Huon Mallalieu

Chelsea's crowning glory

The glamour of Masterpiece returns to The Royal Hospital for another year, but with the emphasis firmly back where it should be, on fine art and antiques

THE Masterpiece experience can be sampled for a third time from June 28 to July 4, with the preview on June 27. Once again, the fair that claims to offer 'the best of the best from around the world' is stationed on the South Grounds of The Royal Hospital, Chelsea, in the pavilion that must be one of the world's more remarkable temporary structures. As before, it is the work of Stabilo International, the firm responsible for stand-building at Maastricht, whose entrepreneurial president, Harry van der Hoorn, is a founding partner of Masterpiece. In fact, the fair will begin on the Terrace outside, where there will be an Anish Kapoor sculpture installation, *Mountain*, shown by Piano Nobile, and a set of painted fibreglass 'The Four Seasons' by Philip Haas in the fruity manner of Arcimboldo. The latter is from an edition of five produced in 2010.

↑ Jacqueline Simcox, the Oriental specialist, has something to excite the Chinese market—an imperial silk tapestry wall hanging, featuring five-clawed dragons with (instead of the usual flaming pearl of wisdom) the inscription 'may you live for 10,000 years'. It measures 77¾in by 120⅞in, and dates from the reign of the Qianlong Emperor (1736–95).

↑ Last week, we showed the COUNTRY LIFE/LAPADA Object of the Year, which came from Witney Antiques. Here is another of its specialities, a fine English embroidered mirror, proclaiming support for the restored monarchy through portraits of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, Charles II and Catherine of Braganza and James, Duke of York and Anne Hyde. They are accompanied by figures of peace and harmony.

Last year, the fact that this is primarily an art and antiques fair was lost sight of, and the publicity gave the impression that it was all about lifestyle, bling and celebrity. This year, the balance has been redressed. Although the lifestyle element is rightly very much there, with classic cars, wines, 'design' and—naturally—jewels, my pre-impression is that there will be rather less of it. There is a stronger contemporary-art component, too, including Gagosian, and there are more high-level overseas exhibitors.

Inside, as well as up to 170 exhibitors' stands, there will, once again, be a range of restaurants and bars from the Urban Caprice stable, offering informal dining at The Mount Street Deli, Le Caprice with a full *à la carte* menu, Scott's Seafood and Champagne Bar and Harry's Bar, serving its legendary Bellinis to accompany classic Italian *insalate, secondi* and *dolci*. Last year's Midsummer Party raised more than £400,000 for the cancer-support charity CLICSargent; it is to be hoped that that impressive sum will be bettered on July 3.

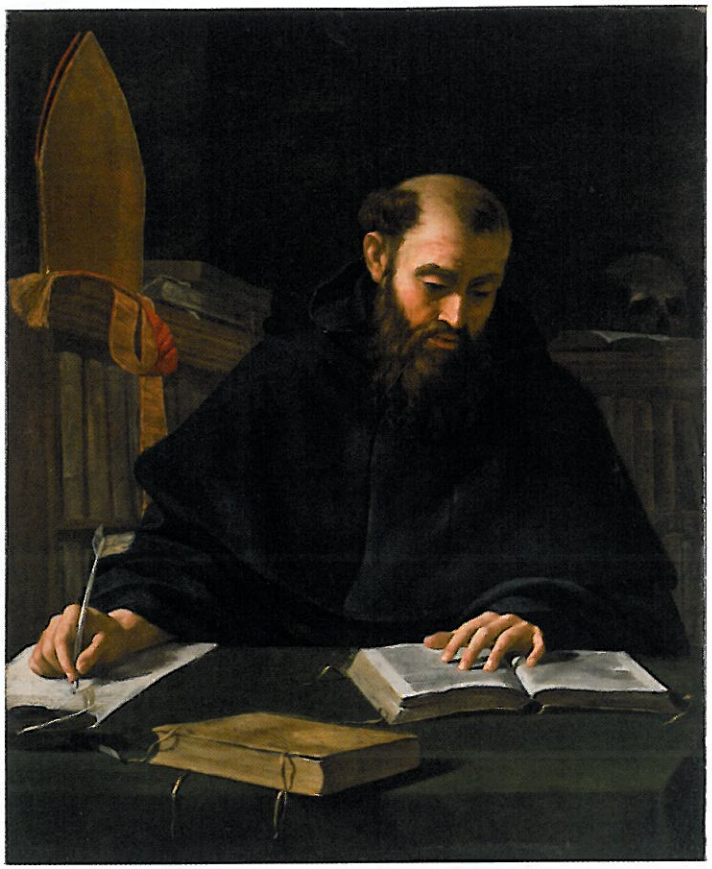
Other features include a truly spectacular loan display of diamonds curated by Carol Woolton of *Vogue* in celebration of the Jubilee, and, from 11.30am to 4pm on June 30, the Wallace Collection is hosting a free symposium on the fine art of collecting. It will be followed by a tour of the fair conducted by the Wallace's new director, Dr Christoph Vogtherr.

