

Art market



Huon Mallalieu

Are you sitting comfortably?

A 1940s design icon will offer tempting repose at PAD London and fashionably floral Spode and a star sapphire are set to make a mark at Esher Hall

SANDOWN Park Race-course prompts thoughts of animals, certainly, but not necessarily of wildlife. However, this year's art and antiques fair at the Esher Hall on the course between October 9 and 11 is supporting the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, which works to save endangered species in their natural habitats around the world, but is based nearby at Shalford, just outside Guildford in Surrey.

Among its fundraising initiatives is an adopt-an-animal scheme, whereby, for £32, you can sponsor an elephant, tiger, snow leopard, moon bear, painted dog or other endangered creature (and get a print by David or his daughter Mandy among other goodies) or sponsor a much-needed wildlife guardian. Incidentally, I would still be puffing this admirable foundation even were I not a cousin of the founder. Haynes Fine Art of Broadway will be showing a painting by the man himself (**Fig 1**).

A detail, or rather the lack of it, strikes me as odd in an attractive 1978 painting of a Co Cork village



Fig 1: Painting of a Co Cork village scene from 1978 by Mary Fedden. With Marais Fine Arts

by Mary Fedden (1915–2012), which will be shown at the fair by Marais Fine Arts of Guernsey (**Fig 1**). There are no signs on the houses reading 'Bar and' Outfitter, Grocer, Garage or whatever. On a post-university driving tour of southern Ireland with a friend, we frequented many such, until, approaching Thurles in Co Tipperary, we declared that we would take not a drop more Murphy's until we came upon a Bar and Auctioneer. A moment later, having parked, we found that the town could

do better: Bar, Undertaker and Auctioneer, a combination that makes excellent business sense.

Fedden is much in favour at present; this is priced at £19,500. It must also be time for a parallel revival of the reputation of her husband, Julian Trevelyan.

Spode Pattern 1166 has probably never really been out of fashion. Connoisseurs describe it as 'one of the most expensive in ceramic decoration' and 'one of the most magnificent to come out of the Spode factory'. It is based on a cobalt-blue ground

with a gilt scale pattern, hand-painted with lush flowers, and was produced from 1808 to 1833, most intensively between 1815 and 1820.

Emma Duveen of Guildford, specialist in objects of art and paintings as well as porcelain, will show a potpourri dish in the pattern at £750 (**Fig 3**).

Another floral-related offering will be a rare and particularly elegant pair of tables shown by S. & S. Timms of Amphil (**Fig 2**). They are *demi-lune* satinwood three-stepped tables decorated with painted architectural scenes, intended to display banks of flowers, either against walls or, if standing together (*plein-lune*,



Fig 2: Pair of *demi-lune* tables for displaying flowers. With S. & S. Timms



Fig 3 left centre: Potpourri dish in Spode Pattern 1166. With Emma Duveen. Fig 4 left: Russian star-sapphire and diamond egg pendant. With T. Robert

so to speak), to stand as one centrally. Although the metal liners in the top steps and most of the glass wells below are replacements, the quality well justifies a price of £29,500.

I suspect that were the maker's mark not rubbed, the Russian 14ct-gold and silver star-sapphire and diamond egg, or perhaps acorn, pendant made in St Petersburg between 1908 and 1917, would be more expensive than the £9,500 that will be asked by T. Robert of Norfolk. Although described as large, which it is for a sapphire, in length, it is equivalent to the diameter of a 20p piece (*Fig 4*).

The London autumn-fair season continues with PAD, following LAPADA in Berkeley Square between October 14 and 18. This is a fair that succeeds in integrating old and new with a panache that others can only hope to emulate. It has a spacious feel, with 60 or so stands rather than the 100 on the same floorspace at LAPADA and the organisers are not tempted to bulk it with second-rank contemporary exhibitors.

Last year, Phoenix Ancient Art of Geneva and New York exhibited here for the first time at a London fair and was happy with the results. I particularly wished to illustrate its Hellenistic head of a queen or goddess from the early 3rd century BC, not only for its beauty, but particularly for its eyes (*Fig 7*). In this case, the blankness is rather powerful, but, until the recent 'Defining beauty' exhibition at the British Museum, I had never fully understood that the eyes (along with much else on Greek marble statues) would have been painted in—and to us might seem rather crude. Presumably the many neo-Classicalists who followed the blank-eyed tradition did not know.

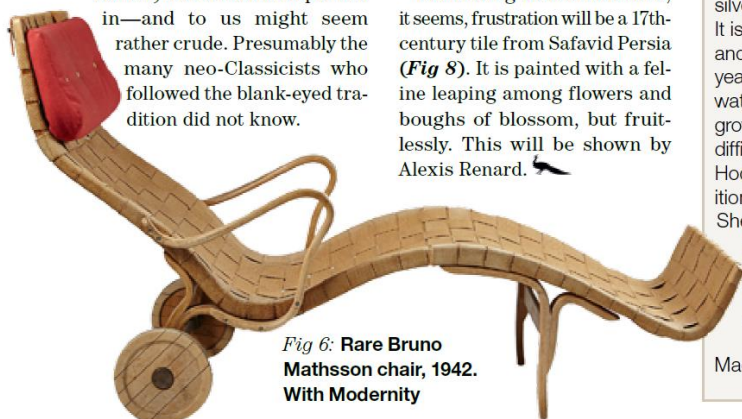


Fig 6: Rare Bruno Mathsson chair, 1942. With Modernity



Fig 5: Battle for the Skies (WW1) (1987) by David Shepherd. Haynes Fine Art of Broadway

Tantalus is not a figure who seems to have been sculpted much in antiquity, but his mythological punishment by frustration appealed to the humour of the Victorians. Lockable frames for sets of decanters to frustrate thirsty servants were named after him, the best-known being wooden ones manufactured by Sir John Betjeman's family firm. Blairman will take such a Tantalus to PAD, but not a Betjemann. This is an electroplated version designed in about 1879 by Christopher Dresser.

Should you look up the Swedish furniture designer and architect Bruno Mathsson (1907–88) on Wikipedia, you will find a photo of him seated in his 1942 bent-birch, brass and paper-webbing chair. A rare version of this, with wheels, will be offered by Modernity (*Fig 6*). All it needs is a decanter for total comfort.

Illustrating both wildlife and, it seems, frustration will be a 17th-century tile from Safavid Persia (*Fig 8*). It is painted with a feline leaping among flowers and boughs of blossom, but fruitlessly. This will be shown by Alexis Renard.



**Next week
Masters in the Park**



Fig 7 left: Hellenistic head from the early 3rd century bc. With Phoenix Ancient Art. Fig 8 above: A 17th-century tile from Safavid Persia. With Alexis Renard

Pick of the week

Old olive trees are fascinating challenges for a painter. Their writhing trunks have the texture of very ancient elephants and, when wind-blown, hardly seem related to the shivering clouds of silvery grey-green leaves. It is the contrast of age and youth perhaps. Last year, I tried to do several watercolours in an olive grove and found them very difficult, so I admire Marcus Hodge's trees in his exhibition at the Jerram Gallery, Sherborne, Dorset, from October 3 to 21 (*above*, 01935 815261; www.jerramgallery.com). Mr Hodge is a successful portrait painter, but he also works in the post-Impressionist *plein-air* landscape tradition. In this show, his olives come from Majorca and he also paints an unusually clement west coast of Scotland. A show of landscapes and still-lives by the art historian John Maddison follows, running from October 31 to November 18.

