

# The elephant never forgets

Refuse to take home a flamboyantly unfashionable mantel clock and it'll haunt you for quite some time, plus ancient tribal artefacts can seem deceptively more recent

THE *Parcours des Mondes* is changing form slightly for its 14th and latest incarnation in the Parisian Left Bank galleries between September 8 and 13. Among the 86 participants—both resident and visiting from around the world—there will be about 20 dealers in Asian works. This initiative requires careful handling, lest the nature of what is now arguably the world's principal market celebration of primal (otherwise tribal) arts is diluted.

Obviously, many artefacts and works of art from cultures across Asia are a perfect fit for the *Parcours*, as indeed from Europe, but where should the boundaries be set? Tibetan bronzes, yes, but porcelains, presumably, no. *Netsuke*, perhaps, but Japanese prints or Indian miniatures? Many textiles, yes, but Ming *huanghuali* furniture, no.

Actually, there will be one exhibition each of Indian miniatures and Japanese prints this year, and also Japanese screens, which could lead to difficulties in the future. As with the question of primitive/primal/tribal, great tact will be required, as it is almost impossible to discuss such matters without being accused of cultural snobbery.

In any event, I am greatly looking forward to my all too brief tour of some of the galleries, on which I will report next month. With so much to choose from, I pick a couple of exhibits almost at random to illustrate now.

Galerie Flak in the rue des Beaux-Arts casts its nets wide, including African, Oceanic and Inuit items. Often primal artefacts are 19th or 20th century, even though they may look older to an inexperienced eye, but Inuit pieces can be very much older than one might think. The gallery has one such (recently sold, but on show at *Parcours*): a large—21½in—



Fig 1 above: Edwin La Dell's *Fishing at Marlow*. With Gwen Hughes Fine Art at the Watts Gallery.

Fig 2 below left: Walrus-ivory harpoon weight from the Bering Strait, 500–300BC.

On display with Galerie Flak. Fig 3 below right: Early-20th-century *shifola* face mask from the Lwalwa tribe. With Jacques Germain



carved walrus-ivory harpoon weight from the Bering Strait, which is datable to 500–300BC (Fig 2).

Jacques Germain, an African specialist from Montréal also exhibiting in the rue des Beaux-Arts, has a *shifola* face mask from the Lwalwa tribe on the border of the DR Congo and Angola, which dates from the early 20th century (Fig 3). The Lwalwa are not a particularly large tribe—

about 20,000 people—but carving has always been highly regarded among them. Characteristics of their masks include rectangular eyes, large noses and, sometimes, as here, pudding-basin haircuts that make them resemble medieval Normans.

Presumably, were Mike Melody exhibiting in Paris rather than West Yorkshire, his Orkney chair would be welcome among the



*Parcours* shows. It is a late-19th-century example, before the introduction of caned drop-in seats. Early Orkneys were one-offs. On some old versions, the curved straw backs were domed for protection from draughts, like a club hall porter's chair. Sometimes, too, there was a drawer beneath the seat. Mr Melody, from Chester, will be showing his £975 chair (Fig 6) at the fourth

Harewood House fair, between September 11 and 13.

Another exhibit to be offered there takes me back to 1976 and one of the greatest contents sales of that decade. Malahide Castle, north of Dublin, was possibly Ireland's oldest inhabited house and it was sad to see the 800-year tenure of the Talbots come to an end. Despite that, the three-day sale was a joyous occasion and I was thrilled to buy several James Boswell relics, including, perhaps, his shaving brush, which had been stored

in a cabinet there. As I remember, only one lot remained without a buyer at the end of the first day, a mid-19th-century 21½in-high bronze and decorated mantel clock in the form

of a fully caparisoned elephant with a female rider (can a *mahout* be female?). It was large, flamboyant and completely out of fashion and I was asked if I would take it away for £1. Although we had a van with us, I turned it down and have always regretted my timidity.

At Harewood, there will be a miniature (merely 16½in high) variation on the same theme. This time, the clock carried by the cast-bronze elephant is topped by a shell-blowing *putto*. Perhaps by Mirroy Frères and dating from about 1860, it will be offered by East Anglian dealer Olde Time at £12,950 (Fig 4).

Until October 4, the Watts Gallery at Compton in



Fig 4: Mantel clock with elephant and *putto*. With Olde Time



Fig 5: *The Giant Cable* by Sybil Andrews. With Osborne Samuel

Surrey is the setting for a very satisfying meeting of minds. The Victorian artist George Frederic Watts and his wife, Mary, were believers in the Arts-and-Crafts philosophy that art should have a central place in the community and, since its resurrection from a 2004 'at risk' status and reopening in 2011, the gallery has held to the same ideal. It is thus a most suitable place for the selling exhibition of 'Prints for the People' organised with the Modern British and contemporary dealer Gwen Hughes.

this time by a single artist, Sybil Andrews (1898–1992), whose Futurist Grosvenor School linocuts are increasingly popular (Fig 5). The show accompanies *Sybil Andrews Linocuts: A Complete Catalogue*, by Hana Leaper, with a foreword by Gordon Samuel and published by Lund Humphries in association with the gallery (£35). This will be a very welcome addition to the reference bookshelf.

Next week Rings, kings and celebrations

From the 1930s to early 1950s, several series of lithographs were commissioned that were intended to make good art widely accessible, including the 'Contemporary Lithographs' (1937–8), 'School Prints' (1946), 'Lyons Teashop Lithographs' (1947–55) and 'Coronation Series' (1953). Artists included Julian Trevelyan, Raoul Dufy, Edwin La Dell (Fig 1), Vincent Lines, Barbara Jones and Edward Ardizzone. Editions could be as large as 2,000, but, thanks to wartime paper and hard usage, comparatively few survive. Gwen Hughes has always maintained an affordable stock as well as important works by leading artists, making this an excellent show for the Watts. Prices run from £75 (unframed) and most prints are below £1,000.

More Modern British prints at Osborne Samuel in Bruton Street, London W1, from September 24 to October 10, but

Fig 6: Late-19th-century Orkney chair. With Mike Melody



## Pick of the week



David Inshaw is perhaps the member of the Brotherhood of Ruralists who has remained closest to its vision of 40 years ago. From September 16 to October 1, the Fine Art Society will be showing his new landscape paintings, 'Time Present and Time Past', which are gloriously in the Romantic English tradition.