

11 INSIDERS LOOK BACK ON THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF TEFAF

Art dealers, museum curators, collectors, and others share their personal stories of over three decades of TEFAF

By Wendy Moonan Jun 24, 2022

Established in 1988, TEFAF is proud to celebrate the 35th edition of the fair this year with a look back at the impact it has had on dealers, museum curators, veters, collectors, designers, visitors, and more from across the globe. What follows are the personal reflections of several voices who have had profound experiences at the fair since its inception, and key moments from TEFAF's development over time. Together, these paint a personal history of the fair and speak to the role TEFAF has played within the world of art.



DAVID KOETSER

Old Master dealer, exhibitor, and one of the founders of TEFAF

Where did the idea for TEFAF come from?

Forty years ago, we started discussing a show with the idea of joining Old Master dealers with antiques dealers, who, we knew, felt that we could be stronger together than we were apart. The eight founders—all very experienced dealers—sat around a table: four Dutch and Flemish picture dealers and four dealers in antique furniture, porcelain, jewelry, and silver. We all knew each other and were friends; it was all very collegial. From the beginning, we decided it would be a fair by dealers, for dealers, and we would organize it ourselves. Our idea was to create a non-profit foundation, so the profits would go back into the fair.

How was the fair received during these first years and how did it develop?

We knew from the first day that the fair would be a success when we saw 200 people had queued before the doors opened to the preview—everyone was in black tie. After a few years, the fair's success provided the opportunity to create exhibitions at the fair. Other initiatives included an annual art market report, fair programming, and creating new charities, such as museum conservation grants, supporting cultural emergency response programs, and funding cancer research.

What made TEFAF different from the other fairs?

Firstly, it's a non-profit foundation. Then there is TEFAF's rigorous vetting. We have

out-of-town independent specialists, museum curators, directors, and restorers check all artworks in advance, so collectors and museums can buy knowing things are right. If a label is incorrect, the dealer must change it, or a piece is removed from the stand. This element has been very encouraging to collectors.

What has attracted museum curators from all over the world to the fair?

All of the dealers hold back their best pieces to show at TEFAF, and museum curators have flocked to the fair from the beginning. At that time, the Getty Museum and the Norton Simon would reserve planes to fly from California for their directors, staff and, above all, their benefactors. Other curators got together to fly from New York and Boston. We love working with museums, and the curators are very clear about what they are looking for. We like to help them.

After all these years, what do you like best about the fair?

At TEFAF Maastricht, unlike at the gallery, people come whom you've never met before. You never know who will walk in. One year, ten minutes into the opening, a man stood in front of a marine painting I had by Willem van de Velde. He asked me why I loved the picture, and I told him. He asked me the price, and then he bought it. It turned out that he was one of the ten richest men in America. That's the serendipity of it, it's very exciting. Every day is a new day, I've had a lot of fun in this business. I love the fair, especially the wonderful discussions with other experts. And I love working and exchanging views with the vetting committee as we continually learn from each other.



FRANCES BEATTY AND ALLEN ADLER

Collectors

What brought you to TEFAF for the first time?

FB: "I worked at Richard L. Feigen & Co. for 37 years and participated at TEFAF from 1985 to 1998. My husband and I did not become full-scale, active collectors until 1990, and once we started going together, it became a mission." AA: "I would run around the fair, and every two hours I would go grab Frances. We got adept at making fast decisions. For me, the real excitement at TEFAF is the excitement of the hunt. Even the great dealers want to offer surprises on opening day."

What is one of your favorite TEFAF memories?

AA: "While Frances was manning the stand at Feigen, I would join the opening bell stampede to Kunstammer Georg Laue's stand in order to capture a treasure, often an ivory skull or a mannequin, before anyone else reserved it. Georg Laue is the perfect example of a scholar/dealer who epitomizes TEFAF. The same is true of our great friend and consigliere Sam Fogg, from whom we have purchased so many medieval and Renaissance works. I remember one year standing in his stand eyeing a marvelous pipe clay figure, a hooded woman with a particularly haunting sad expression. A gentleman next to me said, 'You ought to buy it.' I replied, 'And who are you to tell me to buy it?' The friendly stranger said, 'I am Frits Scholten, curator of sculpture at the Rijksmuseum.' He became a generous friend, happy to give his opinion on works in his area."

