

The Art Market Collecting**African art unpacked at 1:54**

Plus: Monet's Charing Cross for New York; big-name sellers in London; Banksy lights up lacklustre week; surprise success in Hong Kong



Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga's 'Conscience Fragile' (2019) © Courtesy October Gallery

Melanie Gerlis 12 HOURS AGO

Organisers of London's 1:54 fair for contemporary African art did well to open its sophisticated seventh edition to VIPs a few hours before the opening of the Frieze fairs on October 2. There was an inevitable lull when the 1:54 crowd made its way to the Frieze tents in Regent's Park, but, exhibitors say, not before some helpful contacts and early sales were secured.

"African art" is increasingly seen as a very broad term for the 54 countries within the continent, as the fair's name reminds us. "The 'African' label doesn't have to go, but it has to evolve," says Rakeb Sile, co-founder of Ethiopia's Addis Fine Art, which opens a second space in London's Cromwell Place next year. "Africa is seen as a monolith, but it has very many different histories. What comes into people's heads should be more nuanced now."

At the fair, Sile sold works by all the Ethiopia-born artists she had brought for her booth: Tadesse Mesfin (£25,000-£35,000) and his pupils Ermias Kifleyesus (£5,500-£12,500) and Merikokeb Berhanu (up to £15,000). Elsewhere, sales included DRC artist Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga's "Conscience Fragile" (2019) to South Africa's Norval Foundation (October Gallery, \$65,000), while Vigo gallery reported sales of 57 of the "Pain Relief" drawings by the Sudan-born Ibahim El-Salahi (priced between £2,000 and £30,000 each), including a number to London's Modern Forms collection.

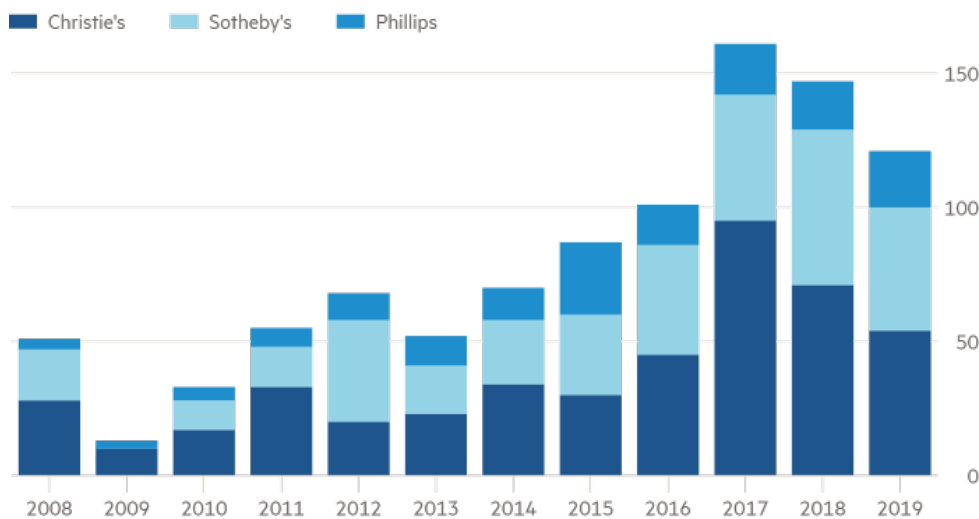


Merikokeb Berhanu's 'Untitled XXXVI' (2019)

With London's most important art season behind us, the auction houses are getting in gear for the all-important Impressionist, Modern and contemporary art sessions in New York next month. This week, Sotheby's revealed it will offer Claude Monet's "Charing Cross Bridge" (1903) for between \$20m and \$30m on November 12.

Brexit hits auction houses

Evening sales for London, October, post-war and contemporary art (£m)



Source: ArtTactic © FT

The painting comes from the collection of Andrea Klepetar-Fallek, who died in May, and her late fourth husband Fred Fallek. Born in Austria in 1920, Klepetar-Fallek was among the first wave of European Jews to move to the newly established state of Israel in 1948. Her remarkable life story includes fleeing the Nazis in Vienna, escaping from a concentration camp on the Croatian island of Rab and leaving Argentina’s Peronist dictatorship in 1972. Works by Pierre Bonnard and Edgar Degas also come to auction from their collection, which Sotheby’s has guaranteed and has secured a third-party to buy the Monet.



