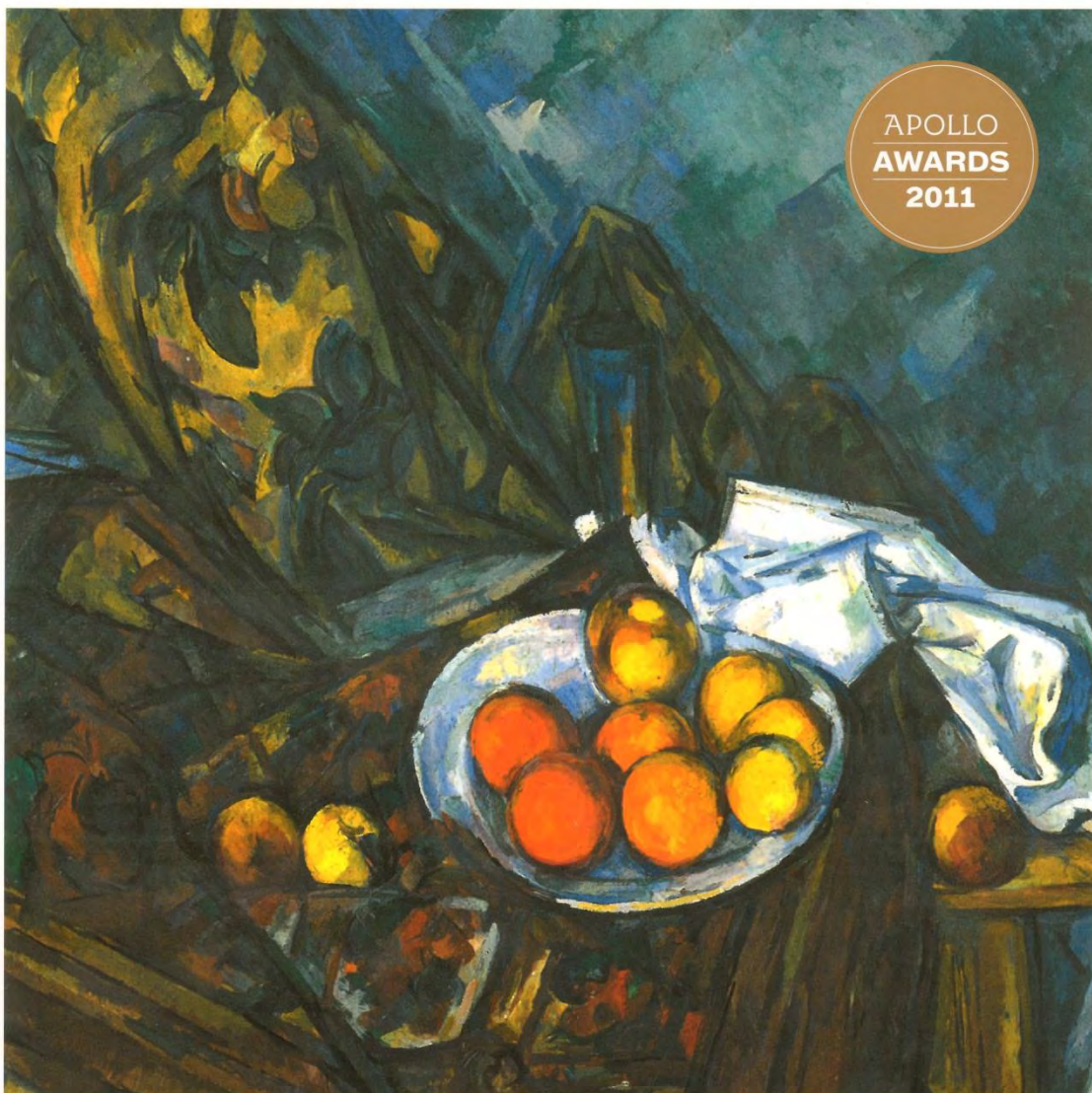


DECEMBER 2011 £5.95

# APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

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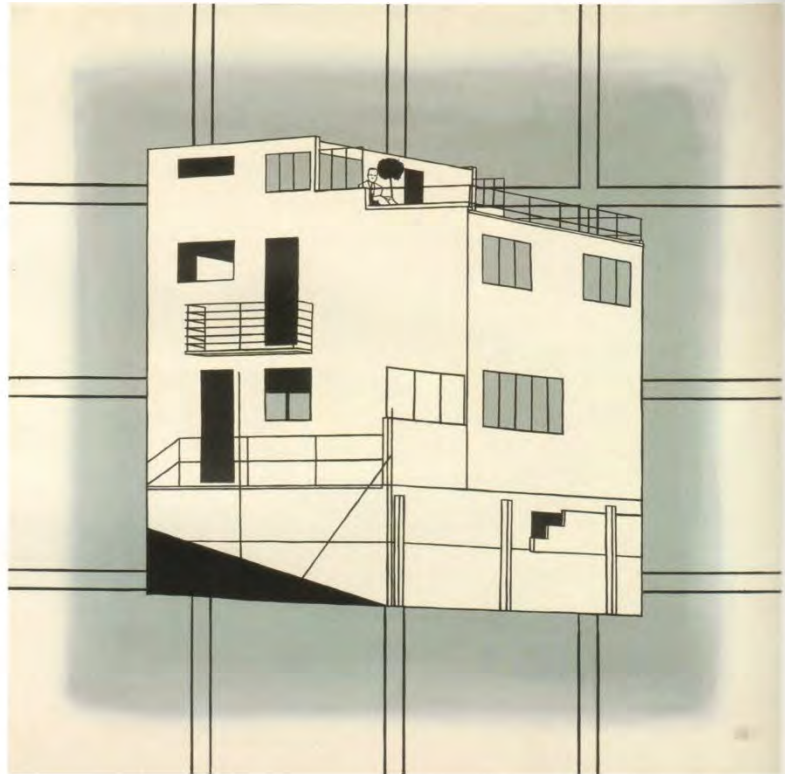
## MARKET REVIEW

October seemed an inauspicious time for any commercial art event in the Western world, not least in Italy. By general consensus, business was not good at this year's Florence Biennale dell'Antiquariato (1–9 October), but it was better than many expected. Sculpture was the highlight of this fair, and it was the sculpture and works of art dealers who fared better than most, with a couple of collectors buying six or seven pieces between them. Most transactions consisted of Italian pieces sold to Italians; 'notified' work – such as the Deruta plate and Urbino majolica flasks at Trinity Fine Art – could have been sold several times over if available for export.

Fairs, of course, are notoriously difficult to judge, given that some exhibitors do well and others do not, and that business is done long after the lorries have left. In the UK capital, this year's Frieze (13–16 October), to me at least, was not the contemporary fair's strongest presentation to date, but serious business appears to have been done, at least by a few.

Marian Goodman, for instance, sold Gerhard Richter's *Strip (CR921-1)* for £1.5m; a Neo Rauch at David Zwirner changed hands at \$1.35m and a Takashi Murakami carbon fibre sculpture sold through Galerie Perrotin for \$900,000. Outside in the sculpture park, all three editions of Thomas Houseago's *Hermaphrodite* were snapped up at \$425,000 apiece via Hauser & Wirth, with the gallery stating it was its best Frieze ever. The fair proved a good platform for younger artists too, and several exhibitors in Frame, the section dedicated to solo artists, sold out.

Was business better at the Pavilion of Art & Design (12–16 October) in London's Berkeley Square? Some reported slow business on the opening night. Photography dealer Michael Hoppen, for instance, sold only one piece but it was his major offering, a unique Peter Beard collage. New York dealer Friedman Benda similarly found a buyer for the most important piece of its Ettore Sottsass display; 88-Gallery, however, sold its entire stand. Over the course of the fair, others reported sales to new collectors as well as strong sales after the generally reassuring auction offerings.



