

INCLUDING
WHAT'S ON

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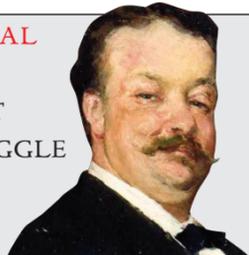
THE ART NEWSPAPER™

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THE NEW **DIRECTOR**
OF THE **NATIONAL**
GALLERY IN LONDON
GIVES US HIS
FIRST INTERVIEW
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MEET THE **IDENTICAL**
TWIN PAINTERS
WHOSE WORK ART
HISTORIANS STRUGGLE
TO DISTINGUISH
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HUGE GIFTS
FOR MUSEUMS
IN **SYDNEY,**
BERLIN, LONDON
AND **EDINBURGH**
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The art market

Show and sell: Sotheby's announces auction of Chinese art just two days after museum display

The Estella collection will be sold in Hong Kong this month following exhibitions at leading institutions

LONDON. A collection of Chinese contemporary art unveiled to the public at the Louisiana Museum in Denmark in 2007, published in two glossy catalogues partially funded by the institution and with contributions from leading scholars in the field, and then sent for display to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem earlier this year, has now been consigned for sale at Sotheby's. It is to be auctioned in Hong Kong this month.

The Estella collection consists of 200 works by 69 artists. It was assembled between 2004 and 2007 by dealer Michael Goedhuis for Sacha Lainovic, a director of WeightWatchers, and his business partner, Ray Debbane, who is president of a \$1bn private equity firm, Invus,



Feng Mengbo, *Gray Sea Hold Hands*, 2006. Estimate: US\$21,000-\$32,100

and also chairman of the board of WeightWatchers. The collection now belongs to New York dealer Acquavella who pur-

chased it last summer. Sotheby's also has a stake in it.

Speaking to *The Art Newspaper*, Michael Goedhuis says: "The aim of the partners was to form a fine collection of Chinese contemporary art butressed by a book with the best possible scholarship [contributions in the catalogue funded by the Louisiana Museum are by Hou Hanru, Martina Köppel-Yang and Pi Li, among others]. The original concept was that ultimately some of the art would be donated to museums. But then a small group of additional partners was bought in and the collection became an investment vehicle."

The decision to sell was made last August, when the

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Guardis seized by British police following request from Italy



LONDON. Two Guardi paintings have been seized by Scotland Yard in London, *The Art Newspaper* can reveal. Worth over £10m, they are among the artist's greatest Venetian scenes. It is alleged that they were recently exported from Italy without their true importance being disclosed.

A source inside the Public Prosecutor's Office in Rome confirmed that the London seizure took place at the request of the Italian authorities.

The pair of pictures by Francesco Guardi depict the Bucintoro festival, a thanksgiving service performed in Venice on Ascension Day. Dating from around 1780, they are *The Departure of the Bucintoro to San Nicolo on the Lido* and *The*

This pair of paintings showing the Bucintoro festival in Venice is now with Scotland Yard

Return of the Bucintoro to the Palazzo Ducale.

The Guardiis had once been owned by Lord Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe Hall (now National Trust), Lancashire, who sold them in around 1952. They were then bought by Senator Mario Crespi, of Milan, whose family owned the influential newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. He died in 1962 and the pictures remained with his family. They have only rarely been exhibited, and the last time was in the 1980s.

Three years ago the paintings were bought by an Italian dealer. There is no suggestion that the family was involved in the recent export.

An Italian export licence is required for pictures of this importance, and without this, they can only be sold on the basis that they will remain in the country. This substantially reduces a work's value. The Guardiis might be worth around €6m (\$9.4m) in Italy, but over £10m (\$20m) on the international market.

Informed sources have told

us that when an export licence application was made in Milan, the Venetian views may have been ascribed to an anonymous 18th-century artist, with no mention of Guardi, and were given a relatively modest value.

An Italian export licence was therefore granted without serious consideration by the authorities.

In the UK, the Guardiis were handled by a leading London dealer. He apparently applied for a UK re-export licence, correctly describing the works as by Guardi and giving an appropriate financial value. The application was granted, giving permission for the works to be exported out of the European Union. It is believed that the Guardiis may have been destined for the United States.

However, before the works left Britain, the Italian authorities intervened, asking for them to be seized. The role of the London dealer is now part of the investigation. Scotland Yard said it is unable to comment on the matter for "operational reasons". **Martin Bailey**

An exhibition to die for—literally

LONDON. The German artist Gregor Schneider is planning the ultimate performance piece: showing a person dying as part of an exhibition.

"I want to display a person dying naturally in the piece or somebody who has just died," he told *The Art Newspaper*. "My aim is to show the beauty of death."

The artist says that Dr Roswitha Franziska Vandieken, who runs her own private clinic in Düsseldorf, has agreed to help find volunteers who are willing to die in public in the name of art. Dr Vandieken was

unavailable for comment. "I am confident that we'll find people to take part," says Schneider.

He says he would like to stage the performance at the Haus Lange museum in Krefeld, Germany. The museum declined to comment.

Schneider says that if the museum will not agree to take part, he will stage the piece in a studio space in his hometown of Rheydt, western Germany.

Schneider has long been fascinated with the idea of show-

Schneider acting dead as part of a performance in 2000



ing death in a museum setting: in 2000 he himself feigned death as part of an exhibition at the Haus Esters museum in Krefeld (left).

The artist, who is known for his unsettling installations, currently has an exhibition at La Maison Rouge in Paris (until 18 May) which consists of a series of rooms of decreasing size. Visitors enter alone and, after progressing through a series of spaces, end up in a completely dark room. They must find their own way out and are filmed throughout.

Gareth Harris



Victorian shaped rectangular silver box by Nathaniel Mills, Birmingham 1846, the cover stamped in high relief with a view of the Royal Exchange

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