You have an affinity for collecting Spanish sculpture, what has influenced this interest?

FB: “We began to collect Spanish sculpture because of TEFAF. The first piece we bought was from Munich dealer Sascha Mehringer: a Gabriel Joly sculpture of Two Thieves and a Skeleton, from circa 1530, that we have now loaned to an exhibition at the Prado and the Capodimonte Museum in Naples. We bought it with the blessing of the then-Minneapolis curator Eike Schmidt, now the director of the Uffizi, another TEFAF friendship. After this, we continued buying Spanish sculpture from TEFAF exhibitors, all of whom became friends and mentors.”

What impact do you think TEFAF has had on the world of art?

AA: “TEFAF has been a treasure trove for us, it brings people of very different backgrounds together. It attracts people who love the same things, which creates enormous excitement. The fair’s ethos is about people who really care, who share the joy of connoisseurship. There is a wonderful sense of camaraderie. And the vetting makes all the difference. It creates confidence for someone who is not an expert to know that all the things there are excellent.”



PIERRE ROSENBERG

Former curator and president of the Musée du Louvre

How did you come to first experience the fair?

The first time I went to TEFAF must have been 20 or maybe even 25 years ago, and I haven't missed a year since. I always visit for one day, taking the train from Paris via Liège. There are not many distractions around—once you are at the fair, you can concentrate and explore in a very precise way—which is important when only visiting for a short time. While president of the Louvre, I visited to discover what could be acquired for the collections of the museum, paintings in particular. Many fruitful discussions and conversations were started at the fair that would lead to acquisitions at a later point.

How has the fair changed over the years?

The sections, from Old Masters and contemporary art to works on paper and jewelry, have expanded and their division has become much clearer over time. This aspect of clarity is a tremendous benefit. When I arrive at the fair, I feel at home. I always recognize the beautiful stand of Galerie Kugel as I enter the fair, and I know how to make my way to the dealers I want to see.

What has been one of the most powerful artworks you've seen at TEFAF?

Each fair has its surprises to discover. I remember a painting by a 17th-century French artist I've written quite a lot about, Louis Cretey. Cretey has been rather unknown but had become more fashionable, and this particular painting was Cretey's entry into the history of art. It was a masterpiece by the artist—and it was also already sold by the time I discovered it at the fair.

What impact has TEFAF had on the world of art?

TEFAF has established itself as of great importance for understanding how the market is evolving. It is fascinating to see how interest in particular works develop and how prices evolve. For example, the first years I visited, 17th-century French art was a bit forgotten. Now, there are quite a number of paintings on stands and prices have increased tremendously. It is also a place where scholarship is not forgotten. These days I visit as a collector, and while my field of scholarship is 17th-century French art, I always learn a lot from the sections of Dutch and Flemish art, fields with which I'm less familiar.

I believe the fair's social aspect is also not to be forgotten. It is a place to discover new dealers, to speak to dealers whom I've known for a long time, and importantly, to meet other directors and curators of museums to discuss scholarship, exhibitions, and acquisitions.



ANTHONY BLUMKA, BLUMKA GALLERY

Art dealer in medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque works of art, and exhibitor since 1995

What was your motivation for participating in TEFAF?

After my mother passed away, who previously ran the Blumka business, I knew it was time to find new clients, realizing that they don't just "find" you. My exposure then was mostly in the United States. I had only visited the fair once before I became an exhibitor in 1995, but I knew I wanted more international presence and more international clients. Even then I knew TEFAF was drawing collectors from all over the world, and that the fair was so enticing it had indeed become a destination event. I used to do other New York shows, but none could compete with TEFAF's internationality. I still don't think there is another fair that can really compete.