Claude Monet's 'Charing Cross Bridge' (1903)

The same week, in New York’s contemporary sales, a record could be set for the American painter of edible goodies, Wayne Thiebaud, who turns 100 next year. Sotheby’s will offer his large-scale “Encased Cakes”, bought from the artist when it was painted in 2011 and estimated between \$6m and \$8m, on November 14 (Thiebaud’s current auction record is \$6.3m, including fees). Another of his paintings — “Mickey Mouse” (1988) — comes to Christie’s morning auction on November 13 from the collection of the late couple Ron and Diane Disney Miller, Walt Disney’s daughter (est \$400,000-\$600,000).

What do the actor Jane Fonda, tennis player Michael Stich and Italy's UniCredit bank have in common? All of them sold works at last week's evening auctions at Christie's in London. Fonda's "Trophies (Doll Factory)" (2000) by Thornton Dial, a canvas that incorporates Barbie dolls and stuffed animals, sold for a within estimate £180,000 (£225,000 with fees), while an imposing Günther Förg (1990) from Stich's collection sold under estimate but still for a healthy £160,000 (£200,000 with fees). Six works from UniCredit's collection, including three by Gerhard Richter, made a total £11.8m (£14m with fees), just shy of their combined low estimate of £12.4m. Among these was the bank's "Superficie bianca" (1989) by Enrico Castellani — at £700,000 (£851,250 with fees) it doubled its high estimate.

The Castellani was part of Christie's post-war Italian art sale, which, together with Phillips's combined 20th-century and contemporary sale on October 2 (total £25.8m with fees), proved the liveliest of the five evening auctions in London last week. Each came in within estimate, for a combined total of £160.1m (£192.6m with fees), to little fanfare, but perhaps this is as much as London can hope for in the endless shadow of Brexit.

The exception to London's lacklustre week was, once again, Banksy, who provided the fireworks at Sotheby's on October 3. While not quite as astonishing as his shredding stunt made during the equivalent auction last year, the street artist's huge and timely "Devolved Parliament" (2009), showing the House of Commons peopled (as it were) by chimpanzees, sold in a fevered saleroom for a [staggering £8.5m](#) (£9.9m with fees). This shattered Banksy's previous record of \$1.9m, set at a charity auction in 2008, as well as the work's presale estimate of between £1.5m and £2m.

The artist's shredding performance of 2018 has boosted his prices, concedes auctioneer Oliver Barker, Sotheby's chairman of Europe. "It created a different, more global, constituency for his work," he says.



Yoshitomo Nara's 'Knife Behind Back' (2000)

The highest auction prices last week were, surprisingly, made in Hong Kong. On October 6, as thousands of protesters took to the streets in increasingly intense protests against Beijing's government, the record for a work by the Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara (b1959) was broken twice. Standing at HK\$34.9m (US\$4.4m), Poly Auction was the first to break Nara's record, as his "Not Everything but/ Green House" (2009) installation sold for HK\$40.1m (US\$5.1m with fees). The new benchmark didn't last long, as later that day Sotheby's sold "Knife Behind Back" (2000) for nearly five times that amount, at HK\$195.7m (US\$24.9m with fees, low estimate HK\$50m, third party guarantee).

The Sotheby's painting is not Nara's most prized work but it does show a trademark cartoon of an angry girl and is the largest canvas by the artist ever to appear at auction (234cm by 208cm). It sold after a 10-minute bidding war to an Asian private collector, Sotheby's says. The work was one of five to sell for more than HK\$100m (\$12.7m) during the auction house's five-day series of sales.

Follow [@FTLifeArts](#) on Twitter to find out about our latest stories first. Listen and subscribe to *Culture Call*, a transatlantic conversation from the FT, at [ft.com/culture-call](#) or on [Apple Podcasts](#)

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2019. All rights reserved.