

# The Mecca for ethnic art

Now a key international date, in fifteen years the *Parcours des Mondes* has become a Mecca for ethnic art and a magnet for collectors the world over, including the USA, Australia, New Zealand and, of course, Europe. For Kapil Jariwala of the eponymous London Gallery, "Paris is now the most important marketplace – partly because of its museums specialising in ethnic and Asian arts, but also because curators from all over the world turn up." Some galleries make between 50% and 75% of their annual turnover there, with more visitors in six days than for the rest of the year: a convincing argument for new participating galleries like L'Ibis (Marrakech), Charles-Westley Hourdé (Paris), and Aboriginal Signature-Estrangin Fine Art (Brussels) – which joins what used to be the fair's only aboriginal art promoter, Stéphane Jacob (Paris). (The latter focuses on the Kimberley and Papunya communities, and works by Alick Tipoti).

The success of the event is due to several factors: its format as an outdoor fair providing the pleasures of a stroll through the Paris of Saint-Germain-des-Prés – thus eliminating paid admission and enabling all comers to assuage their curiosity – and most importantly, the excellence of the works presented, many of which are museum quality. Some galleries take years to collect works – five in the case of the Bovis Gallery (Paris), with its hundred or so small marvels in the highly original exhibition "Beautysmall" (an incitement to collect in itself). The Flak Gallery (Paris) is proudly presenting this mid-19th century Eskimo Yup'ik hunter's hat decorated with ivory amulets. "It would be impossible to find one outside a museum," says Julien Flak. He is also certain he will attract enlightened art lovers with this carved ivory head from the Old Bering Sea civilisation (100 BC - 300 AD): "There are fewer than ten of these in the world!" Michael Evans (Dijon) has focused on rare objects from Niue Island, a tiny

Head of Bodhisattva,  
Gandhara, Afghanistan/  
Pakistan, 3rd /4th century  
Schist, H. 24 cm.  
Christophe Hioco Gallery.



« La jeune fille »,  
female Isogho  
statuette, Gabon.  
Wood with traces  
of padouk and  
kaolin, copper.  
H. 44.5 cm.  
Dulon Gallery.



country in the south Pacific Ocean north-east of New Zealand. Laurent Dodier (Avranches) has been sifting through 3,000 years of pre-Columbian civilisations for stone sculptures (well worth noting is

**"Years with the Biennale des Antiquaires have always been positive"** *Pierre Moos*

this Aztec sculpture (1300-1520) of Chicomecoalt, the goddess of agriculture). Bernard Dulon will be staging "the world's first exhibition devoted to Tsogho statuary and the Bwiti rite. The art of these people from southern central Gabon has not had the same recognition as that of the Fangs and the Kotas. The difficulties of accessing this mountainous, landlocked region have made us slow to appreciate their material culture. And yet the Tsoghos invented the Bwiti, a major rite of passage intrinsic to the social order, which found a considerable echo throughout the country and even beyond its borders." A fine array of masterpieces in store, it seems!

### Asian arts, the second mainstay

Created in 2001, this fair originally specialising in the arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas first began to include the Asian arts in 2015: a move it is consolidating this year with 20-odd galleries out of the 78 selected. But we can qualify this straight away, because until now, the term "ethnic arts" has also included the section covering the arts of Himalaya, certain regions of India and Indonesia. For example, Frédéric Rond from the Asian Heritage Gallery is unveiling a votive stela from Nepal showing the terrible Kali: "a remarkably old piece

(14th century), whose sculptural quality is similar to classical work." And what is new precisely comes from classical Asian art, such as the Hindu and Khmer works at the Jacques Barrère Gallery (Paris), the Japanese screens at Gregg Baker (London), the Tibetan Buddhist sculptures at FamArte (Knokke), the refined netsuke at Max Rutherford (London) and this magnificent head of a Bodhisattva from the Gandhara (3rd/4th century) at Christophe Hioco (Paris), with its delicate features inherited from Greek art. Christophe Hioco is incidentally very keen to consolidate the presence of the Asian arts: an approach supported by Pierre Moos, director of *Parcours des Mondes*, with a strategy for "creating a genuine Asian week in June 2017 in Paris, like the ones in London and New York," as he tells us. Sales results at Drouot in June this year – a total result of over €12 M – back up the reasoning for this initiative. But this desire to put the spotlight on Asian arts also reflects changes in collections, now increasingly eclectic. In this light, the SL Gallery (Paris) has recreated the apartment of Mr X., an imaginary collector. A designer interior with furniture and lighting from the 1950s to the 1980s, is the setting for colonial paintings, sculptures from Western Africa (including a Mbala statue from the Democratic Republic of the Congo), works from Borneo (the statue of a Tao Tao ancestor) and more. Here we find the dialogue already initiated by collectors and artists in the early 20th century: a crossover approach asserted at the very heart of the *Parcours*'s specialities.

**Stéphanie Pioda**

**Parcours des Mondes. International Ethnic and Asian arts fair**  
6 to 11 September, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 75006 Paris  
Quartier des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Galleries set up along various streets: the Rues des Beaux-Arts, Bonaparte, de Seine, Jacques Callot, Mazarine, Guénégaud, Visconti, Jacob, de l'Echaudé and Saint-Benoît.

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