

Tangled in Swiss red tape

The Art Market | The roving 'We Buy Gold' show comes to two New York galleries; Paul Smith offers Banksy at Bonhams for £1.8mn. *By Melanie Gerlis*

Joanna Kamm, director of Basel's respected Liste fair for emerging art, has upbraided Swiss customs officials for conducting a routine paperwork check on exhibitors during the fair's VIP opening.

"It was an incredible thing to happen. They always come at some point but are careful not to disrupt business. This time, it was in the first hour of the preview, there were about 15 people in bulletproof vests suddenly everywhere and of course it looked like something was wrong," Kamm says.

This year's edition of Liste, which ran June 12-18, featured 88 exhibitors from 35 countries, including Voloshyn Gallery from Ukraine and newcomers

Regards from Chicago and Blindspot from Hong Kong. Such commitment added to Kamm's frustration, she says. "Galleries came from all over the world and then they are faced with a situation like this," she adds.

Switzerland's Federal Office for Customs and Border Security said it was scrutinising customs formalities for foreign exhibitors and the action was undertaken "by specialists in uniform for reasons of prevention and security".

Exhibitor Nigel Dunkley, director of London's Union Pacific, had organised shipping for many of the fair's UK galleries, so was waylaid for longer than most. "It was inappropriate, to say the least, particularly on the day that most business happens and given that the fair is open all week," he says. He reports healthy sales nonetheless, including all the paintings by Korea's Jin Han Lee (\$20,000 each) and the UK's Will Thompson (£4,000-£7,000), while both of its ceramic light fittings by the Japan-born Soshiro Matsubara also found buyers (£4,700 each). The fair is "consistently an important point of our year in terms of cash flow", particularly as the east London gallery plans to open a second, flagship space in Bloomsbury in the autumn, he adds.

Liste's digital edition, for which exhibitors select one artist from their in-person showing, runs until June 25.

Roving alternative exhibition space We Buy Gold is back in physical form after a five-year break and this time



will run across two neighbouring galleries, Jack Shainman and Nicola Vassell, in New York's Chelsea. "I swore I wouldn't do this in a Chelsea commercial space and it took a while to wrap my head around it, but Nicola approached me. We've been friends for years, and with Jack too it felt like family," says Joanna Bellorado-Samuels, who founded We Buy Gold in 2017 while also working as a senior director in Shainman's gallery, where she has been since 2008. This will be the seventh formal iteration of the show, which Bellorado-Samuels started in a former store in the further-flung Bed-Stuy area of Brooklyn.

The focus is still on art that challenges systems of power. This year's theme is "slippage", Bellorado-Samuels says, of "space, time and language". Just 10 artists feature in what she plans as a "tight show", including some well-known names with deliberately unusual works, she adds. Pieces by Kerry James Marshall include supersized resin coins made in 2012 and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye provides a new text-based work. Lesser-known talents feature too, such as the writer and artist Renee Gladman, who was in the first We Buy Gold show.

Many of the artists shown since 2017 come from minority backgrounds, though Bellorado-Samuels says this is not a hard-and-fast rule, more a sign of her cause. "The project, the name, it's about the intersection of aspiration and desperation. There are so many 'We Buy Gold' signs in neighbourhoods of limited opportunity," she says. And while Chelsea might not fit that bill, the partnership between the galleries in a generally cut-throat world is a different sort of breakthrough.

"Everyone talks about collaboration, but how much do we really do?" Bellorado-Samuels asks. Seven runs June 29-August 11; prices range from free (Yiadom-Boakye's text) to \$1mn.

Fashion designer Paul Smith is selling a Banksy at Bonhams in London on June 29, estimated between £1.2mn and £1.8mn. "Congestion Charge" (2004) takes a pop at the London fee for vehicles entering the city centre and is one of the artist's *Vandalised Oils* works, in which he stencils motifs on classical paintings bought from flea markets. Smith bought the work from Banksy's pop-up Santa's Ghetto concept store the year it was made but has not revealed what he paid for it. Works from this series reportedly originally sold for £700 each in the early 2000s.

Banksy has his fair share of celebrity patrons. Last year, the musician Robbie Williams sold "Vandalised Oil (Choppers)" (2006) for an above estimate £3.6mn (£4.4mn with fees). The anonymous Banksy, who never seems to go out of art-market fashion, last week confirmed his first official exhibition for 14 years, a retrospective of his stencils at Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art (*Cut and Run: 25 Years Card Labour*, to August 28).

The London sculpture specialist Stuart Lochhead is offering a collection of five bronze statuettes made from models by the Florentine Renaissance artist Giambologna (1529-1608). The group was owned by a late US collector and is offered as a whole for in the region of \$7mn.

Such bronzes, from models that sometimes led to full-scale sculptures, are artworks in their own right, Lochhead says. Many were displayed in the homes of the wealthy, including Florence's powerful Medici, as well as being offered as diplomatic gifts to other princely families. The items have "since attracted specialist collectors", Lochhead says, including some who pair them with bold contemporary and modern paintings.

The models in the Lochhead collection are all attributed to Giambologna but were cast by other artists across two generations. The earliest is of the Roman god Mars in a striking pose, made during Giambologna's lifetime and under his direction, Lochhead confirms, in about 1580. Two later pieces, made by the second generation of artists in the studio, include a lion attacking a horse, cast by Giovanni Battista Foggini, dated around 1700.

The works are on view to the public in Lochhead's gallery as part of London Art Week (June 30-July 7).

'Congestion Charge' (2004) by Banksy, which fashion designer Paul Smith is selling at Bonhams



Above: 'Walking in Thornbush and Flowers' by Jin Han Lee (2023)

Below: Joanna Bellorado-Samuels of We Buy Gold



Frank Auerbach *Twenty Self-Portraits* closing 14 July 2023



Frank Auerbach, *Self Portrait III*, 2022, acrylic on board, 63.3 x 57.2 cm

frankrossiart.com
hh-h.com

Frankie Rossi Art
In affiliation with
Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert

38 Bury Street
London
SW1Y 6BB

FRIDAY 30 JUNE to
FRIDAY 7 JULY 2023

LAW LONDON ART WEEK

DIGITAL & LIVE | EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS
at LONDONARTWEEK.CO.UK

Wedlake Bell

Images courtesy of LAW Exhibitors Rupert Wace (left) and Finch & Co (right)