As usual on these occasions, the following selection comes with the caveat that some things may have been sold before the fair.

↔ From New York, Kentshire as brought a superb *pietra dura* able made for Augusta, Lady John ennedy-Erskine, one of William IV's umerous illegitimate family. She ent to Italy on honeymoon in 1827, nd stayed on because of her husand's consumption. He died in 831, the year that this table top as completed for them.

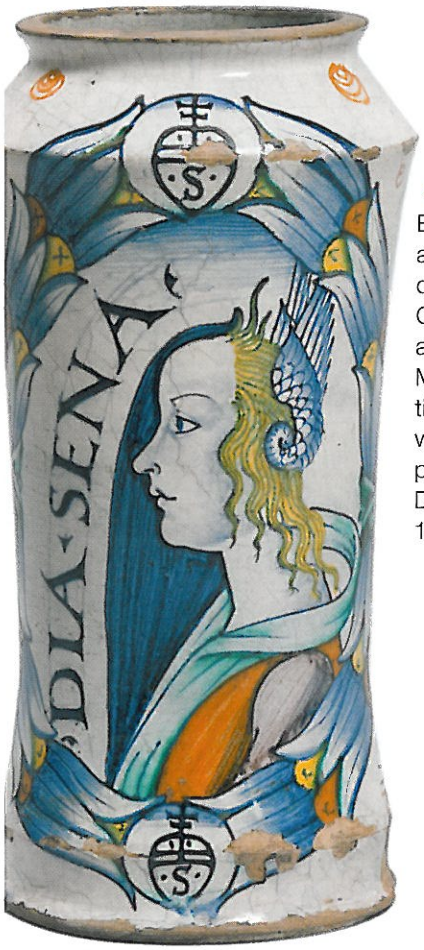
Apter-Fredericks has a particularly e carved fustic and satinwood sofa, ought to have been designed jointly the architect James 'Athenian' uart and John Gordon, and made the latter for Spencer House for e 1st Lord Spencer in about 1760. ➢

↑ Although Masterpiece has not always given the impression of a fair where Old Master and early paintings would necessarily flourish, last year, a number of dealers did very well, including, in their very different fields, Dickinson and James Harvey. The latter is taking two stands this year, one *in propria persona* and the other to relaunch the stock and name of his late mentor Christopher Wood. Notable Old Master paintings will be found with Agnew's, which has a newly discovered Van Dyck oil sketch for his first group of Charles I's family, and with Philip Mould, such as this charming 16⅛in by 11in *Portrait of Mary Tichborne* (born 1641) by the Master of the Countess Of Warwick.



↑ Another recently rediscovered Old Master is Whitfield Fine Art's *Saint Augustine*, 47⅝in 38⅛in, by Caravaggio, painted in about 1600.

