

Opulence abounds, starting with the booth of fair stalwart **Kraemer**. The Parisian 17th- and 18th-century furniture dealer is pulling out all the stops, furnishing a replica of the Oval Office with exquisite examples of French marquetry, ormolu, and lacquer, including a circa 1720 gilt-wood table whose legs are carved with allegories of Europe,

America, Asia, and Africa. The four continents—a popular 18th-century motif—are also represented in a set of spectacular carved wall panels at the booth of Biennale regular **François Léage**, of Paris, who is optimistic about this edition. “American buyers are back in force,” says Léage. “The fall of the euro helps.”

Challenging 18th-century French furniture for preeminence this year is 20th-century design. “It’s a reflection of the market,” explains Aaron. Among those joining powerhouse **Vallois** in the luxe modernist field are three of the event’s Parisian debutants: **Michel Giraud**, **Alain Marcelpoil**, and **Galerie Marcihac**. Another sign of changing times: There are twice as many specialists in modern art as in Old Masters.

Among the former is first-time exhibitor **L&M Arts**, of New York and Los Angeles, whose booth will feature **Alexander Calder**’s mobile *Constellation with Red Knife*, 1943.

The Renaissance and Baroque sectors, however, have managed to withstand the influx of modernity and remain strong. Among the treasures from these epochs are a pair of late 17th-century enamel, ormolu, Trapani coral, and brass mirrors and a circa 1650 covered vase of black porphyry, bought at auction in 1782 by **Louis XVI**, at the booths of the Parisian dealers **Galerie Perrin** and **Anne-Marie Monin**, respectively. **Gismondi**, also of Paris, is bringing the large circa 1542 Fontainebleau School canvas *The Garden of Pomona*, the

A 1730 lacquered beech-wood sofa à joutes, after designs by Johann Michael Hoppenhaupt II, at Didier Aaron.



Above: A late 18th-century chandelier with blue-lacquered sphere and stars, at Kraemer, of Paris. Left: a ca. 1560 boxwood statue of Venus and Cupid, attributed to Laurent Rénier, at Anne-Marie Monin, of Paris.

only remaining evidence of **Francesco Primaticcio**’s fresco for the Pomona Pavilion, which was destroyed in 1766.

The fair remains very French, with 70 percent of exhibitors from Paris, but six booths are manned by Americans, including the ceramics dealer **Jason Jacques**, from New York, who is making his Biennale debut with a detailed re-creation of the **Georges Hoentschel**-designed Art Nouveau stand from the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, including many of the original wares. “It’s the only show where if you don’t make your booth spectacular, above and beyond, you will not be back,” says Jacques.

Making a noteworthy return after a conspicuous absence in 2008, Belgian dealer/decorator **Axel Vervoordt** has been given top billing. “The Biennale is very important to us,” says **Boris Vervoordt**, the legendary Axel’s son, who has taken over the day-to-day running of the business. “You could say that back in the 1980s it kick-started my father’s career.” Vervoordt’s booth stars an Egyptian peridotite block statue of Amenmose, priest of Hathor, 1292–1185 b.c., and the 1959 slashed **Lucio Fontana** canvas

Concetto Spaziale, Atessa 59 T 120.

The Biennale is nothing if not eclectic. Highlights range from a 3rd- to 2nd-century b.c. Hellenistic bronze equestrian figure of Alexander the Great at **Phoenix Ancient Art**, of Geneva and New York, to “Renaissance of Yiddish Culture,” a show of Kiev-based artists at the booth of the Paris and Tel Aviv gallery **Le Minotaure**. Some of the world’s top dealers of non-Western art will be there as well, including Parisian tribal-art specialist **Bernard Dulon**, who is bringing a never-exhibited 16th-century Kuba hunting dog. A Tang Dynasty glazed-pottery Ferghana horse is the centerpiece of the Parisian Asian-art dealer **Christian Deydier**’s booth, and a monumental beige terra-cotta Greco-Buddhist head of the bodhisattva Vajrapani, from the ancient kingdom of Gandhara, is the headliner at **Jacques Barrère**, also of Paris. Jewelry has a powerful presence, too (see page 38).



A Tang Dynasty Ferghana horse at the booth of Christian Deydier, of Paris.

In celebration of the Biennale’s 25th anniversary, the organizers have invited 25 up-and-coming dealers to exhibit one object each on the balcony of the Grand Palais. **David Ghezlbash**, of Paris, has chosen a circa 200 b.c. Greek marble head of Zeus, while **Marie-Alexandrine Yvernault**, also of Paris, is bringing a luminous circa 1975 stainless-steel sculpture by **Studio Reggiani**.

These emerging dealers may represent the Biennale’s future, but it’s a younger generation at established galleries that promises to steer it to increased prominence. “Why does the world’s greatest fair take place in a minor Dutch town? Why is the Biennale only held every two years? Because dealers need time to find goods? How does Maastricht manage?” asks **Antoine Barrère**, the 35-year-old successor to his father at Jacques Barrère. “And the Biennale should be held during the main Paris auction season, to dynamize the market.”

—Simon Hewitt

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SEPTEMBER 2010 THIS MONTH'S CULTURAL AGENDA

Two 1903 vases
by Taxile Doat,
priced at \$90,000
each, at the booth
of New York's
Jason Jacques.



PARIS

DEFINING CHIC

The incomparably posh **Biennale des Antiquaires**, at the Grand Palais from September 15 through 22, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. And its new president, **Hervé Aaron**—head of the **Syndicat National des Antiquaires (SNA)**, which produces the event, and president of **Didier Aaron Gallery**, of Paris, London, and New York—is determined to distinguish it from the massive **TEFAF** Maastricht, the Biennale's rival for the title of world's top fair. To this end, he has pared the number of exhibitors down from the last edition's 94 to just 87, including 13 newcomers: eight French and five from abroad. Fewer participants means that each has more room in the sumptuous space designed by **Agence Decoral** and **Patrick Bazanan**, whose elaborate garden setting for the 2008 Biennale was much lauded. >>