

MID-SUMMER NEWSLETTER



'Troupeau d'Eléphants dans les Arbres' Table by François-Xavier Lalanne, 2001, sold for \$6,630,000 (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000)

'Should I stay or should I go?' sings the art market. The late spring and early summer international design sales performed exceedingly well, regularly fetching prices in the seven figure skies. Is it inflation, enthusiasm or truly the beginning of a new era?

In any case, looking back at the whole season one can only notice that a larger part of the successful totals were made by a handful of 'blue chips' designers such as François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne, Diego Giacometti and Jean Royère. Collectors continued to be seduced by biomorphic design and intimate works. The top price was achieved the 'Troupeau d'Elephants dans les arbres' table by François-Xavier Lalanne from the collection of Sydell Miller sold at Christie's New York for \$6,630,000 (estimate 1,000,000 - 1,500,000€) making it the third most expensive work by François-Xavier.



'L'Autruche' by Diego Giacometti, designed circa 1977, cast before 1985
Sold for \$428,400
(estimate \$70,000 - 90,000) at Phillips New York



Important table by Isamu Noguchi, sold for \$1,109,000 (estimate 700,000 - 1,000,000 USD) at Sotheby's New York



detail of the smoking room 'Les Palmiers' by Jean Dunand

The last sale of the season was held by Phillips in London and achieved an impressive total of £11.7 million – the highest total for a design sale in the company's history. The sale included much more historical design works than usual, particularly from the first half of the 20th century. Jean Dunand's splendid smoking room panels 'Les Palmiers', created for the residence of Mademoiselle Colette Aboucaya in Paris in 1930, sold for £3.3 million (estimate £1.5m-£2m), a world record for the artist. Ron Arad saw the bidding on his 1993 prototype for the 'D-Sofa' sail past the £120,000 high estimate to arrive at an astonishing £1,232,500, his own new world auction record.



Pair of armchairs by Jean Royère, 1955-1958, sold for £504,000 (estimate £100,000 - 150,000)

The sale also included the elegant collection of the Majdalany family residence in Beirut commissioned to Jean Royère in 1955. At the time, the French designer, always on the look out for new markets, had opened an architecture with the cousin of the patron Nadim Majdalani in Beirut in the mid-1940s. Amongst the selection a pair of armchairs sold for £504,000 (estimate £100,000-£150,000) and a rare sofa (estimated £150,00-£250,000) was chased to £491,400. I was particularly seduced by the 'Flaque' table with its mirrored glass that sold for £327,600 (estimate £120,000 - 180,000). The two beds with integrated headboard and bedside table remained unsold despite their beautiful geometry and attractive estimate (£15,000 - 25,000).

As always, the Italian selection of the auction was splendid and full of rarities such as a pair of vitrines by Carlo Scarpa commissioned by the Italian manufacturer Dino Gavina for the opening of his iconic store in Bologna in 1963 and kept in the private hands of a former employee. The vitrines sold for £352,800 (estimate £150,000 - 200,000).



Pair of vitrines by Carlo Scarpa designed 1957, executed circa 1963 sold for £352,800 (estimate £150,000 - 200,000)



[Christie's New York, Misha Kahn: Furniture Unhinged, 18 August 10:00 AM - 24 August 10:00 AM EDT | Online auction](#)

The art market never really sleeps and, in the midst of our mid-summer dreams, Christie's has announced the first N.F.T Design auction.

Unless you have been living under a rock, you might have heard of these three letters. Broadly speaking, N.F.T.s are a tool for providing proof of ownership of a digital asset. Using the same blockchain technology as cryptocurrencies like bitcoin—strings of data made permanent and unalterable by a decentralized computer network.

The Non-Fungible Token have existed in various forms since 2015 but took a whole other dimension when Christie's sold 'Everydays: The First 5000 Days' by digital artist Beeple for over \$69 million in March 2021. On top of being the first auction house to venture into the N.F.Ts, Christie's was also the first to accept crypto currencies as payment.

A few days ago, the auction house announced 'Furniture Unhinged' the first Design N.F.T sale in partnership with the designer Misha Kahn. The sale will include ten N.F.Ts, each comprising a unique 3D model rendered as an FBX file together with a corresponding MP4 single-channel "trophy" video of the object spinning on a pedestal.

