

Il Sole

24 ORE

Tefaf, the market starts again with the old masters

In the first days collectors shop, the choice falls on the best known names and a few discoveries

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16 March 2026



“Man with a Plumed Red Beret” 1654, di Willem Drost, olio su tela 102,9 × 92,1 cm, da Agnews Gallery

In Maastricht from 14 to 19 March 276 galleries from all over the world presented many works at Tefaf, and today we can already announce some sales. The fair, where global collectors find their treasures, devotes special attention to great masters and high value works of art. Despite the difficult global context, reports from the collectors' preview days - visitors increased by more than 5% - indicate a lively market at the highest level, with galleries confirming significant acquisitions in several categories in the first two days of the fair.

Museum and institutional representation grew by over 10%, with 450 institutions represented by directors, curators and patron groups. This initial momentum underlines the continuing confidence of collectors and institutions in quality works: 'What we are observing in Maastricht this week,' says **Boris Vervoordt** on behalf of the Tefaf Executive Committee, 'tells us that the appetite for great works of art continues to grow.

Exhibitors have assembled an extraordinary concentration of quality and scientific rigour, and collectors have responded immediately. The acquisitions that took place right from the opening confirm that, even in uncertain times, collectors remain deeply committed to acquiring truly exceptional works".

Italian gallery owners are also satisfied. "The VAT reform is helping with the ordinary concessionary regime at 5% helps all art sectors and antique dealers, today it no longer makes sense to work with the margin. This makes us competitive in Europe," commented **Sirio Ortolani**, president of Angamc, at the opening of Tefaf.

"We are confident," also confirmed **Alessandra Di Castro**, president of the Apollo group, "circulation is improving and the threshold raised to 50,000 from 13,500 is a step forward. In the ideal world, the direction should be that of France with its 300 thousand euro value threshold on paintings or the European 150 thousand threshold. But now we need to work on the art bonus by involving patrons to grant tax benefits to those who make art accessible to the public". At Tefaf in the heart of the Netherlands, the reduction in VAT has made Italian dealers extremely competitive and perhaps even a little envied by other European countries. In Italia, the work of the galleries is slow, 'here, on the other hand, competition from the international scene makes everything more sparkling. I don't know, maybe there is more pressure, there is more urgency, undoubtedly here there is an atmosphere, a climate that is much more stimulating,' explains the Roman gallerist. The Italian galleries, traditionally among the most represented in the historical art and antiques sector, this year number 21, almost 10% of the total number of exhibitors.



Diego Velázquez Ritratto di Don Sebastián García de Huerta c. 1628-1629 Olio su tela

Sales, hunt for old masters

Agnews Galery sold the 'Man with a Red Plumed Hat' by **Willem Drost** (1654) to the Leiden Collection of Thoams S. Kaplan. Adriaen Isenbrandt's triptych, awaiting a buyer is the 'Salvator Mundi' by **de Ganay**. Great intensity characterises Artemisia Gentileschi (no less than four works at the fair) with 'Self-Portrait of the Artist as Cleopatra', exhibited by Jean-François Heim. Painted around 1620, the painting shows the artist in the shoes of the famous Egyptian queen. At Colnaghi's, great attention is paid to Diego Velázquez's painting 'Portrait of Don Sebastián García de Huerta' offered at €7 million, which will however have to remain on Spanish soil. Painted between 1628 and 1629, the work depicts an important ecclesiastic and jurist of Castile, whose career led him to become secretary to King Philip IV.



Artemisia Gentileschi Autoritratto dell'artista come Cleopatra Circa 1620 Olio su tela 114 x 75 cm

It received much interest as did the other baroque work 'Hercules the Gladiator', 1599 (oil on panel, 65.5 × 54.4) by **Peter Paul Rubens**, presented by Salomon Lilian. The painting depicts the Roman emperor Commodus identifying with the hero Hercules, wearing the lion's skin and wielding a spear, the emperor stands out as a powerful and theatrical figure, set in an illusionistic marble oval. Distinguished sales were made by the American Gallery 19C at the Van Gogh Museum which purchased 'L'homme est en mer' (1887-1889) by the French artist Virginie Demont-Breton for an estimated price of between EUR 500,000 and EUR 1,000,000. Van Gogh knew the composition through a print and made a painted copy of it in 1889, so the monumental painting is an addition to the museum's collection and is the first work by Demont-Breton to enter a Dutch public collection. While from Spain, Colnaghi sold four important works: Tintoretto's 'Portrait of a Gentleman' to an American private collection; Lavinia Fontana's 'Portrait of Isabella Runi with a Lady-in-Waiting' to an Asian private collection; Julius Hübner's 'Study of the Head of a Jew' to an American collection; and Alonso Cano's 'Portrait of a Carmelite Monk' to a European private collection.



Peter Paul Rubens Ercole gladiatore 1599 Olio su tavola 65.5 × 54.4 cm

Italian gallery Caretto & Occhinegro sold its highlight 'The Pentecost' by to a private collection, as well as 'The Capture of Christ' by with an asking price around EUR 250,000. Roman gallerists Antonacci Lapicciarella Fine Art reported strong sales, including two paintings by **Gustaf Fjaestad**, part of the 'Swedish Lights' focus, acquired by a major European collection and a Canadian foundation respectively, both for six-figure sums. The Dutch Bijl-Van Urk Masterpaintings sold several works during the opening days, with prices ranging between EUR 100,000 and EUR 1 million, including 'A Banquet Still Life' by **Willem Claesz** and 'Small Ships in Heavy Weather' by **Jan Porcellis** at the Kremer Collection. Also from Madrid, Caylus sold "Gypsy in Blue" by **Isidro Nonell** and "Apparition of the Madonna and Child" by **Mateo Cerzo**. Other sales include **Josefa Sánchez** offered at €65,000, "A view of the "Delicias Cubanas" of the count of Yumuri" by **Luis Antonio Fenech** for €65,000-45,000. American gallery Christopher Bishop Fine Art declared a lively opening with the sale of **Pierre Balmain's** 'Fashion Illustrations ca. 1960/61' collection for Bergdorf Goodman and **Marie Mélanie d'Hervilly Gohier Hahnemann's** 'Portrait of Guillaume Guillon-Lethière'.