What has been one of your most memorable sales at TEFAF?

Several years ago, I sold four exceptional enamel and gold small reliefs, made around 1520-30 in Augsburg, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They were originally intended to decorate an altar or a reliquary box. The reliefs, featuring scenes from the Passion of Christ, were made using the technique of ronde-bosse enameling. In such works, a goldsmith carved the figures out of gold or silver and then coated them with a glass paste that is then melted into enamel—resulting in shimmering colors. The objects have beautifully executed details and a color palette that ranges from

transparent blue and green for the background, over opaque white for the faces, to turquoise, cobalt, purple, and green for the robes.

How has the fair changed over the years?

Greatly. The fair was more provincial 25 years ago. At the beginning, I did everything myself. Then it became more sophisticated, with a professional team of stand builders. My self-made stands were not appropriate anymore—we really grew up with the fair. Now it's all done professionally for you, and the displays and logistics are of the highest standards.

You share a stand with Julius Böhler Kunsthandlung. How did this collaboration start? Florian Eitle-Böhler and I published our first publication together in 2000, *Collecting Treasures from the Past*, which accompanied a joint exhibition in New York. Then, by chance, at TEFAF our stands were put side by side for the first time, and we just took down the wall between us. Then we realized we could do future TEFAF presentations together, as we shared so many interests and affinities. That was the beginning a long professional relationship as well as friendship.

What impact do you think TEFAF has had on the world of art?

Through the years, the quality and rarity of the objects became more important, and there are greater efforts and more competition in acquiring art objects from all periods. Nowadays, museums are bringing their trustees to TEFAF in order to secure acquisitions immediately. I believe people are indeed hungry to socialize and acquire at TEFAF, as they really missed attending the fair in person. Both our private and institutional clients inquired about our participation before this edition, and they are very excited for TEFAF to be back.



MELANIE GERLIS, FINANCIAL TIMES AND THE ART NEWSPAPER

Journalist, author, and art market expert

When did you start reporting on TEFAF?

I have covered TEFAF since starting at The Art Newspaper in 2006—and ever since. As an art market writer, art fairs have always been a part of my remit, so TEFAF, as one of the grandest on the circuit, was a must-see. I also, for both The Art Newspaper and the Financial Times, have written previews of the fair in the run up and I covered the online fair. TEFAF had the good idea to focus on single objects, which was quite a relief after all the other online fairs had hundreds of galleries with dozens of works, which was too much to digest. What I've always enjoyed about covering TEFAF is the ability to go deep into different, niche areas of the market—design, Oceanic art, porcelain, jewelry—as well as the staples: antiquities and Old Masters. When everything else around is relentless and increasingly modern and contemporary, TEFAF was always a luxurious, older-style treat.

How did you come to first experience the fair?

I didn't know Maastricht at all other than it being the name of a treaty, so I was very pleasantly surprised by how pretty the old town is and, during TEFAF, how lively. I first visited TEFAF as a student at the Sotheby's Institute in 2005 and was impressed with the sheer size, breadth, and depth of the fair. And the beautiful flowers are really lodged in my memory, so when I think of TEFAF, I can smell the tulips! At that point, I wasn't on the VIP list, but the next year I got to experience the oysters and

champagne, which paired so well with the heavy-framed paintings and well-dressed visitors.

What is one of the most powerful artworks you've seen at TEFAF?

I absolutely love old master drawings, a field I first discovered at TEFAF. I remember one red chalk Raphael drawing in particular.

What impact do you think TEFAF has had on the world of art?

TEFAF has become a place to see the best of the best galleries and the interesting art and objects they offer. Because of its focus on older art, TEFAF has a stamp of quality and connoisseurship, which it has built on with museum partners and other non-commercial projects, so for the wider art world, it became a place of education as well as a commercial endeavor. Bringing galleries together to create a multinational one-stop-shop has proven to be a potent formula to sell art and bring in the crowds. We all crave seeing art in person, both because of the sheer impact that art can have up close and because it is the basis of a rewarding, collective social experience. People's love of coming together to enjoy the cultural experience of art is not going away.



