



# Why treasure is a universal word

The new Treasure House fair carries the hopes of the art and antiques market



Fig 1: Black-walnut 'conoid' bench by Geoffrey Nakashima. With Geoffrey Diner

**H**ARRY VAN DER HOORN and Thomas Woodham-Smith show a confident swagger in the naming of their fairs: Treasure House opens at Royal Hospital Chelsea, London SW3, tomorrow as a replacement to their previous Masterpiece, which fell victim to the turbulence of recent years. A 'talking head' I used to know would say 'ah well, only the next 24 hours will tell'—but all parties in the art world will be wishing success to this new venture. The prospect of London without a major summer art and antiques fair was deeply worrying, as testified by the enthusiasm with which this initiative was welcomed.

Mr van der Hoorn is the owner of Stabulo, which builds elegant stands for TEFAF Maastricht and the Frieze autumn fairs in London, as well as Masterpiece, which he founded in 2009 with Mr Woodham-Smith, a long-experienced antiques dealer. He comments that the new name points to continuity as well as quality: 'Our choice of title reflects the wide range of disciplines and masterpieces in the fair, each piece a treasure in its own right. From my perspective, and I speak as a Dutchman, "Treasure" is a word that is understood throughout the world and "House" is a mark of respect to the Grosvenor

House Fair, a fair that inspired so many of us over the years.'

It is a demonstration of trade confidence that 43 of the 55 exhibitors previously appeared at Masterpiece. As Brexit is cited as one of the reasons for the disappearance of other London fairs, it is remarkable that 10 overseas dealers are braving the expense and paperwork to take part, plus

four more that are partly London based. As I'm bandying statistics, let me record that there will be one fifth-generation business, Fileman Antiques of Steyning in West Sussex, at least three third-generations and seven seconds.

Perhaps, as it rises from Masterpiece's ashes, Treasure House should take as its symbol the ho-ho bird, often seen on carved 18th- and 19th-century chinoiserie mirror frames. Despite the terminology, ho-ho birds originated in Japanese mythology, where they represented good fortune, longevity, fidelity and wisdom. They are a confection of phoenix, pheasant, heron, stork and bird of paradise. The Japanese phoenix is not a singular creature as in Western bestiaries, which is why a splendid pair of chinoiserie pier glasses (Fig 2) to be offered by Ronald Phillips of Conduit

Street, W1, can be topped by two each. The design is based on one that was published in Chippendale's 1754 *Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* and these were made in about 1765.

The variety of furniture on offer is represented by pieces brought by Godson & Coles, still proudly ensconced on what used to be known as the Brown Mile of the Fulham Road, and by Geoffrey Diner from Washington DC in the US. The first, which is described as 'exceptionally rare', is a George I burr-walnut and giltwood bombé bureau-cabinet with brass mounts (Fig 3), dating from about 1725. It is 8ft 3in high and would make a dramatic statement in any room. The second is a complete contrast, except in material and quality. Diner's bench (Fig 1), described as 'conoid' because of its twist, was made in about →



Fig 2: Pair of chinoiserie pier glasses based on a Chippendale design. With Ronald Phillips





*Fig 3:* Rare 8ft 3in-high George I burr-walnut and giltwood bombé bureau-cabinet with brass mounts, about 1725. With Godson & Coles





**Fig 4: Roman bronze stag, 5½in high. With Charles Ede**



**Fig 5: Silver owl, 8¼in high, Dame Blanche as a spirit of the night. With Univers du Bronze**



**Fig 6: George III silver-gilt cup and cover, marked by Heming in 1761. With Shrubsole**

1973 by the Japanese-American George Nakashima (1905–90), who learned to use traditional Japanese tools when interned during the Second World War and became one of America's most influential furniture designers. This bench is in American black walnut with hickory spindles.

A similar ancient-to-modern pairing in animalier sculpture is provided by Charles Ede of Mayfair and the Univers du Bronze. Mr Ede has a 5½in-high 1st-century AD Roman bronze statuette of a stag (**Fig 4**); the Parisian gallery has an appealing 8¼in-high silver owl, titled *Dame Blanche* as a spirit of the night (**Fig 5**), by François Xavier Lalanne (1927–2008). Univers du Bronze also has a Lalanne bronze monkey, perhaps inspired by his time as a guard in the Louvre's Egyptian galleries.

