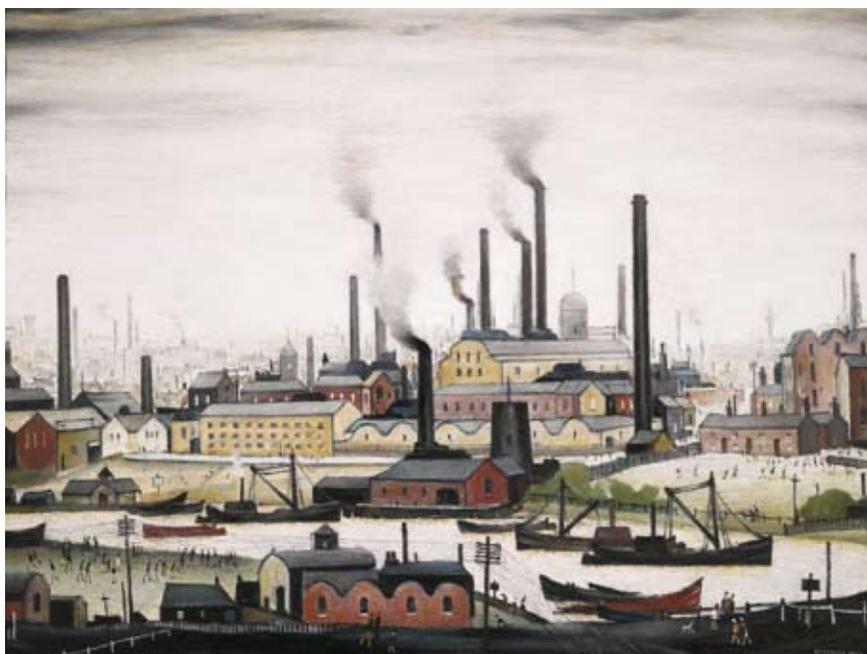
Many boast distinguished provenances – among them Jeanne Lanvin and Elsa Schiaparelli – and several are unique. The one-off Marcel Coard rose-wood cubic armchair luxuriously inlaid with vellum and mother of pearl of around 1920, for instance, once belonged to another couturier, Jacques Doucet (estimate €200,000–€300,000). The nickel-plated brass and glass console table, designed by Pierre Legrain around 1924 (estimate €100,000–€120,000) came from Marie-Laure de Noailles, and features in her Cecil Beaton portrait.

Jean Dunand and Jean Goulден collaborated on just four pieces of furniture, and two of them – both unique – are also here. The *Commode à l'Anglaise* of 1921 (Fig. 1), made for Madame



¹ Goulден, is lacquered with a brilliantly hued and boldly stylised landscape, while the slightly later bureau de pente in black and silvered lacquered wood with eggshell is given a delectable textured surface (estimate €300,000–€400,000 apiece). Other furniture highlights include Paul Iribe's Nautile armchair of around 1913, complete with walnut nautilus shell arms (€150,000–€200,000), and a pair of chic modernist shagreen armchairs of 1928 by Jean-Michel Frank (€250,000–€300,000).

Marcilhac's penchant for lacquer is evident here, as is a predilection for sculpture. The two are combined in Jean Lambert-Rucki and Jean Dunand's lacquered and carved wood and eggshell *Prière* of around 1927 (€200,000–€250,000). Strong pieces by Ossip Zadkine, Miklós and Csáky also take a bow. Even functional pieces are sculptural – Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat & Maison Keller's glazed stoneware vase with its coiling gilt-bronze snake mount (c. 1900; €30,000–€40,000), Dunand's clock raised on intertwined serpents or Sandoz's cobra standard lamp. A real joy are the richly hued and textured glass bottles of Maurice Marinot, the subject of Marcilhac's latest monograph, with estimates from around €6,000. Estimates start at €1,000, and the 300 or so lots are expected to realise around €8m.



