

FEATURE

OUR FRIENDS ECLECTIC

By showing art and design in seemingly domestic settings, PAD London has changed the face of art fairs. We talked to its founder, Patrick Perrin

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By Oliver Bennett

Some art fairs feel a bit like expensive airports – endless beige carpets, identikit white walls, water-coolers. PAD, meanwhile, which takes over Berkeley Square in London each October, is much more like walking into a fantasy friend's home. Many of the stands show design and antiques as well as modern art: Picasso and Warhol paintings hover above Danish mid-century sofas; classic Magnum photographs sit beside antiques and jewellery on plinths. And all is discreetly on sale.

It's a sensual Gallic counterpart to Frieze London art fair – with which it runs concurrently – and the brainchild of Patrick Perrin, a Frenchman who set up PAD after studying art history in London and working for Christie's New York. "I've been immersed in the art market since I was a child," says Perrin. "After London and New York, I opened a gallery with my father in Paris, specialising in 18th-century French furniture, and I created [decorative arts fair] the Salon du Dessin in Paris in 1991." This led Perrin to create PAD Paris – a contraction of Pavillon des Antiquaires et des Galeries





d'Art and "inspired by 'cabinets de curiosités'". Then, with no equivalent fair here, Perrin crossed the Channel to start DesignArt London in 2007 in Hanover Square. A year later, the fair moved to Berkeley Square and in 2009 was renamed PAD London, incorporating modern art as a key genre. "The combination of design and art worked instantly," he says.

The difference between PAD and other art fairs/biennals is its eclectic mix, which makes it much easier to imagine the work in a domestic setting. "Collectors and public alike say

ABOVE: BAOULE FIGURE FROM IVORY COAST; COPPER VASES APPLIED WITH BRIGHT BLUE COLOUR (2010) BY TORU KANEKO

they feel 'at home' at PAD," says Perrin. "It's important that it's calm and relaxing, so you enjoy the beauty of every stand, curated by each dealer. It's about inspiring people, giving them ideas for their homes." Indeed, Perrin says most buyers are art and design lovers who "don't buy for investment but for pieces they cherish. They genuinely buy for themselves and there are more domestic than investment purchases." At the same time, PAD has helped pioneer a trend for "cross collecting" – the collecting of artefacts across genres and art forms. "We were first in London to mix genres, although in Paris the trend already existed," says Perrin.

"The eclectic formula has been used by other fairs since and cross collecting has become a strong trend." And as seen last year, when a collection of Japanese armour sold out, there remains great potential in the applied arts or decorative arts, particularly when compared to the market for contemporary art which Perrin calls "a speculative market" ready for "bad surprises". It shows the hint of a hard nose beneath the chic exterior.

PAD London, 15-19 October, 11am-8pm (Sun 11am-6pm)
pad-fairs.com