

# COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

OCTOBER 4, 2023

## Great Dixter Still taking gardening to new heights



The art of autumn by Monet and Hockney  
Drop-dead gorgeous: the ethereal beauty of mist  
Lutyens, letter-carving and Highland cows





# French exchange

It's fair time in London, with the PAD and Frieze and Frieze Masters all starting next week

WHEN the PAD (Paris Art Design) London fair was launched in 2007, in Berkeley Square, it was the first devoted to 20th-century and contemporary design and was the most stylish such event in Britain. The style is still there, and this year (October 10–15, [www.padesignart.com](http://www.padesignart.com)) will be more international than ever. Designers from more than 30 countries will be shown by the 62 galleries, which are themselves drawn from 16 countries, and 13 of which are exhibiting for the first time.

Among the newcomers, two particularly caught my eye in the pre-publicity. The Mumbai design gallery *Æquō* (I leave the pronunciation to you) commissions items from international designers, several of them female and French, in cooperation with Indian makers working in traditional crafts. At the Paris fair in July, *Æquō*'s teak daybed with its mattress made from mooda dried rice-grass packaging created by Val  rine Lazard won best exhibit prize. In London, the gallery will have one of her chairs (*Fig 2*) and four *tavit* chairs designed

by Florence Louisy and sand cast with bronze (*Fig 3*) or aluminium finishes in a Mumbai traditional metal workshop.

The Parisian Secret Gallery on the rue de Varenne on the Left Bank has an 18th-century exterior, but a coolly theatrical interior, which is not surprising as the owners have backgrounds in stage design. A particularly handsome exhibit will be a cabinet in the Lala range with cloisonn   tile decoration by the London-trained architect Reda Amalou (*Fig 1*).

Laffanour-Galerie Downtown from the rue de Seine is a returning regular. Fran  ois Laffanour approves of what he calls 'total art', and admires architect-designed furniture, while disdaining the white sofa and minimalist look. One exhibit which would be at home anywhere is a bronze standard lamp, *Savana Circus* (*Fig 4*), created in 2019 by Richard Texier (b.1955), a sculptor whose most-noticed work to many Britons is probably the monumental red skeletal, or rather reticular, winged polar bear in front of the Gare du Nord, which is a warning of the animal's threatened extinction. The standard lamp seems more

hopeful, with animals in the branches of a tree which emerges from the back of an elephant.

Laffanour-Galerie Downtown is evidently an organisation with resources and stamina. Not only will it be at PAD, but it will have two exhibitions in Paris where it will also participate in a new design fair, all at the same time.

Simultaneously, Frieze and Frieze Masters will be back in Regent's Park (October 11–15, [www.frieze.com](http://www.frieze.com)), with orbital happenings around London. Frieze Sculpture is already to be seen in the English Gardens between

the two Regent's Park sites (until October 29), and it includes 21 artists. Frieze has 160 exhibitors and Frieze Masters more than 130, representing 46 countries between the two. From this vast assemblage I offer a mere four, a sculpture and three paintings, all, as it happens, from Masters.

Given the numbers of pop-up restaurants and bars in the marquees, perhaps the antiquities dealer Charles Ede should have asked one of them to display a prize piece, an 18th-Dynasty Egyptian limestone offering table (*Fig 7*) dating from around 1400BC. It is



Fig 1 above: A Lala tiled cabinet by Reda Amalou. With Secret Gallery



Ren   G  rritsen



Fig 2 above left: A Bedsa chair by Val  rine Lazard. With *Æquō*. Fig 3 above right: A bronze *tavit* chair by Florence Louisy. With *Æquō*. Fig 4 right: A *Savana Circus* lamp. With Laffanour-Galerie Downtown



relief-carved with comestibles, including gazelle, duck, wader, wine, loaves and lotus flowers, and an inscription celebrating 'that which heaven gives and the earth creates and the Nile brings'. Such offerings would be anointed with oil, which would flow away through a loaf-shaped spout.

Should the newly opened National Gallery Frans Hals show have provoked envy, there is a chance to acquire a work here, as Salomon Lillian of Amsterdam offers a *Portrait of a Man aged 50* (Fig 6), dated 1635. Another notable 17th-century Dutch, or perhaps Anglo-Dutch, work is 24in by 36in. *A View of the Thames at Westminster on The Lord Mayor's Day* (Fig 8) by Thomas Wijck (about 1616–77). Alas, nowadays the annual procession (this year November 11) is entirely by coach; in the 1660s Wijck was able to show the barges of 10 of the Great 12 City companies. This is with Rafael Valls.



Fig 6: *A Portrait of a Man aged 50* (1635). With Salomon Lillian

Last year, Maggi Hambling spent six weeks in a Manhattan hospital after a near-fatal heart attack. She is now deservedly enjoying a moment. Frankie Rossi Projects and Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert are hanging 'Maelstrom' (Fig 5), an exhibition of works meditating on her experience, at their Bury Street, SW1, gallery (October 5–November 24), with a selection of work at Masters. The paintings seem to combine the violent energy of her waves with, perhaps, an element of near-abstract self-portraiture. Also during the autumn there are Hambling shows at Gainsborough's House in Suffolk and in Turin. 🐉

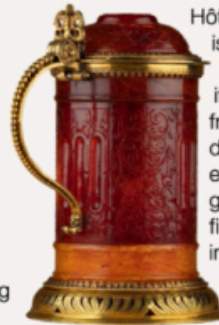
Next week Elveden (part two)



Fig 5: A painting from the Maggi Hambling exhibition 'Maelstrom'

### Pick of the week

Königsberg, otherwise Kaliningrad, currently owes its notoriety to the weapons based there, but in more reasonable times, the adjacent coasts are celebrated as the source of 90% of Baltic amber. Amber is found in different forms around the world: in the Baltic it is petrified pine resin, sometimes with insects or plants embedded, making it a symbol of immortality. Being translucent and comparatively soft, it can be carved and polished to make numinous works of art that have been prized by great collectors for centuries. From the 16th century, the rulers of Prussia fostered the creation of such things for diplomatic gifts. Amber and the Galerie Kugel in Paris make a perfect partnership, since the gallery in the



Hôtel Collot on the quai Anatole France is itself the embodiment of a *Wunderkabinett* or treasury. The family, now in its fourth and fifth generation, emigrated from Russia in 1924 and has always dealt across a wide range of the highest quality. It has taken 20 years to gather the 50 items which make the first ever amber exhibition to be held in France (October 18–December 16, [www.galeriekugel.com](http://www.galeriekugel.com)).

Outstanding among them are a small tankard (pictured) by Georg Schreiber of Königsberg, about 1610, with slightly later silver-gilt mounts; a small standing shell cup attributed to Johann Caspar Labhart of Kassel, about 1690 with 19th-century gold enamel mounts; and a games box complete with chess pieces, draughtsmen and dice, made by Michel Redlin of Danzig in about 1680.



Fig 7 above left: Egyptian limestone offering table. With Charles Ede. Fig 8 above right: *A View of the Thames* by Wijck. With Rafael Valls

