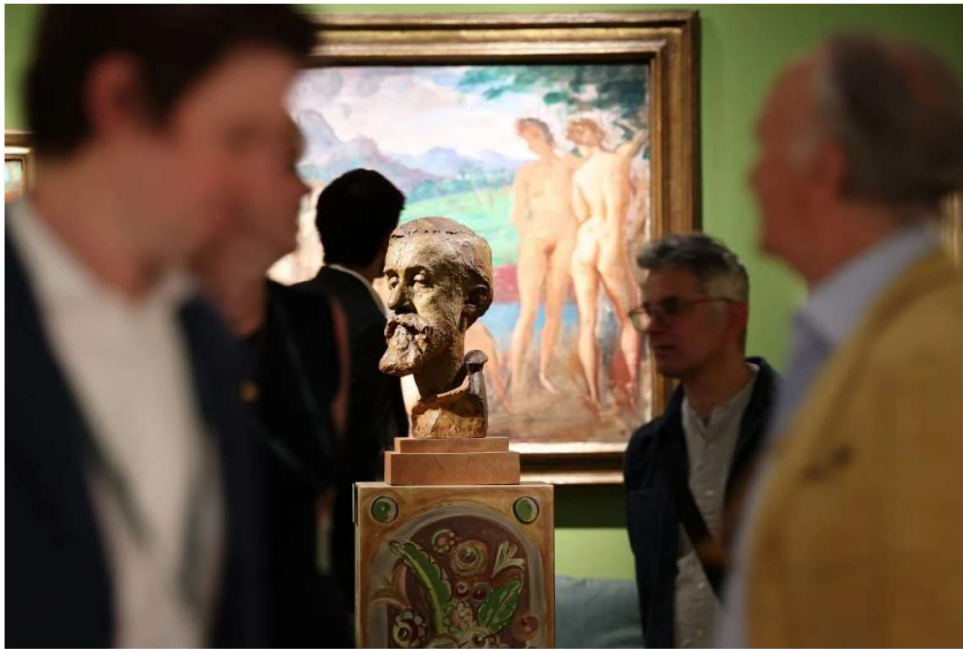


Art Fairs

London's Summer Season Dazzles With Dual Art Fairs

Like the races at Ascot and tennis at Wimbledon, Eye of the Collector and Treasure House have become essential to the city's cultural tapestry.



Philip Mould & Company's immersive booth infused with a Bloomsbury Group aesthetic by interior designer Edward Bulmer at the opening of The Treasure House Fair at Royal Hospital Chelsea on June 27, 2024 in London, England. Photo: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for The Treasure House Fair.

by **Caroline Roux** • June 28, 2024 • [Share This Article](#)

“Now I know you can’t be all things to all people,” said Nazy Vassegh on Thursday as visitors arrived at day two of the Eye of the Collector, the fair she founded in 2021. Hoping to develop an event that blurred the boundaries between art and design, with work displayed like an exhibition rather than on stands, Vassegh quickly discovered that many in the latter group are wedded to the booth format. At this latest edition, the fourth, it was noticeable that the majority of work on show was hanging on the walls and seemed primarily British. (Vassegh said, however, that the 18 galleries had brought work by 61 artists from 20 countries.)

Previously staged at Two Temple Place—the neo-gothic fantasy mansion built for William Waldorf Astor in 1895 on the banks of the Thames—Vassegh has moved the fair to a less distracting venue called the Garrison Chapel in Chelsea. “People couldn’t help looking at the interiors of Two Temple,” said Vassegh. “Here the art pops out much better.” She has helped that along by installing partitions painted dark and light gray throughout the space, to create a route through what is effectively a very big church hall.

Bang in the middle of a new development of luxury homes, opposite a huge Theo Fennell store, and a stone's throw from Sloane Square, it is a far better location. The clientele is on the doorstep and it's minutes away from Treasure House, the new art and antiques fair that, since last year, replaced the axed Masterpiece. Treasure House also opened on Thursday, in a grand white tent in the grounds of Chelsea Royal Hospital.