2

1 *Commode à l'Anglaise*, 1921
Jean Dunand (1877–1942) and Jean Goulден (1878–1946)
Lacquered cabinet with bird's-eye maple interior
Sotheby's Paris in association with Artcurial, The Private Collection of Félix Marcilhac (11–12 March)
Estimate: €300,000–€400,000
Enquiries: +33 1 53 05 53 05

2 *A River Bank*, 1947
L.S. Lowry (1887–1976)
Oil on canvas, 71×91.5cm
Sotheby's London, Lowry: The A.J. Thompson Collection (25 March)
Estimate: £1.5–£2.5m
Enquiries: +44 (0)20 7293 5000

3 *Fanglei* (ritual wine jar)
12th–11th century BC
Chinese, late Shang/early Western Zhou dynasty
Bronze, ht 63.6cm
Christie's New York, The 'Min' Fanglei: A Magnificent and Highly Important Massive Bronze Ritual Wine Vessel (20 March)
Estimate on Request
Enquiries: +1 212 636 2000



3

Meanwhile in New York, Asia Week grows from strength to strength. This year's event presents exhibitions, auctions, gallery shows, lectures and activities (14–22 March). An unprecedented 47 dealers from across the globe show objects in all media originating from this vast continent, from antiquity to the present day. Newcomers include Gisele Croës from Brussels, Michael Goedhuis of London and the Milanese-based Giuseppe Piva.

One of the auction highlights, however, is undoubtedly the massive and spectacular archaic bronze wine vessel offered at Christie's New York on 20 March (Fig. 3). This imposing *fanglei* is well known, having passed through the hands of several of the most distinguished dealers of the early 20th century, and when it last took a bow at auction in 2001, it set a world record for an Asian work of art. Like all the known surviving examples, this one – the largest – is believed to date from the late Shang

or early Western Zhou dynasty – the 12th or 11th century BC – and shares a common language of bold decorative imagery cast in high relief, with taotie and dragon masks to the handles and prominent flanges at the corners. An inscription case inside the neck reveals that the vessel was commissioned by 'Father Ji'. A similar inscription found on a comparably cast cover in the Hunan Provincial Museum suggests that it might well belong to this piece. Estimate on request.

On 25 March, Sotheby's London offers a single-owner collection comprising 15 paintings by L.S. Lowry. The late A.J. Thompson acquired his first Lowry in 1982, and went on to buy the very best he could of his industrial landscapes, securing his last major purchase, *Piccadilly Circus, London* of 1960 (estimate £4m–£6m), just three years ago at the Forte sale. Works range from a small oil sketch on panel, *Children* (£50,000–£80,000), to the atmospheric *After the Fire* of 1933 (£700,000–£1m). The burnt-out factory is still smoking, and the men look on or congregate at the pub.

In the recent Lowry retrospective at Tate Britain, curators T.J. Clark and Anne Wagner considered the Salford painter's gritty view of working-class life in the industrial North in relation to the early painters of modern urban life across the Channel – Manet, Seurat, Degas. They made the point that while his subjects may seem anachronistic in a post-industrial age, an image of belching black chimneys, block-like warehouses and teeming, grimy waterways such as in *A River Bank* of 1947 (£1.5m–£2.5m; Fig. 2) is probably not so dissimilar to the views on the edges of Shenzhen or São Paulo today. Perhaps it is time for the Lowry market to break free from its very British base.

Just five works by the Netherlandish renaissance master Jan Gossaert (c. 1478–1532) – also known as Mabuse – remain in private hands, and one is now offered by Koller Zürich on 28 March. The oil on panel has not always been considered an autograph work, but Maryan Ainsworth accepted the attribution and included it in the Gossaert retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010–11. She dates the panel to around 1530, linking it to a group of paintings featuring a sweet-countenanced Virgin holding a squirming, rather muscular Christ Child with an overlarge head. Estimate CHF 1.8m–CHF 2.2m. **A**