

From 5-8 October, Regent's Park will, once again, be buzzing with the excitement of the global art world. A chic, glamorous, fashion-conscious tribe of international collectors will converge onto London, and a show of pyrotechnics will begin. Running concurrently with the fair is a full programme of exhibitions in museums, galleries and auction houses, as well as a series of openings, parties, private dinners and bigger gala events which will electrify each day and night of the week.

Frieze Art Fair began in 2003 and is the brainchild of Amanda Sharp and Matthew Slotover, publishers of *Frieze Magazine*. Their project was to give voice to the über-contemporary London art scene, creating an art fair that would mirror the zeitgeist of the Saatchi generation, which exploded in the mid-1990s in what was then nicknamed 'Cool Britannia'.

This generation was named after Charles Saatchi, famed art collector and patron of emerging Young British Artists of the time.

I still remember the thrill of the inaugural 2003 Frieze. There was a palpable sense of pushing boundaries, opening the market to new frontiers, and introducing more conventional audiences to daring, demanding works of art. The first Frieze felt like an experiment: it was ten-

tative and very avant-garde, but immediately the response was overwhelming. Exhibitions multiplied around it all over London, taking over the galleries that were not showing in Regent's Park, and becoming a fundamental part of the capital's art scene.

Very quickly, the auction houses realised that they could not ignore it, and started organising sales at the same time to capitalise on the international crowd of collectors arriving from all over the world. What were once tepid October mid-season sales became ultra-contemporary auctions. One of the beacons of the autumn season, the Italian Sale, which started in 1998, grew steadily from a total of £5 million to £45 million in a few years, pushing to record levels the prices of Fontana, Burri, Manzoni, and all the

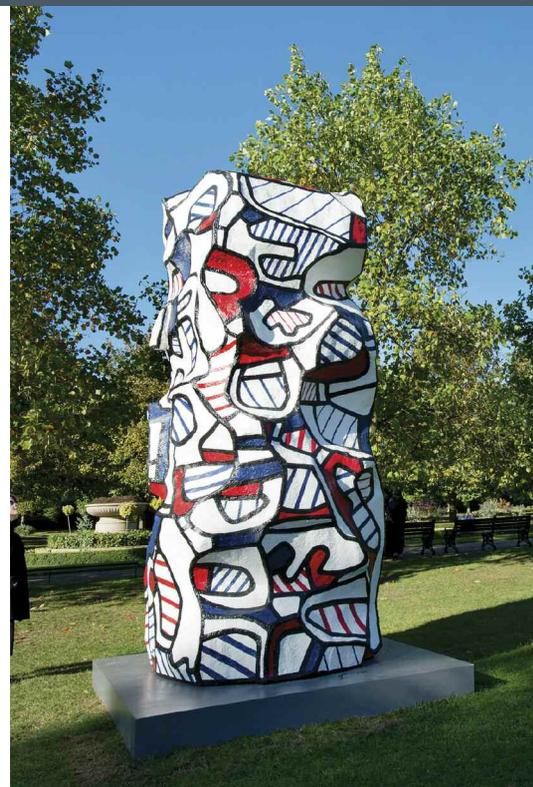
Arte Povera generation. Viewings saw a new public of young collectors attending previews and parties, and events became ever more daring: from warehouses to galleries, to re-purposed Victorian residences in St James. The Frieze atmosphere meant a 'licence to thrill', and to seduce future buyers, the Millennials.

Although its initial purpose was selling art, the fair became a cultural platform, deserving all the respect and attention of a major event. A mirror fair was inaugurated in 2011 in New York on Randall's Island, in keeping with the mission of pursuing and promoting the cutting edge in contemporary art.

In 14 years, Frieze has evolved immensely. Regent's Park now hosts two fairs: Frieze London and Frieze Masters. The first maintains the original aim of

FRIEZE

The international art





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world takes over London FRIEZE

exhibiting contemporary works, while the second is dedicated to bringing together centuries of masterpieces, with more than 130 galleries showing art from Antiquity to the 20th Century.

Frieze London remains one of the few fairs in the world focusing on contemporary living artists: in 2016 it exhibited work of 1,000 living artists. It has a special section called 'Live' for young galleries and emerging artists, and one called 'Focus', dedicated to live, performance-based works. What is even more special is that Frieze London also presents specially commissioned artists' projects, and panels led by artists and curators. It properly serves as a catalyst for fostering new artists and supporting audacious artistic ideas. The panels and discussions organised around the core of

the fair are extremely interesting: museum directors talk alongside the top dealers and artists, around controversial and 'hot' subjects such as the future of museums, the making of new public collections, or the lack of support to institutions.

