



FINANCIAL TIMES

Arts

High flyer takes off

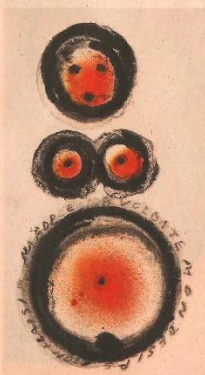
The Art Market | Senior figure quits Christie's;

Sotheby's hires forensic conservator; any offers

for the Stasi's stained glass? By *Melanie Gerlis*

Christie's had done well to keep its high-profile staff departures to a minimum through the hesitant art market of 2016 – until this week. After 23 years, Brett Gorvy, its high-flying international head of postwar and contemporary art, has left to join forces with the heavyweight 20th-century Modern and contemporary dealer Dominique Lévy. They have created the Lévy Gorvy gallery, which will still operate through Lévy's New York and London spaces and with a renewed vigour in Asia. They are also launching an affiliated art advisory business and reject any suggestion that their independence in this area will be compromised by the gallery business. "The goal is to service your clients and with objective advice. If you are self-serving, you'll lose your client and their trust," Gorvy says. Lévy compares the business model to that of the dealers Pierre Matisse and Peggy Guggenheim in the 20th-century. The gallery is "not just a place where you stop and shop", she says.

Gorvy's departure is in many ways a blow to Christie's. His access to top-dollar collectors was key to the auction house's dominance in the most visible fields. In 2015, his client bought the priciest work ever at auction –



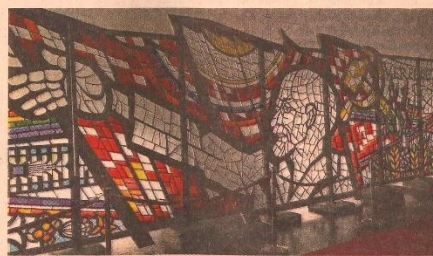
Clockwise from main: 'Return from the Kermesse' by Pieter Brueghel the Younger; 'Peace Around Our World' (1982-83) by Richard Otrfried Wilhelm; 'My Will, My Desire' (2016) by Annette Messager



Picasso's "Les femmes d'Alger (Version O)" (1955) for \$161m (\$179m with fees) – and it was Gorvy who pretty much turned Christie's orange as part of a 2013 marketing campaign that helped Jeff Koons' "Balloon Dog (Orange)" (1994-2000) sell for \$52m (\$58.4m with fees) – still the record auction price for a living artist.

Gorvy leaves behind a motivated team at Christie's, however. "The bench is strong," says Jussi Pylkkanen, the auction house's global president. "While something of a surprise, Gorvy's decision is in keeping with other senior auction specialists who have moved into more niche businesses recently. And in any case, the beady-eyed might have spotted clues to his mindset through his prolific Instagram feed. Back in July, Gorvy posted a painting by Jean Dubuffet, quoting the artist: "Unless one says goodbye to what one loves, and unless one travels to completely new territories, one can expect merely a long wearing away of oneself and an eventual extinction. #newadventure".

The traditionally quiet Old Masters market has generated more newsworthy this year than usual – and not always for good reasons. Sotheby's has now



taken some of the more negative matters into its own hands by hiring James Martin, a forensic conservator, to create a scientific research centre at the auction house. Earlier this year, Sotheby's used Martin's firm, Orion Analytical, to assess paintings it has sold as by Frans Hals and Parmigianino. Martin found the Hals to be a forgery; there is no update on the Parmigianino.

Martin's expertise extends across other fields. The Knoedler Gallery, whose first Modern art forgery trial settled earlier this year, closed down

the day after it received Martin's forensic report that found a painting bought there for \$17m as by Jackson Pollock was a fake. Martin also examined evidence as part of the investigation into the convicted wine dealer and forger Rudy Kurniawan. So can his hire prevent future such scandals? Martin can't quite commit that far but says that his appointment is about "providing Sotheby's specialists and researchers the scientific and technical support that is available to their counterparts in museums."