- 1 *Concrete Villa, Bruun*, 1963  
Patrick Caulfield (b. 1936)  
Oil on board, 122×122cm  
Robin Katz Fine Art at the  
Pavilion of Art & Design,  
London (12–16 October)  
£450,000
- 2 *Combustione legno*, 1957  
Alberto Burri (1915–95)  
Wood, plastic and vinavil on  
fabric, 117×97cm  
Sotheby's London, 20th Century  
Italian Art Including Italian Identity  
(13 October) £3.2m

Certainly there were high-figure sales. Dickinson sold a 1966 seven-slash red canvas by Lucio Fontana that had an asking price of €3m, and New York-based Van de Weghe Fine Art closed deals on a Basquiat for \$2.2m and an Alexander Calder mobile for \$1.5m. The winner of the best piece of fine art at the fair, Patrick Caulfield's *Concrete Villa, Bruun* of 1963, offered at £450,000 by Robin Katz Fine Art, also found a new home (Fig. 1).

It proved a good season for Italian artists at auction too. Sotheby's London found its highest ever total for a sale of 20th-century Italian art, realising £21.6m on 13 October. The sale was also 85 per cent sold by value. A new auction record was set for Alberto Burri's *Combustione legno* (Fig. 2), a 1957 work in wood, plastic and vinavil on fabric. Five bidders pushed the price to £3.2m (estimate £800,000–£1.2m). Christie's London's Italian Sale on 14 October was smaller, but it still notched up





£17.5m, establishing a new auction record for Domenico Gnoli's *Busto femminile di dorso* of 1965 (£2.3m). At Bonhams Contemporary Art Sale on 13 October, however, the vast – and punchily estimated – collage of magazine covers by Alighiero Boetti looked just too expensive at £1.2m and failed to sell.

Strikingly, London's general evening auctions at Phillips de Pury, Bonhams and Sotheby's all came in below target, and many of the lots that did sell were sold on or below their estimates – including Sotheby's top lot, Lucian Freud's intense *Boy's Head* of 1952 (£3.2m). The same sale did see, however, a new auction record price for Leon Kossoff. *A Street in Willesden*, painted in 1985, fetched £690,850.

Things perked up at Christie's London on 14 October. Its strong, £38m Post-War and Contemporary Evening Sale was 92 per cent sold by value and 89 per cent by lot. Five paintings by Gerhard Richter found new homes, with *Kerze (Candle)* of 1982 soaring over estimate to sell for a record £10.5m (Fig. 3). Another artist's auction record was set when the maquette for Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North* sold for a mighty £3.4m. Overall, in this round of fairs and sales in London, mid-century artists fared best.

- 3 *Kerze (Candle)*, 1982  
Gerhard Richter (b. 1932)  
Oil on canvas, 83×62cm  
Christie's London, Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale (October 14) £10.5m
- 4 Female idol, 4th millennium BC  
Neolithic Syria or South Arabia  
Basalt, ht 39.3cm  
Ariadne Galleries at the International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show, New York (21–27 October) \$250,000

Sotheby's New York, meanwhile, hosted one of the oddest and most lavish auction views ever. Its big autumn offering was works of art consigned by one of its most important clients, Lily Safra (18–21 October). The gilding of almost everything over-dazzled, and only the auction house staff were allowed to touch the objects for sale. On closer – but hardly close – inspection, many of the pieces disappointed, or looked rather expensive. In the event, 302 of the 841 lots remained unsold. The good French furniture and English silver was good enough, however, to raise the total beyond the pre-sale estimate, and the six auctions totalled \$45.9m.

There was a brisk sense of purpose about the visitors to this year's International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show at the Armory (21–27 October). Although things didn't fly off the stands in great numbers – except, perhaps at Phoenix Ancient Art – again, a surprising amount of business was done. Even brown English furniture was sold, albeit exceptional pieces, such as the richly carved mahogany card table from the Percival Griffiths collection (Ronald Phillips), and a splendid George II pine table in the manner of Matthias Lock (Kentshire).

Antiquities, however, seemed to steal the day, with Phoenix selling some half dozen pieces on the opening night alone. Ariadne Galleries could have sold its basalt female idol, originating from Neolithic Syria or South Arabia in the 4th millennium BC, and priced at \$250,000, several times over (Fig. 4). **A**

