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The Art Market: Unseen collections

By Georgina Adam

A conversation with the famed art historian Michael Peppiatt was the trigger for an exceptional Giacometti exhibition which opened on Friday in New York and continues until December 18. “Peppiatt – to his eternal regret – never actually met Giacometti, but he immersed himself in Giacometti’s circle, visited his studio and started writing a book about it,” says Nick Maclean, of the London and New York art dealership Eykyn Maclean, which is organising the exhibition. “We also wanted to hold a Giacometti show, and so we started running the two projects together,” he says. Peppiatt’s book *In Giacometti’s Studio* was published last week, while the show, *In Giacometti’s Studio: An Intimate Portrait*, is accompanied by a separate catalogue, with an introduction by Peppiatt.

The 100-strong non-commercial show draws almost entirely on the collection of Giacometti’s nephew Silvio. Spanning the years 1919 to 1965, the works include well-known sculptures such as “Lotar I”, “II” and “III” and “Femme de Venise V”, as well as a series of small 1940s bronzes, drawings, archival material and paintings. Not from the family are two major sculptures in the show, the “Grand Tête de Diego”, 1954, and “Le Nez”, 1947.

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Among the drawings is a fascinating copy of a Van Gogh self-portrait, sketched in ball-point pen directly into Rewald’s 1961 book *Le Post-Impressionisme*, as well as doodles on a newspaper image of Lee Harvey Oswald. The paintings include a portrait of the French poet Jacques Dupin, one of Giacometti’s circle, who is interviewed in the catalogue. A “shrine” to the family includes portraits and sculptures of Giacometti’s parents and his siblings Otilia, Alberto, Diego and Bruno.

The discrete but influential dealership Eykyn Maclean was set up in 2006 by two ex-Christie’s specialists and operates from a two-floor townhouse in Manhattan: this is the first time they have organised a public show.

A Parisian auction house is planning a sale in London next year. The small Europ Auction, just one year old and financed by a London-based Frenchman, is holding a sale in Claridge’s hotel on May 6 next year. “We will be selling about 80 lots of 18th-century French furniture, worth about €10m,” says Camille Bürgi, a specialist of the period and advisor to the firm, who is organising the sale. Why is he holding the auction in the UK? “We have a number of clients based here, who don’t want to pay the 5.5 per cent tax if they send their objects for sale to Paris,” says Bürgi. “We also organised a very successful sale in Geneva for the same reasons – that’s why we have ‘Europe’ in our name.” Bürgi promises some top-level lots for London, including a piece from Versailles.

What is astonishing about the initiative is that it has never been done before: Bürgi admits he is startled by how liberal auctioneering in Britain is, compared to the heavily regulated French system. This, coupled with Drouot’s inertia and protectionism – it repeatedly tried to prevent Europ Auction from holding auctions in its premises – explains a lot about why Paris lost its pre-eminence in the market after the 1950s.

For the first time, the powerful Nahmad firm of art traders is showing its “family collection” in a vast exhibition at the Zurich Kunsthaus next year. “It will be the first time even we see all these works, 120 of them, together,” says Helly Nahmad, who runs the family’s London gallery and is organising the show. “It gives us a chance to see what are the collection’s strengths, what are its

weaknesses,” he says.

The show promises to be a blockbuster: Nahmads are particularly known for their Picasso holdings, and his work will figure large in the show, which also includes a palette of blue-chip names: Matisse, Modigliani, Kandinsky, Monet, Renoir, Ernst and Miró. As some of the works have already been seen in the firm’s New York and London galleries, I ask Nahmad if this is a non-selling show.

“This is not commercial, but the Swiss are very intelligent, they know that finally everything is for sale, at a price, even in American museums,” he answers, adding, “What few people realise is that we have a huge lending programme, at this moment we have 135 works of art from our collection on loan to various museum shows.”

Daniel Eskenazi is best known for his expertise in ancient Oriental art, working with his father, the foremost specialist Giuseppe, in their London gallery. This week,

however, he is displaying a series of photographs made in collaboration with artist Kate Daudy, who works with poetry. In the Chinese tradition they have collaborated, he taking the photographs in China, she inscribing them with poetry. Entitled “Yellow Mountains and Red Letters” the show is at Bonhams (November 4-12) and the works, in editions of five, are priced between £3,000 and £8,500.

The Farsi name again worked its magic at Christie’s in Dubai this week. The firm’s sale of international modern and contemporary art rang up \$29m, \$6.7m of this thanks to 30 works from the Saudi collector, Dr Mohammed Said Farsi, devoted to Egyptian artists. The first part of his collection sold this April in Dubai and fetched \$8.7m: both parts were 100 per cent sold. The third and final part of the collection, some of them nudes deemed, *ahem*, unsuitable to sell in the Gulf, will be offered by Christie’s on November 9 in Paris. Top lot this week was “The Whirling Dervishes” (1929) by Mahmoud Said, sold for \$2.5m (est \$300,000-\$400,000), and the sale was enlivened at lot 33 (Chafic Aboud’s “Déjeuner à l’Atelier”, \$108,100) by a nine-year-old boy in the room, bidding for his parents by waving a lollipop. Qatar – much in the news because the Emir has expressed interest in buying Christie’s, something firmly denied by the auction house – bought a number of lots from the Farsi collection, according to dealers in the room.

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