



Christopher Bramham, Two Lemons 2013-14

ART

Market News: Wyndham bids farewell

There were records and a fond farewell at the Duchess of Devonshire sale, while a young Ethiopian artist hit the jackpot in New York; Colin Gleadell rounds up the week's art news



BY COLIN GLEADELL
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The Indian art market is the subject of a forthcoming survey by [Art Tactic](#), a number-crunching market analyst which focuses on emerging markets. The survey rates the modern and contemporary Indian market as one of the most improved emerging markets in 2015 in terms of auction sales. "With US, European, and Chinese art markets showing a decline in auction sales in 2015, the Indian Modern and Contemporary art market saw a 14 per cent increase (based on Sotheby's, Christie's and Saffronart). This result is even more

positive (a 36 per cent increase in 2015) if we add results from Bonhams, Pundoles and Asta Guru,” the report says. Only the much smaller African market has improved by more. Looking to the future, 53 per cent of experts consulted believed the Indian market would rise in 2016, a much higher

degree of optimism than in any of the other markets surveyed, which include the Americas, Europe, China, Russia, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia. The survey notes how the trend towards auctions held within India is increasing, and that these sales are including a greater number of antiquities and miniatures – which all points to a growing sophistication amongst Indian buyers.

Among the exhibitions that comprise [Asian](#)

[Art Week](#) in New York, the greatest preponderance of Indian art is not modern and contemporary but miniature paintings from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Specialist London dealers Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch have secured a collection of 31 miniatures, mainly of the Rajput schools, formed by German advertising executive Gunter Heil in the 1980s – a golden age for Indian miniature collecting. They are now priced from \$15,000 to \$200,000 each. Another miniature collection, from the estate of Claus Virch, a former curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art who was buying during the 1960s and 70s – is being sold by Sotheby’s with an estimate range of \$800 to \$35,000. Interestingly, miniatures are India’s top modern and

contemporary art collector Kiran Nadar’s latest hobby. “It’s not big at the moment,” she tells the Daily Telegraph, “but it will be important.”

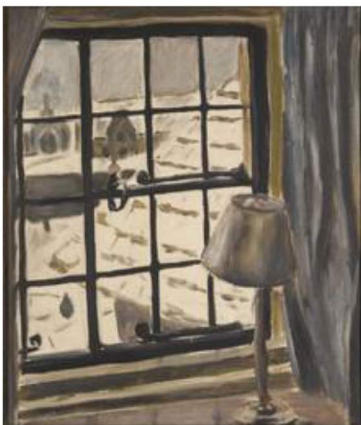
Outgoing chairman Henry Wyndham made his last appearance on the rostrum as [Sotheby’s](#) chairman last week during the marathon eight-and-three-quarter-hour sale of The Duchess of Devonshire’s collection in London. It would have been much quicker had it not been for the volume of slow internet bidding, which clearly doesn’t suit Wyndham. “Sorry, you’re too late,” he grumped at one unfortunate internet bidder who has just taking too long to press the

button. Then, as a pair of pearl earrings estimated at £70 was subject to a lengthy bidding battle exclusively on the internet until they sold for £700 pounds, he mused: “I don’t know why I’m here; it just does it by itself”. After the last lot, the room burst into a loud cheer. “It was,” said managing director, Maarten ten Holder, in a brief public homily, “a masterclass in auctioneering”. Then, proffering Wyndham a tall pina colada with all the trimmings, he added: “We know you are looking forward to a long holiday... and probably a stiff drink.” “Oh God, how embarrassing,” muttered Wyndham, before switching off his microphone.



Kishengharh royal elephant, Heil Collection

[Enlarge](#)



Nancy Mitford, View from Ashall Manor, 1926/7

[Enlarge](#)



David Dawson photograph of Freud painting the Queen

[Enlarge](#)

The Duchess of Devonshire sale saw some relatively stupendous prices, notably £15,000 for a rare painting by Nancy Mitford, who was discouraged from painting by her art teacher, record prices for flower paintings by Emma Tenant and Jo Self, and a small photograph by Lucian Freud's former assistant, David Dawson, of Freud painting the Queen which sold for £10,000.

Dawson, who was attending the opening of an exhibition at Jonathan Clark's Chelsea gallery that evening, where half the paintings by one of Freud's favourite artists, Christopher Bramham, had already been sold, looked pleasantly surprised at the news. Prices for his photographs of Freud exhibited at Sotheby's two years ago were just £3,000.

A jam-packed week of contemporary art fairs and auctions in New York last week has demonstrated that, even with an economic downturn looming, there is enough interest to sustain this roller-coaster of a market. The main auctions, which were in the lower price category compared to New York's big May sales, were uneven, but saw \$39 million of sales, not dramatically lower than last year's \$44.6 million peak for a March series, with Sotheby's hitting a mid-estimate \$20 million with only 15 per cent of its 349 lots going unsold.



Dawit Abebe, No 2. Background 37, 2016

[Enlarge](#)

Business was also ticking along nicely, if not at a frenzied pace, at the numerous art fairs, with several galleries selling out in the opening days. At the biggest fair, the Armory Show, the geographical focus was on Africa and its diaspora – a theme which had a trickle-down effect into the smaller fairs, like Volta, where young Ethiopian artist Dawit Abebe sold nine huge paintings of people standing with their backs to the viewer (The background series) for \$12,000 each. Abebe was exhibiting with Kristin Hjellegjerde, who has a gallery in Wandsworth, south west London. Several of his paintings and drawings were bought and

exhibited by the Saatchi gallery last year in the African/Latin American show, Panagea 11. This was a first appearance in New York for both artist and gallery, and buyers included veteran US talent spotting collector, Susan and Michael Hort, young New Yorkers Carole Server and Oliver Frankel, and the Sharjah-based Barjeel Foundation, whose collection is currently on view at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London.