CHARLES ZANA

Interior architect and designer

What brings you to TEFAF every year?

What continues to fascinate me at TEFAF is the variety of specialties presented, the quality of its stands, and its ambiance. It's a fair in which the best galleries present masterpieces, exceptional objects from all fields and from all decades—it's an incredible circuit. Every year I discover new dealers who sell ancient paintings, Japanese armor, Renaissance weapons, or ancient or anique ceramics—this is what makes TEFAF unique and exceptional.

Is there a memorable work you acquired for a client at the fair?

I have particularly enjoyed Laffanour's stands, where I have often presented pieces to clients. I especially remember a small desk by Pierre Jeanneret, exceptional in its simplicity and incredible patina. It came directly from Chandigarh and the wood had no restoration.

How has TEFAF impacted your practice as a designer?

One year, Galerie Perrin had a white, minimalist stand with 18th-century antiques, including a pair of gilded Regency armchairs upholstered in gunmetal damask. I realized that the way Perrin presented their objects was very modern. It gave me the idea to look at the 18th century differently. I saw details I kept in mind, and it inspired me to design a contemporary slipper chair, Franck Bridge, in patinated bronze with caramel-colored suede upholstery. Also, by going to TEFAF all these years, I have built a more precise interest and knowledge of the arts from around the world. It has a strong impact on my search for high-quality objects because the mix of, for example, contemporary art, ancient art, and Flemish art works well when the quality of the pieces is there.

In 2018 and 2019, you collaborated with an exhibitor. How did that come about?

I was flattered when Christophe de Quénetaïn asked me to design stands to display 18th-century furniture and ceramics. It was a very interesting collaboration because I discovered a lot of fantastic pieces. I listened and I learned about them; I tried to think about how to present them in a different way. We were interested in bringing a different perspective through colors that weren't used at the time. In 2018, we painted the walls a kind of pearl gray and used a rug that Madeleine Castaing had produced for the Codimat collection that depicted leaves outlined in black and dark gray. The idea of these "scenographies" was to surprise visitors. On another wall, to highlight a colorful collection of Italian Renaissance majolica plates, we painted the background a vibrant blue, creating a combination that evoked a drawing.



MARINA KELLEN FRENCH

Collector

How did your interest in collecting first develop?

I grew up with the arts in Manhattan. My grandparents collected Chinese and Meissen porcelain and modern painters like Picasso, Delaunay, and Miró. In the 1950s, my father was interested in young contemporary artists. My mother was brought up in France and bought French furniture and decorative arts. For me collecting was innate, natural, in my blood.

How did you first discover TEFAF?

One night at a dinner at the Morgan Library, I sat next to Wolfram Koeppe, senior curator in the department of European sculpture and decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He had been very close to my parents and told me about how they collected. Then he asked me if I'd like to go to TEFAF with him. A few nights later, I went to dinner with Emily Rafferty, then president of the Met, who told me, "You will have the best time. You will be on your hands and knees unscrewing the leg of a console," and that's exactly what happened—with a console that belonged to Louis Bonaparte, the king of the Netherlands and younger brother of Emperor Napoleon.

What was your first impression of the fair?

I found it the most extraordinary experience. It's Holland at its best: very elegant, very

chic, very European. People are kind, helpful, courteous, and the fair's visitors come for their appreciation of history. It has the best dealers in the world, from Europe and North America to South America and Asia. It's a very international crowd with a collegial atmosphere: a great place to meet friends, art historians, important collectors, and dealers, all with whom you can share interests and from whom you learn a lot. The broad range of the fair expands your knowledge, and the quality is unbelievable.

What has been one of your most exciting TEFAF acquisition experiences?

Wolfram and I often call certain TEFAF dealers in advance and ask what they think we might like. Dealers are very respectful of collectors. Also, as a trustee at the Met, you think about what the museum might want. We always attend the first four days. Wolfram taught me that you need to make a decision about an object in the first 15 minutes of opening day, so we begin with our list of favorite dealers, including Kunstammer Georg Laue, Carlton Hobbs, Adrian Sassoon, Sam Fogg, and Galerie Kugel.