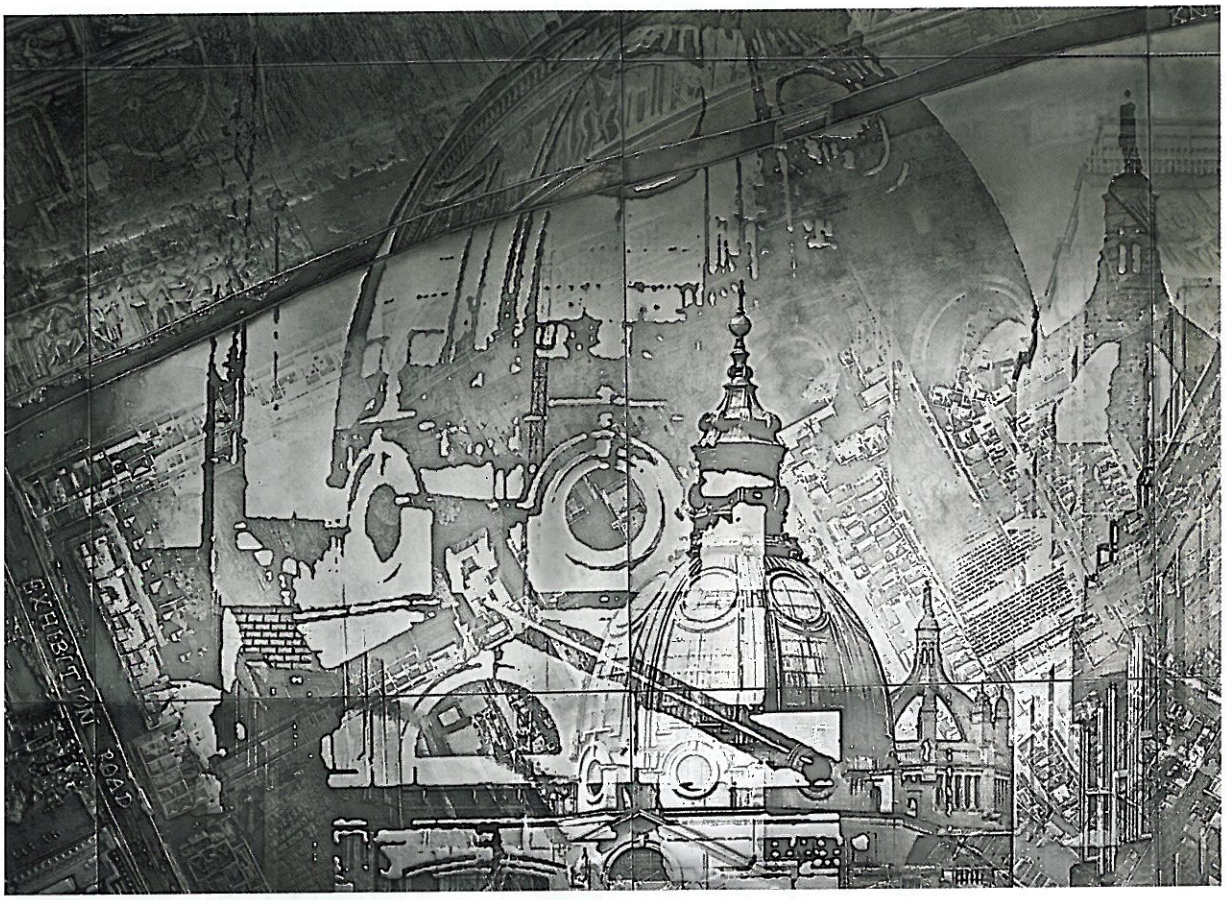
→ This year looks as if it will be a good one for 20th-century sculpture. Offer Waterman has this painted steel *Floor Piece 'Hé'* of 1972; the Fine Art Society a rare 1988 aluminium cast of Sir Alfred Gilbert's *Eros*, patinated and finished by his former assistant George Mancini; and the Sladmore Gallery has a cast of Rodin's *The Kiss*. On that last subject, James Hyman offers a complete show of photographs and paintings on the theme of Love.



← Among his European paintings and medieval works of art, Sam Fogg of Clifford Street offers a small but very fine Maiolica 'Bella Donna' tin-glazed earthenware *albarello*, probably made in Deruta between 1510 and 1520.

↑ Fernand Léger's 19⅝in by 25½in 1943 gouache *Les Belles Cyclistes* is great fun (Lefevre Fine Art). So, too, are the creations of Shaw Speed & Custom, whose line is wondrous bespoke motorcycles that are 'more a fusion of art and function'. The car specialists this year are Rolls-Royce and Duncan Hamilton.

