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MASTERPIECE LONDON 2017: PREVIEW

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CULTURE / ART

The eighth edition of the cross-disciplinary fine art and antiques fair will land on Chelsea Embankment in June

Last year, 40,000 visitors flocked to learn about and acquire works of art at Masterpiece London. Although every piece on show is for sale, the fair is also a chance to meet gallerists and discover ancient and contemporary art – and everything in between.

“Masterpiece is unique in how it arranges exhibitors who bring six millennia of art from all over the world,” says chairman Philip Hewat-Jaboor. “It offers an unrivalled opportunity to be exposed to this extraordinary range under one roof.”



This year's edition will reflect the taste for modern British and Italian art that has heightened over the past few years. Osborne Samuel, Robin Katz Fine Art and Piano Nobile will exhibit Henry Moore, Howard Hodgkin and Bridget Riley. "Modern British art was undervalued for so long," says gallerist Lyndsey Ingram, who specialises in this field as well as prints.

"As some other areas of the market have become so expensive in the past few years, people are starting to look for good opportunities elsewhere. Modern British work is fresh and exciting. It's as relevant as American artists working at the same time, whose work can be very costly."

Part of the era's appeal is colour, says Hewat-Jaboor. "People want striking works, whether that's a Patrick Heron painting or a Roman head. I think there's a need for visual immediacy among collectors today."



Ursula Casamonti is director of Tornabuoni Art London, which specialises in post-war Italian art. "Pop artists such as Tano Festa and Franco Angeli are performing very well at auction," she says. "This shows growing interest in artists other than Lucio Fontana and Alighiero Boetti."

While the latter remain at the upper end of the market due to the historic importance of their work and influence on younger artists, Festa and Angeli provide a new attraction for collectors." More Italian masters will be presented at Masterpiece by Mazzoleni, M & L Fine Art, Cortesi Gallery and Repetto Gallery.



Works on paper are also a focus at this year's fair, especially by titans such as Pablo Picasso, David Hockney and Andy Warhol (including at Offer Waterman and Sims Reed). "You can buy superb works on paper by leading artists at a fraction of the cost of their canvasses," says Ingram.

"They're often more intimate and spontaneous. They provide a different perspective on the artist's work, which some prefer to the formal quality of painting."

Five minutes with... Masterpiece London chairman Philip Hewat-Jaboor

My highlights this year include Masterpiece Presents, an immediate and perhaps unexpected introduction featuring a large-scale work by Chilean artist Iván Navarro, which Paul Kasmin Gallery has specially commissioned.

Some people suspect we are more anchored in classical or traditional fields, but in fact we have always been strong in contemporary design, furniture and jewellery. It's important to keep abreast of trends without leaving behind the areas we've always covered.

Without question, beauty and the old connoisseurial taste are coming back into fashion, such as 18th-century furniture, where people are coming to understand the context of these works of art.

I'm always very wary of investment, as I strongly believe you have to buy what you like – you get the best return on pleasure and mental stimulation.

Masterpiece London, 29 June-5 July 2017, South Grounds, The Royal Hospital Chelsea, SW3, masterpiecefair.com 

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