

# DATEBOOK

SEPTEMBER 2012 THIS MONTH'S CULTURAL AGENDA



PARIS

## Best in Show

The **Biennale des Antiquaires** is poised for a historic edition this year, with **Karl Lagerfeld** providing not only scenography but also star power to the prestigious fine art, antiques, and jewelry fair. In short, director **Christian Deydier** has delivered on his promise to transform an event he had lamented as “dull” in his campaign to reclaim the presidency of the **Syndicat National des Antiquaires** in 2010.

“Putting Lagerfeld’s name on the Biennale has brought an enormous number of requests for booths and visitor passes,” Deydier told *Art+Auction*. “Last time, the gallerists were demoralized and didn’t want to invest much. They preferred to do it on the cheap and protect themselves. Now, despite the financial crisis, the attitude is to show some guts, to bring out the best of ourselves.”

From September 14 through 23, the Grand Palais will house 123 exhibitors presenting €50 billion (\$61.3 billion) worth of fine antiques, artworks from the Renaissance

to the contemporary era, and luxurious jewelry. The number of participants is up from only 86 in 2010, with the reopening of the classic Salon d’Honneur—for the first time since 1937—along with new space under the mezzanine’s balconies giving the fair more room. Although the event remains resolutely French, some 45 exhibitors are first-timers.

All will be set in Lagerfeld’s vision of fin-de-siècle Parisian window-shopping, with large windows reviving the feel of the boutiques inside the long-lost Grand Bazar on the Rue de Rennes and a tribute to the Rue de Rivoli on the mezzanine. At the heart of the Grand Palais, under its Beaux Arts glass nave, a giant hot-air balloon will be re-created from period blueprints, echoing one of the Palais’s very first exhibitions.

“When Karl does something,” says **Dominique Lévy**, of **L&M Arts**, “you know that it’s going to be exceptional, so you want to rise to the occasion.” Some dealers are building nods to the fashion legend into their shows. **François Léage** will anchor his booth with a rare two-tier Louis XVI Martin Carlin table whose upper tabletop holds a drawer that swivels open to reveal a writing case. The form recalls a fan like the one Lagerfeld used to carry. New York’s **Marlborough** and **JGM Galerie**, of Paris, are mounting the Biennale’s first solo booths by living artists. At Marlborough, **Manolo Valdés**, in a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, created everything from the paintings to the library of carved-wood books.

The Biennale’s first Chinese invitee, Hong Kong jeweler **Wallace Chan**, hopes to make a splash with his *Stilled Life* cicada brooch in imperial jadeite with diamonds and rubies, priced at €30 million (\$40.2 million).

Gallery president **Pierre Levai** chose the Spaniard because his “work is very much a commentary on Old Masters, the school of Fontainebleau, and modern artists like Kirchner or Picasso. And Lagerfeld has a certain baroque taste that will fit well with Valdés.” JGM will present **Claude Lalanne**.

As many as 30 of this year’s participants specialize in modern and contemporary art, more than twice as many as in 2010. Bowing to historicity, **Tornabuoni Art**, of Paris, will hang masterpieces from each decade of the 20th century, anchored by a 1919 **Picasso** and a 1984 **Basquiat**, while Geneva’s **Krugier** has an outstanding **Cézanne** canvas, *Tasse, verre et fruits, II*, 1877. **David Ghez** presents a bronze statue of Isis/Aphrodite, likely from Alexandria between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100, while **Charly Bailly Fine Art**, of Geneva, is unveiling a rediscovered **Francisco de Zubaran**.