The successful buyer of each lot may 3D-print as many physical examples of their FBX as they would like, and/or they may commission one unique, authentic example which Kahn will render in PETG thermoplastic polyester, epoxy, and paint. One of the lot, 'It Must Have Been The Clams', is accompanied in the current sale by a real-life example. Misha Kahn is a recognized designer, represented by the gallery Friedman Benda, who has been experimenting with various mediums and techniques, high tech tools, virtual reality and robotics, and seems a logical choice for such experiment. The estimates of the sale will start at \$100

Discussed at nausea for fine art the N.F.Ts have remained rather discreet in the design world and it will be interesting to see to what extent the design collectors will embrace it. Discreet but not absent. Indeed, the world of design has not been immune to the N.F.Tmania. Digital renderings are not new to the designers but they have become increasingly realistic. In fact, the bulk of images in the Ikea catalogue have been computer-generated since 2014. The question is what are the changes created by the N.F.T technology change specifically for designers?

By taking away the pressure to create a functional and budget realistic design, it allows them a flexibility in the creation process. Indeed, the gestation of a chair today would take approximately between 2-4 years between the conception, the prototypes, product testing and then after the production, the marketing, distribution, etc.

In 2018, the designer Andres Reisinger posted on Instagram a digital image of a chair covered with pink flower petals – the Hortensia Chair. When he posted it on Instagram, it rapidly went viral and he received numerous orders for it. He then decided to find out if he could actually make the chair which is now [owned by the Design Museum of Ghent](#). Later on, Reisinger sold 10 digital-only designs in less than 10 minutes for a total of nearly half a million dollars. Five of the pieces were also offered with ‘real’ physical counterparts. In addition, winning bidders, can use them to furnish their virtual worlds and gaming environments.



[Talking about the changes in the creative process](#) the designer Nicholas Baker said ‘It’s this scary and definitive moment that defines that the work is finished. But with digital work, it never really feels finished because you can always go back and update it. But minting a piece of work to the blockchain feels like a completion moment, it’s finished and will forever be how it is. This permanence gives the digital work value but also gives closure to a project.’ Baker has been minting his design sketches VR designs on the blockchain. He also started on Instagram by posting chairs sketches every week and quickly got an enthusiastic response which led him to embark on the N.F.T journey.

In addition to this new freedom, N.F.T also represent a new source of income opportunities for designers who are now able to monetize all their research. A valuable argument in a world where it has become increasingly hard to become an independent artist. Indeed, the digitalization of work simply brings forward a process that already existed. Finally, the blockchain will allow a greater recognition of ownership and copyrights for the designers just like it does for fine art artists.

It will be interesting to see how collectors, seasoned or new, react to the sales and will be their selecting criterias.

Historically, designers and architects have always used utopian projects as a form of financial and intellectual escapism in times of economic downturns. Already in 1978, Soviet "paper architects" Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin created an incredible collection of elaborate etchings depicting outlandish, often impossible, buildings and cityscapes. They saw fantasy architecture and design as a mode of resistance against the bureaucratic homogeneity of Communist esthetic.

The successive lockdown certainly triggered related challenges and a reflexion on the world we live in and opportunities to make something different. But what is the critical agenda defended by the current N.F.T movement in the design and architecture field? Are they promoting a societal vision beyond a fantasy of personal consumption and relaxation? That is the question that will, in my opinion, determine the value and the longevity of the current production. Furthermore, will the historical work of design be minted to co-exist on the blockchain?

Glimpse of the autumn season :

One of Hippopotame Bar by Jean-François

Looking at Sotheby's there are no N.F.Ts. in sight but a few announcements. The bidding for [the mid-season sale in Paris](#) will start on the 21st of September and will feature 'a large panel of works of the 20th century, spanning from Carlo Bugatti to Olivier Gagnère (...) a selection of Art deco pieces by Paul Dupré Lafon, Jacques Adnet, Edgard Brandt, midcentury pieces by Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé, 60's and 70's iconic design by Willy Rizzo, Joe Colombo, Warren Platner, and contemporary pieces by Yonel Lebovici, and Garouste et Bonetti.'

After selling the Hippopotamus themes bathroom by François-Xavier Lalanne for more than 2.3€ million last year in Paris, Sotheby's has announced that their Important Design Sale in November will include the iconic Hippopotame Bar from 1986.



View of Jean Dalsace's office in the maison de Verre, circa 1931

Looking even further ahead – and at a much more classic view - Christie's has announced the sale of Annie and Jean Dalsace's collection in Paris. The sale will take place on the 7th of October and will comprise around sixty pieces of furniture by Pierre Chareau preserved in the Dalsace family from the outset but also pieces by Georges Braque, Giorgio de Chirico, Pablo Picasso or Max Ernst along with tapestries by Jean Lurçat.

In 1918 the couple commissioned their new residence to a young and unknown architect – Pierre Chareau. The Maison de Verre was to become Chareau's masterwork and the epitome of French modernism. This auction will be a real event on the art market and will not fail to leave its mark.

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