

Collecting

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Impressionism beyond borders

Painting | As the movement turns 150, followers of Monet and co outside France are gaining in prestige and price.

By Emma Crichton-Miller

The first generation of French Impressionists — innovative, challenging orthodoxies — ignited latent frustrations in artists of other lands, who took their examples home, creating a blaze of Impressionisms. These offshoots may not fetch the high prices of the founding masters, but they each reflect facets of their inspiration: painting en plein air, using square brushes, a fascination with light, an attraction to incidental scenes of contemporary life. Many of the British Impressionists will be represented at London Art Week (LAW) and Treasure House Fair next week, 150 years after the movement's founding.

Karen Taylor of Karen Taylor Fine Art, a specialist in British women artists, says: "Many late-19th-century women artists were forging their own paths, but once you have people going to Paris, you can't escape the Impressionist influence." In LAW she will show, among works on paper from 1750 to 1950, a watercolour "View of Heidelberg, Germany" (1869), suffused with light, by Sarah Sophia Beale. In 1872, Beale took classes in Paris at Charles Joshua Chaplin's studio (where American Impressionist Mary Cassatt studied); back in England she set up an art school spreading these modern French ideas.

You did not need to study in Paris, however, to be influenced by the new aesthetic, as feathery, intimate watercolours of mother and child (1899), probably self-portraits, by Mary Gow demonstrate. Supported by her artistic family, Gow studied at Heatherley's in London, the first British art school to admit women to the life room in the same way as men. These images reflect the focus on female experience pio-



neered by Cassatt and fellow Impressionist Berthe Morisot.

Ben Elwes Fine Art will show epic Arctic landscapes painted in situ by Swedish artist Anna Boberg. Mostly self-taught, she saw herself as an expressionist rather than an Impressionist, but her style varied in response to her subject, by turns bold and vigorous, delicate and sensitive, in pursuit of colour and atmosphere. Gallery co-founder Rachel Layton Elwes hopes the exhibition *Painting the Arctic Summer* will bring new attention to her passionate evocations of the Nordic environment.

Alongside works by Degas and Renoir, Haynes Fine Art will exhibit paintings by the Belgian Fernand Toussaint, who painted in both Impressionist and Post-Impressionist styles. Tony Haynes says Toussaint "encompassed subjects from lovely figurative works to still life and landscapes".

Haynes has made a speciality of the British Impressionists of the Staithe, Newlyn and St Ives schools, some of whom he is also showing. "These UK artists were encouraged to go out to Paris, sit in the cafés, attend the schools," he says. Some went to Pont-Aven in Brittany, where Gauguin held court. Once back, they sought out atmospheric locations on the Yorkshire and Cornish coasts. Rather than revolutionaries, they felt themselves, in the words of leading figure Stanhope



Left: 'Sunset on the Thames' (1917) by Emile Claus at Macconnal-Mason — Courtesy the gallery

Forbes, as part of "one of the distinct waves of feeling which occasionally occur in Art". They are not especially expensive either, says Haynes: "Our exhibition is about showing accessible Impressionists."

Haynes particularly admires the vivid paintings of London- and Paris-trained Dorothea Sharp, which catch the ever-changing bright light of Cornwall's coast: "Painting through two world wars, a terrible time to be anywhere, she

offered happy subjects." Highly regarded in her lifetime, today her work can be acquired from £12,000.

As part of LAW, David Messum Fine Art celebrates 50 years of showing British Impressionists. In 1985 the gallery published the first comprehensive survey of British Impressionism, subtitled "A Garden of Bright Images". It was an effort to draw attention to an area of British painting then often overlooked in favour of the Post-Impressionist-



influenced Modernists, such as Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. Messum suggests that "there was Impressionism in England before French Impressionism — Constable, Gainsborough, Turner. Influence went both ways."

The gallery championed the Scottish Colourists — Samuel John Peploe, Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell, GL Hunter and John Duncan Fergusson — who trained in France and closely followed artistic developments there. "Their market has benefited hugely from our attention — and we found a market for Swedish Impressionism also," Messum says.

