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'The Salon: Art & Design,' a Wide Range at Park Avenue Armory

By **ROBERTA SMITH** NOV. 14, 2013

"The Salon: Art & Design," the smart young fair at the Park Avenue Armory this weekend, is doing an excellent job of splitting the difference between the auction-house randomness and white-cube-gallery control. As its title suggests, it is wide open in terms of material — art, craft, design, antiques from any period or place can be found here. It is up to the dealers to provide the focus, which they do. This means controlled diversity. You can bounce from concentrated views of French Art Deco to early Modern art to pre-Columbian ceramics in one aisle.

It helps that Salon is just hitting its stride, in its second year under this name, its third altogether. With 53 participants instead of the 60 or 65 usual to the armory, it is spacious and logistically relaxed. The large majority of outstanding European dealers (31), many of them from Paris, may guarantee freshness for several years to come.



A watercolor and gouache circa 1937 by the Cuban-born artist Wifredo Lam. Credit Galerie Gmurzynska

The initial impression is of contrasting phases and styles of Modern design. Left to right, just inside the entrance, there is a lineup of impertinent decorative objects in glass and ceramics from the 1950s by the restless Ettore Sottsass, arrayed on two startling consoles made of steel and birch-tree trunks (bark intact) by Andrea Branzi, at Friedman Benda. Across the aisle, Galerie Downtown — François Laffanour is juxtaposing Charlotte Perriand's signature shelves and a great table from the 1930s with the low-lying, nearly abstract furniture in black wood with cowhide upholstery that the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer designed for his own home in the 1960s.

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And a few more steps away, Galerie L'Arc en Seine has mounted an impeccable white-on-white presentation of French Art Deco that includes parchment-covered cabinets by Jean-Michel Frank and a pair of small armchairs by Pierre Chareau upholstered in alpaca, announcing a theme of white fuzzy seating that has echoes elsewhere. Also here: a small gourdlike, lusciously glazed ceramic jar from 1892-93 by the French Art Nouveau s master Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat with a tiny bronze stem-shaped lid by Alphonse Voisin-Delacroix. It announces the DNA of the ceramic eccentricities of our own Adrian Saxe.

But the Modern-design-dominant impression doesn't hold. At Galerie Gmurzynska, modern, mostly European depictions of the nude hold sway. A large painting circa 1937 of two women — a Picassoid exercise in black lines and stained-glass color — by Wifredo Lam is unusually strong. It is followed by all kinds of unexpected items, including an astounding relief by Mikhail Larionov from around 1912 and a gaudy fusion of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Richard Prince pulled off by none other than the actor Sylvester Stallone, who is a better, or at least more energetic, painter than Bob Dylan.



A macabre Aztec figure of a man wearing the flayed skin of a human-sacrifice victim. Credit Frédéric Dehaen/Galerie Mermoz.

Next door, at Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, it's all early American Modern art. Edward Hopper's skillful 1904 portrait of Guy Pène du Bois is reminiscent of work by his teacher Robert Henri and flanked by paintings by Pène du Bois himself. Three small works on paper by Edith Dimock fuse Ashcan School with the Katzenjammer Kids and were seen in the 1913 Armory Show. Two small oil landscapes by John Marin, from around 1915, are uncharacteristically white and creamy.

Across the way, Phoenix Ancient Art rises to the occasion with a broad selection of figures and objects from Greece, Roman, Syria, Egypt and beyond, in glass, ceramic, bronze and stone. A standout is a small regal female figure from third-millennium B.C. Bactria in exquisitely carved and incised composite stone. Similar ones were a

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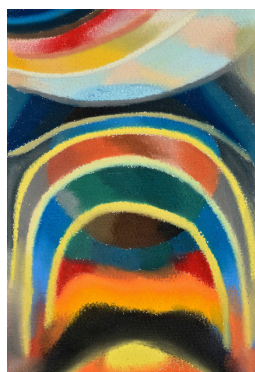
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revelation of the 2012 Documenta 13 and rarely sighted in New York. Also dating from the third millennium is an East Syrian alabaster plaque whose elaborate incisions conjure the face and body of a female deity with Magritte-like doubleness; a looming altar with attendant worshipers and a pueblolike stack of dwellings. Also exquisite: an eighth-century B.C. Phoenician lamp that is simply a thin disc of ceramic shaped by a single pinch.