Frieze Masters provides a more 'classical' experience, but is also a dynamo for innovation. Our taste and capacity to mix epochs and cultures are constantly provoked when we walk through these spectacularly curated booths. Medieval gold-grounds are offered alongside Calder mobiles; eighteenth century consoles support Cycladic sculptures. A more traditional crowd is clearly gravitating towards Frieze Masters: more experienced buyers, from a slightly older generation, ready to spend more on 'blue

chip names', such as Picasso, Matisse, Miro and Dali. These same collectors will however happily walk to the other side of Regent's Park and let themselves be tempted by the colourful, intense message of a video and a photo created two months ago, exhibited at the other fair. The two events communicate with each other, challenge each other and force collectors to overcome their self-imposed limits and preconceptions, in a positive, virtuous circle that means much more than a commercial enterprise.

Thanks to Frieze London and Frieze Masters, we grow both as art lovers and collectors. These fairs have helped us to be more mature, alert, demanding, open-minded and culturally aware. Exactly as London would want us to be every day.

Giovanna Bertazzoni is the Chairman of the Impressionist and Modern Art Department at Christie's in London.

In conversation with **Giovanna Bertazzoni**

Giovanna Bertazzoni, Chairman of the Impressionist and Modern Art Department at Christie's, has lived in a number of countries over the course of her life, but has called the UK home since 1997. Here she talks to FOCUS Magazine Editor Francine Bosco about her relentless work schedule, navigating a dynamic, glamorous industry and why London is now home for her.

Like many Londoners Giovanna's early life began elsewhere and an expected short stay just for her husband's work turned into a long-term commitment to the city. Originally from Italy, Giovanna studied Modern Literature as an undergraduate, which she describes as a bit of a paradox, as in Italy, the richest country in art in the world, you could not graduate in Art History. You had to study Literature and choose Art as a major. Graduate school took her to France and the Ecole Nationale du Patrimoine in Paris where she completed a Master's degree in Museum Studies. The plan was to work in Paris as a curator, but with her fiancé (now husband) in California completing his PhD at Stanford University, Giovanna's next move was to northern California and a job at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. "It was an interesting time in the US – it was years of expansion and prosperity and it was all very easy and welcoming. Even from a weather point of view!"

The California interlude came to an end when her husband accepted a teaching position at University College London (UCL) in 1997, a move that she says she initially found a bit difficult. "There was a culture clash between London and super liberal, super exciting California when it was the most explosive laboratory you can imagine in the art world. I left that to come to a more subdued environment." In those days, though, Britain had a new government and there was a new sense of possibility. The country was on the cusp of what came to be known as 'Cool Britannia' – an eruption of the arts and culture scene throughout the country. "Coming from the US, and California in particular, was a big transition. London was much more complex

and demanding than San Francisco, people are much busier plus we arrived in October when the weather was not good!"

It was at this time that Giovanna started her lengthy career at the London headquarters of Christie's auction house, an institution that at the time was better known for tradition than innovation. Giovanna's first job at Christie's was as a researcher in the Impressionist and Modern Art department, the one she would eventually head. "When I arrived, Christie's was very male-dominated. Women could only wear skirts and not trousers to work. It was very traditional." The Cool Britannia period however changed everything. "London became more global with a sense of novelty and adventure. Even Christie's had to become more integrated into this zeitgeist. Now it's a global, inclusive place and so feels a better place," she explains. For several years, Giovanna headed the biennial 'Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper' sale in London, rising to Department Head in 2008 and International Specialist Head of Impressionist and Modern Art in 2012. She was appointed Deputy Chair in 2012 and Co-Chairman in July 2017.

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What, you may ask, is life like for someone at the top of the art world? For Giovanna, the highlights include getting to work with amazing works of art. "You get to be academic in terms of work, but there is also a strong commercial element at heart." It's fast paced, with constant, multiple contacts with diverse people around the world, travel opportunities are endless and perhaps best of all it's a chance to "bridge new frontiers with a powerful cultural horizon". She describes it as a "fulfilling lifestyle, very intense but also full of art openings and parties so at the end of the day there's a trade-off". It's also a demanding lifestyle, and despite the glamour and high-octane social interactions, one that Giovanna notes can be difficult for family life. "It's very hard to have a family as it's a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. Many don't have anything else outside of work."

Hard, but not impossible, as Giovanna and her husband have a young son. In fact, it was having a child that Giovanna feels helped cement her sense of belonging in London. "The turning point for me was having a child here. Now I feel at home. You have to think of schools and other friends with children so there's a wider sense of the city." Despite the relentless work and travel schedule, Giovanna does find some time off to do the things she enjoys in London. As well as spending time with her son, she is a keen runner, which she finds is "my way of keeping my sanity", and she and her husband have been dedicated supporters of the Almeida Theatre in Islington for many years. And in 2005, underscoring the sense of feeling and belonging in London, Giovanna and her husband decided to become British citizens. "We were only meant to be in the UK for a few years and then return to Italy, but we have now spent years as dual nationals!"

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