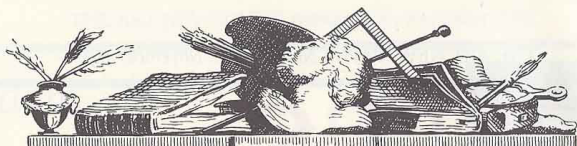


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# THE ART NEWSPAPER™

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## ART MARKET International

# Shows they can't sell

Why some commercial galleries think it's worth putting on exhibitions of borrowed work



Clockwise from above: Vincent van Gogh, *Self-portrait, December 1886–January 1887*, J.M.W. Turner, *Moonlight over Lake Lucerne with the Rigi in the distance, Switzerland, 1841*, Christo, *Wrapped Road Sign, 1963*, and Rembrandt, *The Three Trees, 1643*

### LOAN EXHIBITIONS

**London.** A series of loan exhibitions currently taking place in London suggests that there is a new way of doing business at commercial galleries. The ability to show genuinely museum-quality works (because many have, in fact, been loaned by museums) adds to the prestige of a gallery, even though mounting such exhibitions may at first seem to defy commercial logic.

At Eykyn Maclean, it was only possible to stage "Van Gogh in Paris" (until 29 November) because the exhibition was fully non-selling, says the gallery's co-founder Nicholas Maclean. Hauser & Wirth's London galleries are currently dedicated to a loan show, "Re-View: Onnasch Collection" (until 14 December), which – like a blockbuster museum show – will then travel to the gallery in New York (February–April 2014). The prime works on display include pieces by Robert Rauschenberg, Christo and Clifford Still, and the exhibition "provides a rare opportunity to see major works by these artists in London", says Neil Wenman, a director at the gallery.

Pilar Ordovas (for whom, like Eykyn Maclean, the loan exhibition has become a signature set-piece) has joined forces with the Rijksmuseum to show works

by Rembrandt for the first time in the UK, alongside works by Frank Auerbach. "Raw Truth: Auerbach-Rembrandt" is on display in her London gallery until 1 December, and will then travel to the Dutch museum (12 December–16 March 2014). The London dealer Andrew Clayton-Payne has also linked up with one specific museum, to show 16 watercolours by J.M.W. Turner from Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery (21 November–8 December). The Whitworth has also lent a watercolour by Van Gogh to Eykyn Maclean – *Fortifications of Paris with Houses*, 1887.

The star loan in Eykyn Maclean's Van Gogh show is a self-portrait, 1886–87, from the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. Maclean is not revealing how he arranged the loan, but it can be assumed that a fee would be paid for such a work. Even if a direct fee is not paid, there are "in-kind" advantages – for regional institutions, in particular – given the prominence of London's commercial galleries (all of the above exhibitions were timed to coincide with the Frieze art fairs last month).

David Morris, the head of collections at the Whitworth, says: "We frequently lend to exhibitions in the UK and abroad, and individual works in our collection become well-known in this way." Of the Turner exhibition, he adds

that "opportunities to show a substantial group of works... are rare... because of the high cost of mounting such exhibitions". His museum is temporarily closed for expansion (for a year, until September 2014), so loan exhibitions are a way to keep its collection in the public eye. Nicholas Maclean expects around 10,000 visitors to his nine-week show in London, which compensates in part for the Whitworth's loss of 170,000 visitors while it is closed.

Although works from museums are not for sale, there can be grey areas elsewhere. At Frieze Masters, Thomas Gibson Fine Art presented a solo show of around 25 works by Henri Matisse, of which around eight were not for sale. Those that were loaned by private

collectors were not intended for sale, according to Hugh Gibson, the director of the London gallery, but "if someone is prepared to offer something irresistible, who knows?" However, this is not the point, he says. "We could have had a booth with everything on it for sale, but there is poor material out there and we'd rather show quality."

There are still costs to be recouped. Nicholas Maclean will not disclose his, but altogether they must have exceeded £200,000. He says: "Our exhibition is bringing in collectors, curators, specialists and dealers, so it's an excellent way of expanding our contacts. It's also satisfying to mount a Van Gogh show and open it up for visitors."

Melanie Gerits and Martin Bailey

### In brief

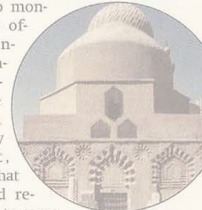
#### Christie's makes a bid for the holiday market

Christie's continues to push its brand into new luxury areas. Last month, the auction house announced the launch of Christie's Travel, set up in conjunction with the tour operator Abercrombie & Kent. The tie-up offers travel-plus-art trips that range from a five-day jewellery-based tour of New York, including access to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition "Jewels by JAR" (20 November–9 March 2014), to more exotic affairs, such as a 12-night trip to India complete with VIP access to the India Art Fair (30 January–2 February 2014), guided visits to artists' ateliers and dinners in private palaces. The trips are not for those on a budget: they cost between £4,895 and £9,949 per person – excluding air fares. B.R.

## Bonhams spots theft from caliphs' tomb

London expert alerts Egyptian authorities

**London.** British and Egyptian police are investigating how eight ancient carved beams from an important Cairo monument were offered to Bonhams in London. The auction house showed them to its scholarly consultant, who warned that the inscribed reliefs appeared to come from the Mausoleum of the Abbasid Caliphs (above).



Dating from the 13th century, the mausoleum is one of the finest early Islamic buildings in Cairo. It is not normally open to tourists.

The consignee, who is not Egyptian, brought the beams into Bonhams' London office in September, giving what turned out to be an incorrect provenance.

Each of the beams is around four feet long and has carved inscriptions with Koranic verses. Bonhams' unnamed consultant studied the archi-

ago and recognised them.

Bonhams reported its suspicions to the Egyptian ministry of antiquities in Cairo, which provided recent photographs of the mausoleum. These confirm that the beams, which appear in earlier photographs, are missing. They also reveal that there has been extensive damage to and further thefts from the mausoleum's interior.

Egypt's ministry of antiquities says in a statement that the theft took place in April 2012, although this date is not certain.

After Bonhams received confirmation of the theft, Alice Bailey, its head of Islamic and Indian art, notified the Metropolitan Police, which in turn informed Interpol. The beams were confiscated and an investigation has been launched by Scotland Yard's art and antiquities unit. (Contrary to reports from Egypt, there was no question of Bonhams putting them up for sale, and they did not appear in a catalogue.)

After President Hosni Mubarak's resignation in February 2011, Egypt entered a period of political turmoil that continues to this day. Museums have suffered thefts and archaeological sites have been looted, but until now, the damage at the mausoleum of the Abbasid Caliphs has not been publicised.

Martin Bailey