

# After Strong Opening Sales, TEFAF Maastricht Closes Early in Face of COVID-19

• Samuel McIlhagga mars 11, 2020 5:06pm [f](#) [t](#) [✉](#)



TEFAF Maastricht, 2020. Courtesy of TEFAF Maastricht.

This year's TEFAF Maastricht art fair closed early, at the end of the day Wednesday, after it was revealed that an exhibitor who'd attended the fair's first three days had subsequently tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Though a Dutch health official asserted that the unnamed dealer "was not contagious during his time in TEFAF," the fair's organizers—in consultation with municipal and health authorities, as well as the MECC (Maastricht Exhibition & Conference Centre)—opted to end the fair four days early.

"Given the recent developments in the regions around Maastricht and increasing concerns, we no longer feel it is appropriate to continue as planned," Nanne Dekking, chairman of TEFAF's board of trustees, said in a statement.



Installation view of Jean Christophe's booth at TEF AF Maastricht, 2020. Courtesy of Jean Christophe and TEF AF Maastricht.

A large gathering of demographically older buyers and sellers, like those who usually attend TEF AF Maastricht, had been a source of concern from the get-go. Nina Hartmann, chief marketing officer at TEF AF, told *Artsy* how cautious the fair was being from the outset: "I'm in a WhatsApp group chat with the mayor of Maastricht and we're being very vigilant... we're evaluating the situation daily."

Despite the worsening global health crisis, the mood during the fair's opening days was one of a concerted focus on the task at hand. "I don't know anyone who isn't pleased to be here. I know I am," said Stephen Ongpin, whose namesake London gallery showed at the fair.



Installation view of Nicholas Hall's booth at TEF AF Maastricht, 2020. Courtesy of Nicholas Hall and TEF AF Maastricht.



Vincent van Gogh, installation view of *The Bois de Boulogne with People Walking, 1886*, in Hammer Galleries's booth at TEF AF Maastricht, 2020. Courtesy of Hammer Galleries and TEF AF Maastricht.

Most would have struggled to argue with Ongpin's statement. This year's fair featured objects ranging from ancient Egyptian statues to uber-contemporary design, with a large slate of European Old Masters holding center ground.

Prior to the fair, TEFAF acknowledged the expansion of its traditional remit and the addition of three exhibitors specializing in contemporary design. *Artsy* talked to two of these newcomers, Paris's Galerie Maria Wettergren and New York's Friedman Benda. Wettergren made standout sales, including a wood, wire, and paper pulp piece by Gjertrud Hals and a sculptural lamp by Ane Lykke.



Installation view of Galerie Maria Wettergren's booth at TEFAF Maastricht, 2020. Courtesy of Galerie Maria Wettergren and TEFAF Maastricht.



Ettore Sottsass, *Prototype of commode column*, 1963. Courtesy of Friedman Benda and TEFAF Maastricht.

“It’s great being the last link in this enormous chain of 7,000 years of art history,” said gallery owner Maria Wettergren. Contemporary design made a splash in its debut appearance at the fair, which Wettergren pinned to design’s flexibility: “It’s a growing market, there is a strong interdisciplinary aspect to it—art dialoguing with design; we take influence from the Bauhaus school. This appeals to people.”

“Design galleries are entering spaces they’ve not before,” added Erica Boginsky, associate director at Friedman Benda.

Another new face at the fair was Tristram Hunt, a former Labour Party MP in the U.K. government and the current director of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London.





Ignaz Günther    *A Pair of Putti*  
Julius Böhler

“This is my first trip to TEFAF,” he said. “I was often told it can be quite empty, but it’s not!” When asked whether the V&A was looking to make any new acquisitions at the fair, Hunt replied, “I’m falling in love with the Delftware, but my curators say we have enough of it! However, they are very interested in some spectacular small sculptures at Daniel Katz [Gallery’s booth].”

“Tristram didn’t buy anything from Katz, in the end,” said Tom Davies, the director of Daniel Katz Gallery, “but we have sold several small but lovely antiquities to European collectors.” Still remaining among the gallery’s presentation as of Tuesday was Jean-Antoine Houdon’s *Bust of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon* (1789) and *Bust of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1788), a pair of sculpture busts depicting major figures of the French Enlightenment and being offered for €3 million (\$3.4 million).



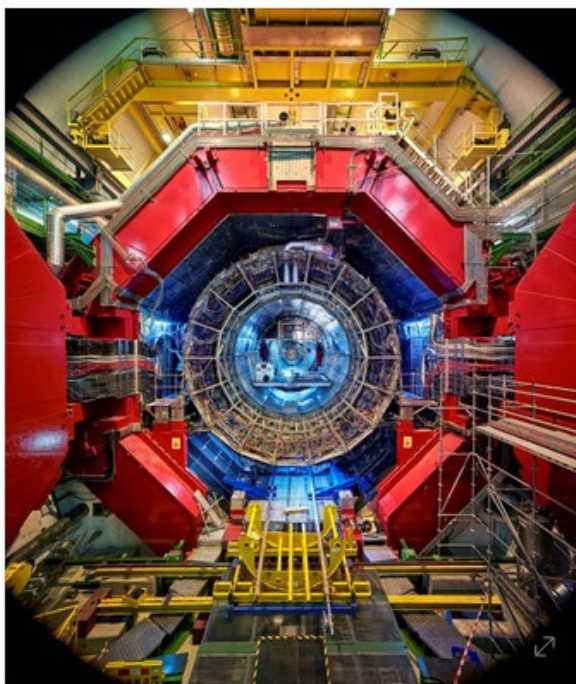
Prosper D'Épinay, *Françoise de la Rochefoucauld, wife of Claude d'Épinay*, 1880.  
Courtesy of Galerie Talabardon et Gautier.