Sales had proved brisk at Eye of the Collector from day one, where prices are on full display and not necessarily off-putting. "It's important," said Vassegh. "People aren't always ready to ask." Two paintings of urban life by the rising star Thomas Cameron, at Canopy Collections, had sold by lunchtime at £6,500 and £7,000 apiece. "They went to collectors we know who are passionate about painters, from Caroline Walker to Peter Doig," said Canopy's Louise Chignac.

At the other end of the price range, a flamboyant cabinet by the Irish-based Zelouf and Bell that resembled a kimono shape when opened, and decorated in lacquered peonies and gold leaf, had been snapped up at the opening for £128,000. A very fine Bridget Riley gouache from 1982 in the Egyptian colors was awaiting a buyer at Tanya Baxter at £395,000.

Vassegh also commissioned works from 10 artists for the show, with the help of galleries and producers, and new pieces included the brilliantly red, joyously pneumatic "Big Girl" chair by Lara Bohinc, like an Italian 1960s design on steroids. Julian Page, who had a 1965 Bridget Riley "Plexiglass" work on offer in very good condition for £47,500, said that "For someone who's basically selling rectangles, and is used to fairs where everything is on the wall, it's great to be next to the occasional chair or pot."



At Treasure House, the official opening speech was made by none other than Chelsea girl Sienna Miller. In a cropped black top, full skirt and Gucci clogs, she welcomed visitors in a few words, before telling me that she was new to the collecting game. “I just bought my first piece, a head of woman by Emily Young,” she divulged. Miller’s presence was explained by her current relationship with Ollie Green, grandson of Mayfair gallerist Richard Green, who had a nice suite of Ben Nicolson paintings on his blue-chip stand.

Treasure House emerged last year from the ashes of Masterpiece, which was fully acquired by MCH Holdings in 2022, then axed a few months later. While the 2023 edition was a rushed job (and mostly U.K. galleries as a result), this year’s seemed a more polished affair, with 70 percent of the galleries from the U.K. and 30 percent from the rest of the world. Among the newcomers were A La Vielle Russie from New York. Specialists in fine jewelry and Fabergé, they provided the pure delight of a silver bell push in the form of a rabbit with garnet eyes (ca.1900) and a tiny lapis lazuli coachman (1910) both by Fabergé and valued respectively at \$145,000 and \$1.2 million.

The fair’s co-founder and director Thomas Woodham-Smith noted that Treasure House is a fair for collectors looking for works they want to live with. “That’s why people come for longer and are hoping for a serendipitous moment when something literally catches their eye,” he said on the opening day. Among the scene-stealers were an 18th Century peacock green crystal chandelier at Fileman Antiques, probably by William Chambers, that had been made for the Maharajah of Hyderabad (£485,000). At E+H Manners, a huge Mexican jar from the 17th century, decorated with scrunched-up faces, was available for £50,000. “They were made for export and are hard to find,” said Errol Manners, who’d come across this one in a minor sale in France.



Cedric Morris, *September Diagram*. Courtesy Philip Mould.

In the eclectic mix, another standout was Philip Mould's exuberant booth, decorated in homage to Charleston by the designer and paint expert Ed Bulmer, and fully stocked with works by Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell and friends. (Mould, it seems, is now betting on Modern British.) "It shows how things work in a domestic setting," said Bulmer of the *mise en scène*.

An exquisite flower painting in oil by Cedric Morris showed how sought after his work has become with its £295,000 price tag. At 3812, a gallery with its home in Hong Kong and one to come at Whiteley's—whenever that vast piece of W2 real estate is completed—rock paintings by Ma Desheng deserved attention. Though the leader of the Stars group in 1980s China, and a powerful painter who synthesizes ink tradition and western art practice, Ma's works pivot from £25-£60,000. "He wants to keep his prices stable until he dies," stated Calvin Hui of 3812. "It's academic, accomplished work."



Courtesy Stone Gallery.

But Treasure House is not immune to trends. And the latest seems to be for fossils and geological finds. A massive crystal geode greeted visitors at the entrance to the fair (a sort of collecting equivalent of an overblown fireworks display), while the fossil of a pregnant dinosaur was causing crowds to visit the stand of Stone from Amsterdam, where a lunar meteorite was also on show. Not for sale, the meteorite will be auctioned online in collaboration with a crypto agency, and be sold as both an NFT and an object for a crypto amount. Only tech bros need apply.