← Amir Mohtashemi of London has a 19th-century Indian life-sized wooden processional horse and rider, the horse with some original pigment and its mane and tail. The wooden baseboard still has the rings for towing ropes. It will be interesting to compare this to the 13th- to 18th-century European wooden sculptures brought by Chiale from Racconigi in Piedmont. ➢



← Based Upon is a team of 30 artists and designers (in the English rather than American usage) that produces large-scale artworks and sculptural furniture, such as *Remembering Knightsbridge*, which measures more than 14ft by 7ft and is made of aluminium honeycomb and varying tones of bronze. The team is exhibiting for the first time.

↑ A pair of hall benches by Robert Adam for Kenwood House, last certainly seen in a 1919 COUNTRY LIFE photograph, has recently been rediscovered and is shown at the fair by Godson & Coles. It is hoped that they will return home when the house reopens next summer after restoration.

↑ The Aktis Gallery specialises in Russian art, and among its stars will be a 1914 poster design by Bonnard for the Ballets Russes production of *La Légend de Joseph*, starring Léonide Massine. It also has a promotional photograph of Massine in costume by Studio Duhrkoop.

↓ ↑ Hemmerle is one of several new exhibitors from Munich. It specialises in jewellery inspired by ancient Egypt, such as these Horus earrings (*below*) with copper, white gold, tsavorite garnets and turquoise. Perhaps a buyer here might also be attracted to an original, such as the Ptolemaic mummy mask (*above*), about 300BC, shown by Charles Ede. Also showing antiquities will be Rupert Wace of London and Cahn from Switzerland.

A selection of summer exhibitions

One of the surprising things about the Grand Tour souvenirs from the cargo of *Westmorland* on show at the Ashmolean in Oxford until August 27 (COUNTRY LIFE, May 9) is that there were no drawings by Carlo Labruzzi among them. Labruzzi (1748–1817) is praised in the diaries of several British *milordi* and artists, including Lord Herbert, later 11th Earl of Pembroke, who regarded him as one of the three most notable painters in Rome. One of his principal British customers was antiquarian Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and his admirers included Lady Caroline Stuart-Wortley (1779–1856). Her husband bought her three volumes of sketches from Labruzzi's widow, which seem to have passed to the Fitzwilliams of Wentworth Woodhouse. One of them supplies the exhibition at Dickinson (in association with Bill Thomson), Jermyn Street, until July 13 (www.simondickinson.com). I hadn't taken much note of Labruzzi before, having only seen faded drawings by him, but these are fresh and strong, and full of poetry. There are 95 in all, varying from comparatively slight drawings to fully worked watercolours, and some lesser, but still desirable, examples have been left unframed and priced very reasonably. Framed examples run from £3,000 to £50,000.

Across the street until July 7, Harris Lindsay (www.harrislindsay.com) offers a fascinating show, 'Uit Verre Streken—From Distant Lands', in association with Guus Röell of Maastricht, a dealer who shares its eclectic good taste. They offer furniture, paintings, sculpture and works of art that were made in India and the Far East, from the 17th to the 19th century, for the European market, together with works by European artists who voyaged in the opposite direction.

In fitting tribute to the Diamond Jubilee, Richard Green (www.richard-green.com) is showing 41 works by royal favourite Edward Seago. That The Duke of Edinburgh and The Prince of Wales are much better painters than many critics allow is partly due to Seago's influence. The proceeds of the accompanying, fully illustrated catalogue will be given to Fields in Trust, whose Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, headed by The Duke of Cambridge, aims to protect outdoor recreational spaces in communities all across the country.

Coming up is the Sculpture Weekend (June 23–24) at Messum's country base, The Studio, Marlow Common, Buckinghamshire, with an evening private view on Friday (June 22, www.messums.com).

It is 50 years since Bridget Riley held her first commercial exhibition, and in celebration, until July 13, Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert (www.hh-h.com) and Karsten Schubert (www.karstenschubert.com) have a two-part show entitled 'Bridget Riley: Works 1960–1966'. The show is divided between their galleries, Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert, 38, Bury Street, and Karsten Schubert, 5–8, Lower John Street.

A different female face of British 20th-century art, Helen Bradley (1900–79) is celebrated at MacConnal-Mason (www.macconnal-mason.com), Duke Street, St James's until July 10.