

# FINANCIAL TIMES

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Melanie Gerlis FEBRUARY 9 2023

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Two of the founders of the now-cancelled Masterpiece fair, antiques dealer Thomas Woodham-Smith and fair builder Harry Van der Hoorn, have taken a summer slot at the Chelsea Royal Hospital to launch a replacement multidisciplinary event. In 2017, Masterpiece was sold to Art Basel's owners, MCH Group, which retains the Masterpiece brand.

The new, smaller and shorter event is rather prosaically called the London Summer Art Fair and will run from June 22-26. This year's fair should benefit from the participation of the many dealers, particularly in the UK, who were sorry to see Masterpiece go.

MCH Group had cited the rising costs for service providers in the UK, coupled with a decline in exhibitors from Europe since Brexit, as reasons for its surprise cancellation of Masterpiece. Woodham-Smith says that while Masterpiece was conceived as a "no-expense-spared" event, it is time to look at fairs with fresh eyes and "still deliver something fantastic", though he says that "neither of us expect to retire on the profits".

The pair already run a Chelsea art fair: in 2019 they bought an 80 per cent stake in the annual event for middle-market dealers run by the British Antique Dealers' Association and renamed it the Open Art Fair. At the time of writing, this was still due to run from April 19-23, but Woodham-Smith says he is struggling to get exhibitors to sign up this year.

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