

## Positive Sales and Spirits at Art13 London Opening Signal a Promising Future

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Art13 London 1-3 March 2013, Installation View

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Visitors and exhibitors are unanimous: **Art13 London's** opening yesterday was a good one. Over 6,000 people made it to **Olympia Grand Hall** in the sleepy West London neighbourhood of Kensington, including 3,000 VIPs. A number of very serious collectors were spotted strolling the aisles, although some of the most recognizable faces – the **Rubells**, **Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**, and **Sydney Picasso** – had all been smartly linked to the fair, either as members of the advisory board or speakers on Art13 London's extensive talks programme. Heartthrob *du jour* **Harry Styles**, from the British boy band **One Direction**, took his first steps as an art collector, purchasing a **Ben Turnbull** sculpture at **Eleven Gallery** for £1,800 (\$2,700).

Now that the glitter has started to settle, it's time for a first tally, and while the floor appeared much quieter today, the figures are looking good. "This is the London art fair we've been waiting for," said Eleven Gallery's **Charlie Phillips**, who also sold a large collage by Turnbull for £16,500 (\$25,000) and two framed video pieces by **Gerry Fox** at £2,750 (\$4,100) a pop.

At time of writing, the biggest sale went to **Kálmán Maklár Fine Arts** from Budapest, who sold "Mass Writing," a large 1958 abstract painting by **Judit Reigl** for £200,000 (\$300,000) to a British collector. Reigl is still working at age 90, and she's one of the fair's discoveries. Born in Hungary, the painter moved to Paris in 1950, where **André Breton** put together her first exhibition. She has been enjoying a reappraisal of late, and her works have found their way to some of the world's biggest art museums, including the **Guggenheim**, **MoMA**, and **Tate**.

The staff at the Shanghai and Hong Kong-based **Pearl Lam Galleries**, which is presenting works by **Su Xiaobai** and **Zhu Jinshi**, was also all smiles, and confided having sold "more than two pieces" for prices ranging from \$80,000 to \$150,000. The fair felt "fresh," they said, adding it was "a good time of the year" to do it.

That wasn't obvious at first. In March, **Frieze Week** is a distant memory, June's auction week not yet on people's minds, and the **Armory** is only days away. But the choice of date characterizes Art13 London's ambitions. This wasn't meant to be a satellite fair, feeding off Frieze's crumbs. From the start, Art13 London has presented itself as a destination, able to attract its own crowd, which might or might not overlap with London's bigger fair's usual clientele.

Beijing's **PIFO Gallery** is certainly not regretting the trip, having sold abstract paintings by **Kang Haitao**, **Zhang Xuerui**, and **Liang Quan**, priced between £15,000 and £20,000 (\$23,000 to \$30,000). Head of gallery development **Niru Ratnam** summed up Art13 London's approach: "70 percent of the galleries are new to London, and 50 percent of the artists have a non-Western background ... That's really what we are trying to do."

The choice seems to have paid off. Fair fatigue is hard to escape when confronted with the same galleries, showing the same artists from London to Hong Kong, Basel to New York. For now, Art13's buyers seem to be mainly based in Europe, with London collectors overwhelmingly predominating. But with such a global makeup – and if the fair continues to deliver – this could change quickly.

"I'm really impressed," said **Sam Dukan**, from Paris's **Galerie Dukan**. "Usually new art fairs don't start with a gallery selection of this quality. The main London galleries are not here, we knew this was the case, but there are some major foreign galleries." For his first outing in the British capital, Dukan has gone local and curated a solo presentation of black-and-white drawings by the London-based artist **Nina Fowler**, priced between £1,800 and £7,000 (\$2,700 and \$10,000). A large drawing of **James Dean** in "Giant," the biggest piece on display, sold last night during the last minutes of the private view.

Not all the galleries are on a roll, though. "Sales-wise, it's been quite slow," confided **Selma Feriani**, from London's **Selma Feriani Gallery**. So far, she has sold a video by Sama Alshaibi ("The Tethered," £9,000/\$14,000) and a fetching abstract painting by **Amel Bennys** (£5,000/\$7,500) to collectors she already knew. **Galerie Ramakers**, from The Hague, was also somewhat disappointed, despite having come with a stunning selection of collages and sculptures by the Dutch artist **Ossip** (with prices starting at a very reasonable £750/\$1,100).

"People take a while to get used to new things," mused African contemporary art dealer **Jack Bell**, from **Jack Bell Gallery**. "But they are generally very happy to discover new artists." Already gone from his solo display by the Benin photographer **Leonce Raphael Agbodjelou** were a single image and a triptych, £5,000 and £2,000 (\$7,500 and \$3,000), respectively, from the artist's "Demoiselles" series.

Overall, spirits were high when ARTINFO UK left the building. "It's probably one of our best fairs," beamed **Asmaa Al Shabibi**, co-founder of Dubai's **Lawrie Shabibi**. Most of their works by Iranian artist **Shahpour Pouyan** and American artist **Asad Faulwell** ranging from £650 to £15,000 (\$1,000 to \$23,000) have found good homes. "And it's so nice to be in London." Then she rushed off to look after another client.

Art13 London, March 1-3, Olympia Grand Hall.

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