Meanwhile, Sotheby's opened December's Old Masters auction season in London robustly on Wednesday with a small but select sale that made a total £12.2m (£14.8m with fees, est £8m-£11.9m). Top lot was Pieter Brueghel the Younger's "Return from the Kermesse" (date unknown) that went for £2.2m (£2.6m with fees, estimate £2m-£3m). Christie's equivalent evening auction on December 8 was still to come as this column went to press (est. £13.6m-£20.3m).

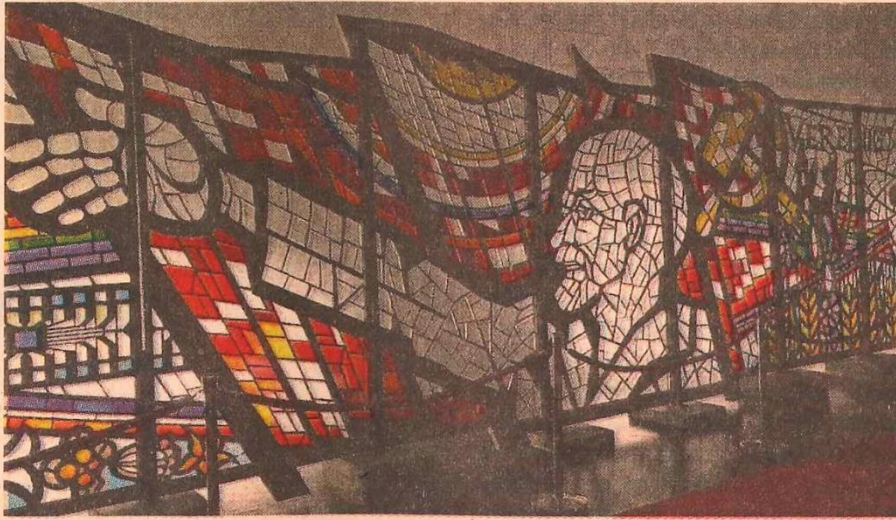
The international gallerist Marian Goodman has given carte blanche to the French artist Annette Messager to inaugurate a second space in Paris that opened this week. The new space, up the road from Goodman's gallery in the Marais area, is now filled with works on paper and small sculptures that use the female body to reflect how women's desire is still treated with suspicion (£4,000-£40,000). A *mon seul désir* is on until January 14, after which the gallery will become Librairie Marian Goodman, a street-facing art bookshop. Other gallery artists, including William Kentridge, will show in both Paris spaces in 2017.

One of the most talked about works in Miami last week could be going to China. Thilo Holzmann, an art historian and dealer, says that a billionaire from Shanghai is among the potential buyers for a 65-ft wide, three-ton, stained glass mural commissioned by the East German secret police in 1979 (priced at \$21.4m).

"Frieden umserem Erdenrund" (Peace around our world), completed by Richard Otrfried Wilhelm in 1983, includes a huge image of Lenin and much communist-era iconography among its 4,000 pieces of blown glass and precious metals. The work was quietly removed from the Stasi headquarters soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Holzmann describes it as "the most important, most secret and most expensive art piece from the period worldwide".

It was bought by Holzmann's uncle in 1990 and left in a shipping container outside Berlin until last year. Holzmann says that US museums are also interested in the unusual item, though he hadn't sealed a deal by the time its exhibition closed on December 4. Whoever buys it, he says, he hopes it will find its way to a museum.





One of the most talked about works in Miami last week could be going to China. Thilo Holzmann, an art historian and dealer, says that a billionaire from Shanghai is among the potential buyers for a 65-ft wide, three-ton, stained glass mural commissioned by the East German secret police in 1979 (priced at \$21.4m).

“Frieden unserem Erdenrund” (Peace around our world), completed by Richard Otfried Wilhelm in 1983, includes a huge image of Lenin and much communist-era iconography among its 4,000 pieces of blown glass and precious metals. The work was quietly removed from the Stasi headquarters soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Holzmann describes it as “the most important, most secret and most expensive art piece from the period worldwide”.

It was bought by Holzmann’s uncle in 1990 and left in a shipping container outside Berlin until last year. Holzmann says that US museums are also interested in the unusual item, though he hadn’t sealed a deal by the time its exhibition closed on December 4. Whoever buys it, he says, he hopes it will find its way to a museum.