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This year, the Newlyn school is Messum's primary focus, including newly acquired pictures of local subjects with fresh brushwork and bright colours by Harold Harvey, who had studied at the Académie Julian in Paris, and by Gertrude Harvey, his wife.

At Treasure House Fair, Macconnal-Mason will show work by Harold Harvey (around £150,000), as well as a French view by anglophile Lucien Pissarro ("who we think of as British"). It will offer "Sunset on The Thames" (1917), painted from the Embankment by the Belgian painter Emile Claus, who was much influenced by Monet and spent the first world war in London. David Mason says: "We especially like his London views, but also his landscapes, which border on social realism."

A proponent of the Belgian variant of Impressionism, known as luminism, Claus will have a pastel on show at the fair with Leighton Fine Art. Nick Leighton suggests that "the market for these lesser-known names is the most interesting one. They are still very accessible."

This summer presents a good chance for these British Impressionists to have, at last, their own qualities reassessed. Given the variety of different schools, the best of them surely deserve, 150 years on, to shelve their identities as also-rans or Impressionists-lite and be recognised in their own right.

Treasure House Fair tries to build on debut's momentum

London | Dealers at the event will be hoping this summer's second edition will bring improved visitor numbers. By Susan Moore

For an event designed, built, filled and promoted in just three months last year, Treasure House Fair's mere existence was remarkable. Dreamt up in the wake of the surprise demise of London's Masterpiece fair, which occupied a similar plot in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, the fledgling fair had only around 50 dealers, offering

Right: 'Queen Mary II and Her Water Gallery' (2023) by Robin Best at Adrian Sassoon



everything from antiquities to modern design, but returns this year with 70.

It was not dealer numbers or visitor crowds which proved Treasure House's viability to fair director and co-founder Thomas Woodham-Smith. "Our greatest success last year was that the average visit time was around four hours. People came and enjoyed being there."

Participants included leading international dealers — among them Jean-David Cahn, Richard Green, Koopman Rare Art, Ronald Phillips, SJ Phillips, Adrian Sassoon and Wartski, who are all return-

