

The Art Market | Trophies in New York; art conferences go global; Victoria Miro opens in Venice; unicorns in London. By *Melanie Gerlis*

# May sales go dotty

Trophy consignments to New York's May season of Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary auctions are shaping up nicely with the auction houses busy securing guarantees from third parties in the run up.

The latest revelation is that Sotheby's is offering Roy Lichtenstein's sexy Ben-Day dot painting "Nude Sunbathing" (1995), estimated to make more than \$20m, on May 18. The auction record for a Lichtenstein from this late (1994-97) "Nude" series is \$31.5m (including fees), set in 2013.

The work is among those on view at the auction houses in London this weekend, which also include, at Christie's, another dotty painting: Sigmar Polke's huge "Frau mit

Butterbrot" (1964), one of 100-plus works from the collection of property developer Jerry Spiegel and his wife Emily, who both died in 2009. The canvas carries a \$20m estimate, high for Polke. Also on view at Christie's, which seems to be bursting with the best, will be Cy Twombly's "Leda and the Swan" (1962, \$35m-\$55m). Only two works by Twombly, both prized "blackboard" paintings, have sold for more than this upper level.

Modern works on the block in May include a Picasso portrait of Dora Maar, "Femme assise, robe bleue" (1939), at Christie's on May 15. The painting, which has a \$35m-\$50m estimate, was confiscated by the Nazis in 1940 from Picasso's dealer, Paul Rosenberg, and later intercepted by the Free French army on its way to Germany in 1944.

Bonhams has secured a Matisse cut-out, a relative rarity at auction. "Arbre de Neige" (1947), in a Canadian private collection since 1968, carries an \$800,000-\$1.2m estimate.

"Obvious art by obvious artists is what sells and there's plenty of it coming to market in May," says Kenny Schachter, a London-based writer, dealer and collector, adding, "I anticipate super-strong results".

As the art market's economic impact grows, conferences dedicated to the trade are increasingly playing a part. Last week saw the launch of the Art Business Conference in New York, which, in the Time Warner Center on April 4, covered topics including cyber risk and freports. "As we



Clockwise from above: Matisse's 'Arbre de Neige' (1947); detail of Jean Duvet's 'The Unicorn Purifies the Water with his Horn' (c1555/61); Chris O'Fili's 'Poolside Magic 8' (2012)

globally, so we are witnessing its growing professionalisation," says Louise Hamlin, who founded the conference in London in 2014. The event started with 225 delegates, rising to 370 last year. "The next logical step was to launch in New York," Hamlin says.

Meanwhile, the more focused Talking Galleries conference, founded by Lluçia Homs in Barcelona in 2011, is expanding geographically. Last year saw its first outing in Korea (coinciding with Seoul Gallery Weekend in October) and in May the conference extends to Paris, in partnership with the Choices Paris Gallery Weekend (May 19, Centre Pompidou). Talks in Dubai are also being planned in November and Brazil in 2018.

One trend that looks set to continue in 2017 is that of established dealers opening in interesting spaces and places, outside the traditional market hubs.

Now, London's Victoria Miro confirms the opening of her first overseas space in a 17th-century building in San Marco, Venice, on May 10, to coincide with the start of the city's 57th Biennale. This follows news that Thomas Dane is also going abroad for the first time, with a new space in Naples planned for later this year, while Maureen Paley opens in Hove, on England's south coast, in July. All cite the opportunity for their artists to show in a refreshingly different context.

"It's a beautiful, intimate space — the canal water laps one side of the gallery. And we can be very flexible with our shows there," Miro says. She is taking over what was Galleria il Capricorno, run by Bruna Aickelin (who is now in her nineties). Miro has worked with Aickelin for decades and many of the London gallery's artists, including Grayson Perry and Chantal Joffe, have already had shows in the space.

Victoria Miro Venice opens with a show of works on paper by Chris O'Fili (\$55,000-\$75,000).

According to the high-end crystal manufacturer Swarovski and the Design Miami art fair, they are the four-man Takt Project from Toyko, the Los Angeles-based architect Jimenez Lai, and Marjan van Aubel, a Dutch designer based in London, who all learnt they were the recipients of the 2017 Swarovski Designers of the Future award at Milan's prestigious Salone del

Mobile furnishing and design show, which closes on Sunday. All three designers are embracing new technologies — including solar cell energy and 3D printing — for the works they have been commissioned to make, based on Swarovski's practice and materials, which will be on view at the Basel edition of the design fair (June 13-18). For the first time, all three works will be shown as one installation.

The six judges included Nadja Swarovski, an executive board member of the family firm and an art collector who once worked at Gagosian gallery, and Deyan Sudjic, director of London's Design Museum. Previous recipients include Random International and Tomás Alonso.

The man who brought his dodo obsession to London's collectors in 2015 is now throwing his weight behind unicorns. The Islamic art dealer Oliver Hoare opens the second iteration of his predominantly selling exhibition *Every Object Tells a Story* at 5 Cromwell Place in London from May 4. The 400 pieces from about 3000BC to 2016 include items related to what most believe to be a mythical beast.

Hoare begs to differ, coining the term "unicorn-deniers" in the catalogue, which is due to go online this week. Among the items is a 2.07-metre "Unicorn's horn" (northern Europe, 1427-1618), priced at £55,000. For the deniers out there, more believable objects include a 16th-century engraving, "The Unicorn Purifies the Water with his Horn" by Jean Duvet (£52,000), and an onyx sculpture of a unicorn by Michael Cooper (2016, £17,000).