But the fair’s bread and butter is antiques, and dealers have been hoarding their best examples since the last edition. After memorably presenting a 19th-century-French-flavored Oval Office in 2010, the Parisian furniture specialist **Maison Kraemer** this year gives over its entire booth to a museum-caliber show of master cabinetmaker **Jean-Henri Riesener**, who designed Marie Antoinette’s writing desk. **Steinitz** is offering an ornate, eight-legged desk, circa 1692–95, by Riesener’s predecessor **André-Charles Boulle**, made with the inlay for which he is famous. Advancing an argument for the Deco period, **Vallois** is showcasing 1920s masterpieces in a booth designed by **Joseph Graf**. **François Laffanour’s Galerie Downtown** counters with a display of the custom-tailored contents of a Paris apartment furnished by **Charlotte Perriand**.



A Louis XVI tiered table in rosewood, marble, and ormolu by **Martin Carlin** will be brought to the Paris Biennale by **François Léage**.

Asian art, a genre close to Deydier’s heart, has a handful of notable entries. Paris’s **Jacques Barrère** will gather important Song Dynasty Buddhist sculptures, among them a trio of 10th-century bodhisattvas from the temples of Shanxi. Deydier himself will show Tang Dynasty earthenware figures.

The fine jewelry section is particularly dynamic with the arrival of Hong Kong’s **Wallace Chan**, **Bulgari**, **Boucheron**, and **Chaumet**, who join regulars **Piaget**, **Harry Winston**, **Cartier**, **Dior**, and **Van Cleef & Arpels**, which is bringing 20 creations inspired by birds of paradise. “Knowing that Karl was involved, all the great jewelers have prepared specific collections,” notes Deydier, with some opting to debut new wares here rather than during Paris Fashion Week. He adds, “We’re expecting an excellent, memorable Biennale.” —NICOLAI HARTVIG

## Q&A: KARL LAGERFELD

**How did you come to be involved with designing the Biennale des Antiquaires?** Christian Deydier had seen how I used the beautiful space of the Grand Palais for the Chanel shows. I have worked that space in so many directions that it may be the place I know best in Paris.

### How did you approach the task?

I wanted to do an updated version of the 19th-century world’s fairs in Paris, or perhaps the Crystal Palace in London in 1851.

### You have designed individual booths before. Were you able to draw on this experience for the Biennale?

My favorite was the booth I designed decades ago for Anne-Sophie Duval. It featured lacquer works by Jean Dunand at a time when Art Deco was hardly admitted at the Biennale! This project, however, has another dimension entirely.

### Tell us about the theme.

It’s in the spirit of Baron Haussmann, who gave us the central Paris we know today, mixed with the Louis XV elements of the Place de la Concorde, etc. But I wanted it totally modern, as modern as an antiques fair can be. It was an interesting challenge.

### What effect do you hope your scenography achieves?

I hope it will be a moment where the public and the dealers will be pleased and happy—in a way detached for a moment from reality. —NH



Galerie **Eigen + Art**, of Leipzig and Berlin, will show **Birgit Brenner’s** *Komm. Zurück*, 2012, at **Art Berlin Contemporary**.

## BERLIN

# ABC Counts on Context

The German capital is down one fair but up one art week this fall. After the demise of **Art Forum Berlin** in 2011, **Art Berlin Contemporary** (ABC) will headline the newly established **Berlin Art Week**, which runs September 11 through 16. ABC, a five-year-old fair headed by a coalition of nine local dealers, has its work cut out for it. According to spokesperson **Silke Neumann**, “No longer having Art Forum, a lot of collectors seemed unsure about ABC: ‘What is it? Can I buy there?’ We had to convince them that the program is different but equally attractive.” Mindful of the city’s reputation as a hub of art activity if not commerce, “we want to instead think about Berlin as a place of art production,” she adds. Starting on the 13th, ABC will showcase more than 150 booths at Station-Berlin, among them **Galerie Neu** and **Esther Schipper**. The week’s off-site highlights include the **Preview Berlin** fair at Tempelhof Airport and **Neugerriemschneider’s Mike Nelson** installation in an abandoned Mitte building, both opening September 14. **Berliner Liste** will be held at the same time but is not included in the official program. —ALEXANDER FORBES