Before the opening of TEFAF Maastricht 2020, Galerie Kugel advertised a magnificent *Orpheus Cup*, made around 1641 in Vienna, created with enameled gold and rubies. The cup incorporates the sophistication of four ingenious masters working forty years apart and was thought to have been commissioned by Emperor Ferdinand III. When on display in Maastricht, the press celebrated the cup as the fair's most fascinating object. It is a true example of a Schatzkammer object, a treasure to be admired for its craftsmanship and meaning. It was acquired by the museum and is now part of the Met's collection.



PETER VAN DEN BRINK

Former chief curator of the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, and former director of the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen

Can you recall your first visit to TEFAF?

I was 35 and working on my PhD at the University of Groningen. I only received a preview ticket very late and stayed in Valkenburg near Maastricht, which is where I now actually live. By the second time, I knew what to expect. I'd take the train in the early morning. It was a five-hour trip, and the closer you got to Maastricht the more people boarded the train and you would see friends and colleagues. The anticipation was very high. Since then, I have never missed the fair.

How has the fair changed over the years?

It was not as opulent with all the flowers at first, but it was always elegant and always glamorous. At the beginning, the only people who came were those with an interest in buying art. Everyone wanted to be there, and there was always a rush at the opening to see the best works on the market all on display in one place. Over time, the fair has become more professional and more organized, but its overall feeling and the importance of the dealers' role has not changed. It's also a huge gift to the city of Maastricht, which has so many good restaurants—crucial for dealers to entertain their clients. It's one of the most important happenings of the year for the city.

What is one of the most powerful artworks you've seen at TEFAF?

There was one painting by Cornelis Bega, a 17th-century Haarlem painter and draughtsman, that I wanted to buy for the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum that I had seen on Peter Mitchell's stand in 2008 and loved, depicting a sleeping maid. A couple of months later, my dear friend and colleague Bernd Lindemann—then director of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie—and I decided to prepare an exhibition on Bega, which would take place in Aachen and Berlin in 2012. We used the 2009 edition to study the Bega paintings at the fair to acquire one for the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum. There were six: at Johnny van Haeften, Rob Noortman, Richard Green, Clovis Whitfield, and two on Mitchell's stand. Of course, we asked Mitchell about the picture we had seen the year before. He had brought it with him again but sold it to a collector straightaway. In the end, we acquired the painting from Noortman. I convinced a couple from Aachen to buy the Bega at Whitfield and an American collector bought the one at Richard Green. All these pictures ended up in the exhibition but not the sleeping maid I really wanted. The owner did not want to part from it, not even for an exhibition. I still don't know where it is to this day.

What impact do you think TEFAF has had on the world of art?

TEFAF has had an enormous impact, especially on the world of Old Masters because most of the important dealers are there. If you want to learn something from someone, you can get in contact with them straightaway, and they have time for you. Everyone else in the art world is around. You can meet every dealer, collector, museum director, potential sponsor, and your colleagues from other museums. The fair is truly magnificent and will remain important, because it combines the best quality with the most wonderful atmosphere.



MADELEINE PERRIDGE, KALLOS GALLERY

Ancient art dealer and exhibitor since 2018

What was your motivation for participating in TEFAF?

It is the pinnacle of art fairs in our section, ancient art. TEFAF is a very dealer-led art fair and offers the best of the best. While we were very conscious that we were the newest addition to the section, we saw participation as a wonderful sign of trust and support from people in our field who saw us as ethical and responsible. We originally applied to the Showcase section and were thrilled to be accepted in 2018. It was a nice, warm start for us, particularly as an all-women team. When it was time to apply to the main fair, there was no guarantee we would be invited back. We had a straightforward talk with various board members about our approach and—after we saw the caliber of the other dealers' stands—the high quality of artworks we would present. We discussed provenance, transparency, and good labeling. We talked about how the antiquities field was in a period of great rejuvenation, with a number of new dealers. It was all very congenial. We were grateful to be accepted because we knew TEFAF would be a springboard for us.

