



Under the Tuscan sun

Old Masters and a fragment from the tomb of a reprobate bishop star at one of Italy's oldest fairs; back in London, an almost 2,900-year-old sarcophagus will be at Frieze Masters

THE Biennale Internazionale dell'Antiquariato di Firenze in Italy, launched in 1959, claims to be the oldest art fair to survive and, for the past few outings, it has been under the direction of Fabrizio Moretti, a Florentine dealer who now operates in London, Monte Carlo and Paris. I would guess that it is his influence that has attracted more impressive international exhibitors than used to participate. Among them this year are the Londoners Dickinson, Agnews and Colnaghi. The fair, which opened on September 28 and runs to October 6, occupies one of the loveliest venues anywhere, the Palazzo Corsini, where the terrace overlooking the Arno is a glorious place to taste some of the best local wines.

Originally based in Milan and now in Geneva, the Rob Smeets Gallery was for many years a lonely standard-bearer for North European Old Masters in Italy. This is its first attendance at BIAF, but it is no longer alone. Caretto & Occhinegro of Turin offer a 19½in by 23½in landscape (**Fig 1**) by the elder Jan Brueghel with figures by younger Frans Francken. It is a subject that seems to have appealed to northern artists, including Elsheimer: Ceres searching for her abducted daughter Proserpina. The goddess was given water by Hecuba, but spilled some, making a boy mock her. She turned him into a salamander and here he is mid-metamorphosis.

Andrea de Mozzi certainly divided opinion. From a Florentine noble family, he was chaplain to two popes and a papal diplomat before being appointed Bishop of Florence in 1287. During his time, the church of Santa Croce and the hospital of Santa Maria were founded and funded. His tomb in San Gregorio, the family church, was inscribed *'Sepulcrum venerabilis patris domini Andreae de*



Fig 1 above: Landscape with Ceres by Brueghel the Elder. With Caretto & Occhinegro. Fig 2 right: Porto Antico by Diefenbach. With Antonacci.

Fig 3 far right: Fragment from Andrea de Mozzi's tomb. With Botticelli Antichità



Mozzis, Dei gratia episcopi Florentini et Vicentini. However, Benvenuto da Imola, the near-contemporary commentator on Dante, described him as a simpleton and buffoon and, in *Canto XV*, Dante himself condemned him to the Seventh Circle of Hell for unnatural vices, which were the reason for his transfer from Florence to Vicenza shortly before he died in 1296. Even modern translators are mealy-mouthed about his particular tastes. His tomb was a product of the workshop of Arnolfo di Cambio, a sculptor who had a long career in central Italy and was head of works for the Florentine Duomo. San Gregorio was largely demolished in the 19th century, but partly repurposed as the Bardini Museum, now the property of the

city. A carved fragment from Mozzi's tomb (**Fig 3**), only his face and mitre, is with Botticelli Antichità (unless already sold).

A much later figure accused of immorality was the German symbolist painter and cult-leader Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach (1851–1913) who settled on Capri. His 53½in by 39½in *Porto Antico* (**Fig 2**) is shown by Antonacci of Rome. Other BIAF highlights include two notable Madonnas, a Titian with Carlo Orsi and a Bronzino with Galerie Canesso.

The Frieze and Frieze Masters fairs open in Regent's Park next week (October 9–13). Contemporary creep seems to have continued in Masters, which could be a pity if it dilutes the strengths that distinguish it from Frieze itself across the Park. There are 150





Fig 4 left: Aïcha Goblet by Man Ray. Fig 5 above: Egyptian Ptolemaic sandstone relief of a woman. Both with Charles Ede

exhibitors at Masters this year and modern and contemporary certainly have their place, but only if the galleries are, indeed, masterly, showing exceptional examples, and are in harmony with the earlier art. As the Belgian designer, dealer and exhibitor Axel Vervoordt says: 'All objects, regardless of their origin or value, share a timeless, universal beauty and an intrinsic purity.'

At TEFAF in March, I was particularly impressed by the collaborative stand by London antiquities dealer Charles Ede and modern-art specialist Sean Kelly from New York, together with Gloria Cortino's sculptural South American onyx furniture. The concept proved successful and, now, Charles Ede has taken it in-house by adding 19th- and 20th-century British and European paintings, works on paper and photography to its portfolio. An effective example of the synergy possible is provided by a 10in Egyptian Ptolemaic period sandstone relief of a woman's profile (Fig 5) and a 1922 profile photograph of Aïcha Goblet (Fig 4) by Man Ray.



Fig 6: Egyptian sarcophagus of Princess Sopedet-em-haawt. With David Aaron

Pick of the week

It is a cliché among contemporary galleries that work must 'challenge perceptions', but, for once, the Hayward's 'Material Worlds', first at Coventry's Mead Gallery (October 9–December 15), then on tour, actually does. Fifteen artists, including Phyllida Barlow and Rae-Yen Song (right), created 'extraordinary, humorous and radical art' from everyday materials. Some of the textile creations might have appealed to Mme Defarge, knitting at the guillotine. Later ports of call are Djanogly Gallery, Lakeside Arts, Nottingham; The Wilson Art Gallery, Cheltenham; and Pitzhanger Manor, London W5.



An older relic of a tomb even than the Egyptian relief is the sarcophagus of Princess Sopedet-em-haawt (Fig 6) of the 25th or 26th Dynasty, which will be shown by David Aaron of Berkeley Square, W1. It was discovered in 1832 at Saqqara and went through several French private collections, before appearing at Sotheby's New York in 2013. It is in remarkably good condition and is well coloured, despite the passage of almost 2,900 years. When it was opened for the first time since 1834, it revealed the yellow and white highly inscribed interior and a handwritten note with details of the discovery and provenance.

Daniel Crouch, the London antiquarian map dealer, has created an exhibition of the cartography of fictional worlds over 2,700 years, 'featuring maps of such magical lands as Middle Earth, Lilliput, Oz... there and back again'. Tolkien's Middle Earth (Fig 7) as portrayed by Pauline Baynes in 1970 is key; as the author said: 'I wisely started with a map, and made the story fit (generally with meticulous care for distances). The other way about lands one in confusions and impossibilities, and in any case it is weary work to compose a map from a story.'

The international dealer Hauser & Wirth is able to satisfy a healthy range of tastes from the later 19th century to contemporary art and Manet's *Pelouse du champ de courses à Longchamp* should find many admirers. It was completed in 1865, the year that *Olympia* was exhibited to considerable controversy. ▶

Next week Books, bits and pieces



Fig 7: Middle Earth. With Daniel Crouch