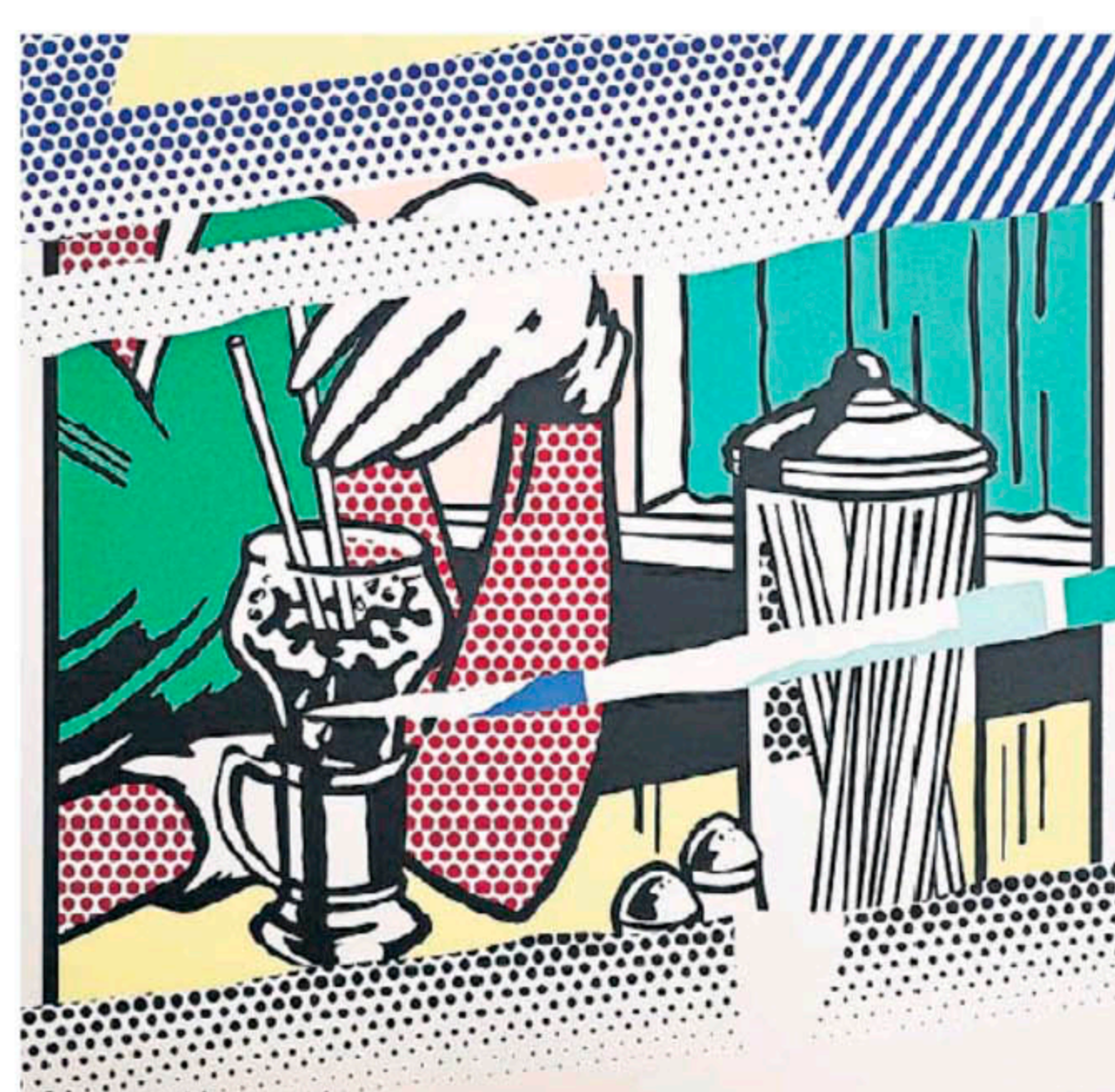
ing. Their ranks will be swelled by New York galleries À la Vieille Russie, SJ Shrubsole and Phoenix Ancient Art. The fair has also stretched from five to six days (June 27-July 2).

While commercial success often seems to depend on a roll of the dice — whether a dealer brings object A rather than B, or a collector turns right or left at the end of an aisle — most of the exhibitors contacted for this article reported decent sales. Fabergé, jewellery and objets de vertu dealers Wartski had one of the best fairs in its history, says managing director Kieran McCarthy.

Even so, Treasure House, owned by Harry van der Hoorn of Dutch builders Stabulo, still needs to make up ground on visitor numbers and local engagement: by the end Masterpiece was welcoming 40,000 people over eight days; Treasure House had just over 12,000 in person in five days last year, with another 18,000 online, says the fair.

"Not enough people seemed to know about the event, or what it was," comments one exhibitor.

The owners of Masterpiece — MCH Group, which also owns Art Basel — had



Above: Roy Lichtenstein's 'Reflections on Soda Fountain' at Long-Sharp Gallery — Courtesy the gallery

axed the fair after financial losses arising from the pandemic and Brexit. Post-Brexit dynamics still apply and it is revealing that the US and Switzerland dominate this year's non-UK exhibitors. Dealers from these countries are used to dealing with the onerous paperwork their EU colleagues were once spared.

Woodham-Smith is fighting back to attract EU galleries. A deal with the art logistics business Momart allows international exhibitors to use the customs procedure known as Temporary Admission, which means no import duty or VAT will be payable, under a simple arrangement.

The fair and Momart will jointly meet this cost — 5 per cent of the shipping fee — and manage the paperwork. "This will take EU dealers back to the pre-Brexit position," says Woodham-Smith. Finalised too late to have much impact this year, he hopes the scheme will bear more fruit in future editions.

In response to a fair landscape dominated by powerful and expanding franchises (Art Basel has added Paris to its roster; Frieze, Chicago and New York), Treasure House has initiated a collaboration with a comparable independent fair. Helen Allen, executive director of the Winter Show in New York, has been appointed Treasure House's development director. "The two fairs share many dealers and have a similar feel, look and quality," says Allen.

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