Can you recall your first visit to the fair?

At the time, I worked at Bonhams in London and went for the day. I was so impressed by the scale of the fair, the sheer number of people and realized I had underestimated the time required to see it. Then, in 2017, the year before we were invited to join TEFAF Showcase, three of us at Kallos went together as a team for a

couple of days to explore everyone's stands, dreaming that maybe next year might be our chance. We realized TEFAF was the fair to sell masterpieces, and we needed to establish ourselves by being there. It was a vibrant time in the market, and it was good for us to see what was out there and what was selling. Attending the fair was an extremely worthwhile experience.

What impact do you think TEFAF has had on the world of art?

TEFAF has really led from the front, by being a dealer-run organization that wants to produce the best fair possible—for dealers and collectors. It continues to raise the bar for other art fairs by attracting the best dealers. And the vetting is so rigorous. It's very comforting to have that because the last thing you want is to sell an artwork that isn't right and to disappoint a client. You know that the vetters are experts in their fields, and you have every confidence in them. Another great benefit of TEFAF is that you might meet someone there who may buy from you afterward. Having that connection is critical. Dealing is a long game.

How has the fair developed over recent years?

I think the range of specialist areas has expanded wonderfully. And with the New York edition and TEFAF Online, many more collectors are able to enjoy TEFAF's fairs.



ALICE MINTER

Curator of the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum

How did you come to first experience the fair?

I was still with Sotheby's in 2016 when I went with my colleagues on the preview day. It was not the easiest place to travel to and I learned the hard way that it's well-advised to book your room a year in advance. But that is all forgotten when one enters the fair. I thought there was nothing like it in the world. In such a small town in the Netherlands, the most important collectors and dealers gather. The flowers, the champagne, the canapes, and the striking outfits—you could be at one of Gatsby's parties. Yet the multiple languages spoken, and number of hugs, handshakes, and smiles enhance the fact that it's an international event conducting serious business. We were all there for the love of art, collecting, curating, or dealing. In fact, TEFAF's flamboyant decor is only appropriate for the unique, remarkable, unforgettable masterpieces offered on the dealers' stands. When entering TEFAF, we forget about the rest of the world. We even forget it is an art fair. We are discovering a succession of Ali Baba's caves.

What brings you back to TEFAF every year?

Yes, for me it's the most important social event of the year, where information is discreetly exchanged and acquisitions negotiated. Now that I curate the Gilbert Collection and am always looking for potential acquisitions, I find it easier to approach dealers, ask for prices, and discuss an object in depth. TEFAF kicks off the whole art season for those of us in the decorative arts. You see the upcoming trends in the art market, you make connections, there are always surprises. As a curator, I'm expected to keep an eye out and inform the Gilbert board of trustees if I see something that will fill a gap in the collection. If and when I do, I make a recommendation, and they will decide on whether to acquire it. Most recently in 2020, I discovered a pair of round gold and hardstone buttons, later fitted as buckles, made by Johann Christian Neuber in Dresden around 1755–85 at Wartski. The Gilbert Collection already had five boxes by Neuber, but these particular buckles showed the variety in his work. I made a quick proposal to the trustees, and they acquired it for the collection.

What is one of the most powerful artworks you've seen at TEFAF?

Galerie Kugel had a gold-set hardstone vase that revealed an eagle shape in the natural grain of the stone. It was from the 16th century, made in Vienna, and may have been made for the emperor of the time because it had the most refined gold mounts. It made me realize that treasures are still available on the market, but only at TEFAF can you see such incredible pieces.

How has the fair changed over the years?

Despite the many more contemporary and modern dealers, I appreciate the fact that the decorative arts are still important. It has been so exciting to watch the decorative arts community constantly reinvent itself at the fair, especially new generations of dealers.