Ernest Quost, *Landscape with Female Bathers*, 1890.  
Courtesy of Galerie Talabardon et Gautier.

A stone's throw from Daniel Katz's booth, a striking and seemingly unplanned social media moment was taking place during the fair's opening weekend, with dozens of attendees taking their photographs between two floating angels. These angels, or *putti*, by 18th-century German Rococo artist Ignaz Günther, were on offer for €350,000 (\$400,000) from Starnberg-based gallery Julius Böhler. Gallery representative Julia Scheid asserted the angels had not been placed strategically to facilitate selfies.

Down the aisle from the Böhler booth, Galerie Talabardon & Gautier attracted rapt attention with its juxtaposition of Ernest Quost's painting *Landscape with Female Bathers* (ca. 1890), priced at €78,000 (\$88,500), and Prosper d'Épinay's sculpture bust *Françoise de la Rochefoucauld, wife of Claude d'Épinay* (ca. 1880), offered for €85,000 (\$96,500). Sadly, according to gallery assistant Marie-Elise Dupuis, the painting has been sold separately from the bust. Together, the two pieces created an effect similar to Isaac Oliver's famous Jacobean portrait *Sir Edward Herbert, later 1st Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1581/2–1648)* (ca. 1613–14).



Thomas Struth, *ALICE, CERN, Saint Genis-Pouilly*, 2019. Courtesy of Galleri K and TEFAF Maastricht.

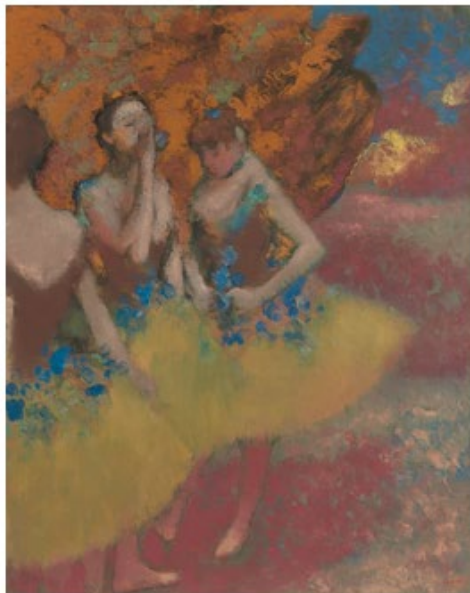


Bernd & Hilla Becher, *Winding Towers*, 1967-82. Courtesy of Galleri K and TEFAF Maastricht.



Upstairs, in TEFAF's sector devoted to works on paper, one booth stole the show. Oslo's Galleri K brought a fine collection of contemporary photography to TEFAF, and reported early sales of Thomas Struth's *ALICE, CERN, Saint Genis-Pouilly* (2019) and Andreas Gursky's *James Bond Island Triptych* (2007). On Tuesday, Ben Frija, the gallery's co-founder, said they'd made nearly €2 million (\$2.28 million) in sales up to that point. The gallery was also offering a grid of nine photographs by Bernd & Hilla Becher, *Winding Towers* (1967–82), which was going for €260,000 (\$297,000). "There had been very great interest in the photographs," Frija said, "especially in their role as teachers for future generations of photographers."

The defining highlight of this year's truncated TEFAF Maastricht fair may have been the booth of New York's Hammer Galleries, which offered a collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works. The gallery's Edgar Degas, *Three Dancers in Yellow Skirts* (ca. 1891), was on the market for the first time since 1969, with an asking price around €37 million (\$42.3 million). Howard Shaw, president and director of the galleries, boasted that it was "the most important painting in the TEFAF building." Making note of its exemplary provenance, he added, "Dr. Armand Hammer, the gallery's founder, bought *Three Dancers* 50 years ago....He was a prolific collector and cultural figure who traveled to Russia and knew Lenin."



Edgar Degas, *Three Dancers in Yellow Skirts*, 1891. Courtesy of Hammer Galleries and TEFAF Maastricht.



Vincent van Gogh, *The Bois de Boulogne with People Walking*, 1886. Courtesy of Hammer Galleries and TEFAF Maastricht.

Still in the Hammer booth, but tucked around a corner, there was an equally interesting work, this one by Vincent van Gogh. Smaller than the Degas, the painting *The Bois de Boulogne with People Walking* (1886) delicately captured Paris in autumn. It was priced between €8 million and €10 million (\$9.1 million–\$11.4 million) and had a novel provenance of its own. Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, an art historian at the University of Toronto who was on hand in the Hammer Galleries booth last week, said she rediscovered the painting in the late 1970s behind a door in the house of an heir of the famous collector Albert Aurier, who “washed it with *Savon de Marseille*” and “saved from it from a bonfire.”

Stephanie Tarras, associate director at Hammer Galleries, said, “We have quite a bit of interest in both [the Degas and the Van Gogh], but we do not wish to divulge specifics.”

Another valuable Van Gogh had no difficulty finding a new home during the fair. *Paysanne devant une chaumière (Peasant Woman in front of a Farmhouse)* (1885), on view in the booth of London-based gallery Dickinson, sold for somewhere between €12 million and €15 million (\$13.5 million–\$16.9 million). Any other major deals that might have been in their final stages when the fair shuttered on Wednesday will have to be finalized elsewhere. •