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Bernard Arnault, architect Frank Gehry, and French President Francois Hollande stand in front of Gudrun by Gerhard Richter

Picture: AFP/Getty

ART

Art Market News: Asian Art in London begins

LVMH's Bernard Arnault is revealed as anonymous Gerhard Richter bidder and The Asian Art in London festival kicks off. Colin Gleadell rounds up this week's art market news



BY COLIN GLEADELL
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A photograph taken in Paris last week confirms that France's richest man, Bernard Arnault, was one of the leaders in the price hike for abstract paintings by Gerhard Richter in 2011. In the photograph, Arnault is standing in front of Gudrun, a large Richter abstract, at the opening of his new LVMH Foundation building.

In 2011, Gudrun was bought, anonymously at the time, for \$18 million, three times the estimate. The same telephone bidder also paid \$14.1 million and \$6.2 million, far above estimates, for two other Richter abstracts in the sale. Walking round Tate's Richter show afterwards, the abstracts seemed more than ever to be imbued with a sense of wealth and luxury. Now I know why.



Frans Verbeeck is a little-known Flemish artist of the 17th century – so little known that when Damian Brenninkmeyer of the



Frans Verbeek, *The Mocking Of Human Follies*

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Vienna auction house, [Dorotheum](#), went to inspect his painting *The Mocking of Human Follies*, it was almost impossible to value because so little by the artist had ever appeared at auction before.

However, because of its similarity to contemporary works by the Brueghel family, he was able to hazard a guess at €900,000 (£709,000). Last week that guess was far surpassed when it sold for €3 million (£2.4 million), on a par with a good work by Brueghel the Younger. The buyer was a Belgian collector who had to fight off competition from a Russian bidder.

A collection of books, prints, drawings and sculptures by Eric Gill that belonged to the free-living publishing millionaire Felix Dennis, who died this summer, is to be offered by [Sotheby's](#) this December. The 100 lots are expected to bring between £300,000 and £440,000, led by a £15,000-



Gao Xingjian, *Minuit*, 2013

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to-£25,000 carved wood sculpture of a man kneeling in confession, *Mea Maxima Culpa* – something one imagines Dennis perhaps never did himself.

The [Asian Art in London](#) festival kicks off this week, and one of the more unusual features will be a display at the [Aktis Gallery](#) in St James's of watercolours and a film by 74-year-old Chinese artist Gao Xingjian. Gao was an avant-garde playwright in China until the late Eighties, when he moved to France, and his play *Fugitives*, which refers to the Tiananmen Square protest, resulted in all his work being banned from performance in China.

Gao has lived in France ever since, and in 2000 won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Soul Mountain*. In his art, he explores a peaceful zone of the soul with semi-abstract watercolours priced from £10,000 to £50,000.

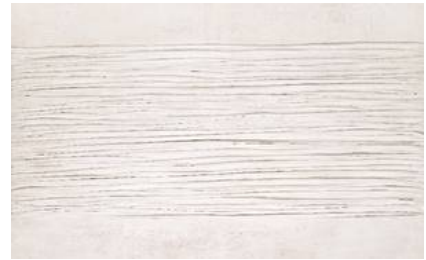
One of the most talked-about stands at [Frieze Masters](#) this year was dealer [Helly Nahmad's](#), which recreated an imaginary collector's apartment, cluttered with works of art, furniture, books and magazines. The art was clearly Nahmad's, but the books, such as a classic Francis Bacon tome by Ronald Alley, were from [Marcus Campbell's](#) bookshop opposite Tate Modern.

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