Sumptuous silver is to be found with Shrubsole of New York, including a 13in-high George III silver-gilt cup and cover (**Fig 6**) after a design by William Kent, which was marked by Thomas Heming in 1761. When Koopman moved from the Silver Vaults to Dover Street, W1, the silver specialist diversified into fine jewellery, such as an Art Deco *tutti frutti* and gem-set macaw

**Fig 7: Chinese punch bowl made by Da Ji. With Koopman**

brooch by Boucheron, 1937, but it still offers spectacular pieces, including a massive Chinese punch bowl (**Fig 7**), made by the Shanghai smith Da Ji for retailer Luen Wo from about the turn of the 20th century.

Most of the picture galleries among the overseas exhibitors deal in international modern and contemporary art, but the British dealers even the balance with

a good showing of homegrown 20th-century works. Among them are a lovely Charles Ginner view of Chideock, Dorset (**Fig 9**) (Richard Green); a strong 1919–20 floral still life by Duncan Grant (Piano Nobile); Sickert's 1908 *The New Home* (Offer Waterman); and a 17in by 13in pen-and-ink portrait of Rudolf Nureyev dating from 1969 by David Hockney (Christopher Kingzett). This →



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Fig 8 above: **A Bay Arabian by Stubbs. With Rountree Tryon.** Fig 9 right: **A view of Chideock, Dorset, by Ginner. With Richard Green**

last not only captures, in the dealer's words, 'Nureyev's fierce intelligence and, even in repose, the nervous energy of his presence', but, unusually, it conveys his physical strength, better indeed than do most photographs. Notable older British works include

the 39½in by 49½in *A Bay Arabian Belonging to Robert Gregory MP* (1775) by Stubbs (**Fig 8**), with Rountree Tryon. The fair runs until June 26 ([www.treasurehousefair.com](http://www.treasurehousefair.com)). 🐾

**Next week We never closed**



## Breakfast with Nelson

The Battle of the Nile on August 1, 1798, was arguably the pinnacle of Admiral Nelson's career. His capture of Corsica in 1794, prominent role in the 1797 Battle of Cape St Vincent and loss of his right arm in Tenerife later that year had already made him something of a national hero, but then the length of his seemingly fruitless search for the fleet carrying Napoleon and his army to Egypt had dented his reputation. By the time he located the fleet in Aboukir Bay, east of Alexandria, the army had already been disembarked and Admiral Breuys' ships appeared to be in a good defensive position protected by shoals. However, a way through was found, and the action, which continued through the night, culminated in a tremendous explosion that blew apart the French flagship *L'Orient*. Only two of the 13 French ships of the line and two frigates escaped the battle. Napoleon's campaign was ultimately doomed; from then on, the British Fleet dominated the Mediterranean.

Nelson's first port of call after the victory was Naples, where the Bourbon king Ferdinand IV and his wife, Maria Carolina, a sister of Marie Antoinette, welcomed him ecstatically, as did Lady Hamilton, who noted that the Queen fainted with joy at the news. He arrived on September 22, in time to celebrate his birthday, as well as the victory, but the respite was short-lived. He pressed Ferdinand to march on Rome, then occupied by the French, and, when that failed, he organised the evacuation of the royal family and the Hamiltons to Sicily, as Naples was itself occupied and a republic proclaimed. After a blockade and counter-invasion, the Bourbons returned and Nelson encouraged bloody retribution against the revolutionaries. This earned further royal gratitude, but hatred among many Neapolitans.

Among the honours and gifts showered upon him, the Queen ordered a porcelain breakfast service (*pictured*) for her hero. This



was commissioned from the Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda and consisted of an ormolu-mounted tray, hot-water and milk jugs and a cup and saucer. It is painted with the fiery end of *L'Orient* and a previously unknown profile portrait of Nelson that was evidently based on a drawing from life. It does not show his recent wound over his right eye, but his hair is still cropped after the surgery.

The service descended through the Brymer family of Ilsington House, Dorset, until 1968. It is not certain when they acquired it, but their antecedent, Alexander Brymer (1745–1822), made a fortune as a naval prize agent based in Nova Scotia, and supplied wine and spirits to the Navy. He was a 'a hard, grasping man' to some, but, in the 1860s, the historian of the province eulogised him: 'It is not always that the prudence and industry that elevate the commercial man to wealth are united with honour, humanity and generosity, as was the case with Mr. Brymer'. For once, the word 'historic' is justified; the service will be a star of the fair, priced at £180,000 on the stand of E & H Manners of Kensington Church Street, W8.