For further excursions in the proto- or nonmodern, this aisle harbors an imposing display of African masks and figures, including a rare figure by the Vuvi of Gabon, who usually make masks, at Lucas Ratton; a superb selection of American and English furniture from 1870 to 1910 at Oscar Graf, much of it upholstered in white, and an equally distinguished grouping of pre-Columbian objects at Galerie Mermoz. Among much competition, the standout here is a large male Aztec figure carved in brown andesite (a volcanic rock) between 1300 and 1521. He wears the flayed skin and face of a human sacrifice — with both mask and garment depicted as tied neatly in the back — and holds the victim's severed hand. The skin, which has a sweaterlike bumpiness, is shown turned inside out. The texture represents the process of removal — the 1,000 cuts from a stone ax. Hannibal Lecter has nothing on this guy. For an another high-level pre-Columbian encounter, Galerie 1492, lined with Peruvian textiles, is not to be missed, not least of all for two fluted ceramic vases that could be French Deco.



Otto Freundlich's "Circles of Light (Cosmic Rainbow)" from 1922. Credit Jean-Louis Losi/Galerie Zlotowski

Some of this fair's clarity results from stalls devoted exclusively or primarily to the efforts of one maker. Joan B. Mirviss has a taste-shifting display of the encrusted, elaborately flanged ceramics of Koike Shoko, a revered Japanese artist in her late 60s who looks to coral and seashells for inspiration. Galerie Alain Marcepoil is featuring the early-1930s furniture of André Sornay, which bring a sharp 1950s angularity to combinations of rosewood, dark-grained plywood and rows of tiny brass tacks (used decoratively and structurally). Menconi & Schoelkopf reminds us how prolific and varied the American abstractionist Charles Biederman, still one of

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history's odd men out, was in the late 1930s. The exploding aluminum furniture of the young French designer Vincent Dubourg at Carpenters Workshop Gallery has to be seen — at least once — to be believed.

Galerie du Passage and Modernity have both brought high concentrations of the handsome rustic-Modern pine furniture from the early 1930s by Swedish designer and architect Axel Einar Hjorth, a figure almost completely unknown in these parts. Directly across the aisle from one another, they present an immersive gantletlike introduction that is one of the Salon's high points. Modernity also continues the white-fuzzy theme with a pair of sheepskin-covered armchairs from the 1940s attributed to the Danish designer Flemming Lassen. A pair of nearly identical, similarly attributed chairs can be found at Hostler Burrows, where things Scandinavian prevail; another standout there is a high-backed chaise longue from 1955 by Kerstin Horlin-Holmquist, a rare woman in this area. Kraemer Gallery adds dimension with a knockout presentation of fine French furniture from the reigns of the various Louises. Key words: marquetry, lacquer, casket, stunning.

What else? Much. Interesting art can be found at Vivian Horan Fine Art (Boetti, Balla, Andre), Connaught Brown (Dufy, Soutine, Leon Kossoff), Galerie Berès (a tambourine painted by Manet!); Galerie Zlotowski (paintings by Le Corbusier and an abstract pastel by Otto Freundlich from 1922 that looks 1960); and Galerie Boulakia (a weird, elongated Bonnard landscape, 1920). At Antoine Helwaser, there is a major early Jules Olitski painting consisting of expansive dark reds encroaching on a curved white channel through which three green spheres seem to be passing. It will be familiar to many. Less familiar is the title, "The Flaming Passion of Beverly Torrid," which proposes a decidedly ovular reading for the picture.

For indispensable over-the-top contributions, Jean-David Botella has a large and rare suite of furniture by Carlo Bugatti and convex mirrors framed in resin by Line Vautrin. Jason Jacques's display was very much in formation when I passed, but I can recommend an 1850 Gothic revival tile floor by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-79), a row of fashion-forward vases by Émile Decoeur (1876-1953), a 1914 gouache landscape by Jacoba van Heemskerck and the voluminous ceramic sculptures of Morten Lobner Espersen, born in 1965, whom Mr. Jacques described as "the young hot thing in ceramics in Denmark." Go forth and see as much as possible.

"The Salon: Art & Design" continues through Monday at the Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street; thesalonny.com

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