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The Art Market: Fair with a new look

By Georgina Adam



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Hallstatt bowl sold at the Independent fair in Brussels

The new offshoot of New York's Independent fair opened in Brussels this week, to considerable applause from exhibitors. "I can't think of a better place to hold a fair," said the London dealer Maureen Paley, as sun streamed through the windows of the fourth floor of the former department store where the event is held.

The concept of Independent deliberately disrupts the standard fair model: it is invitation-only, there are no booths, and the venue allows an easy flow between the displays. Also innovative, and well received, is the mixing of emerging dealers, such as Carlos/Ishikawa, with established ones: David Zwirner, Gladstone, Chantal Crousel.

Innovating in another way is the Parisian Jocelyn Wolff, who has paired with the Swiss antiquities dealer Jean-David Cahn. In a display conceived by the artist Guillaume Lebon, contemporary art sits alongside antiquities, and at the opening, Cahn had already, to his surprise, sold four pieces, including a Hallstatt bowl tagged at €4,000.

Other early sales included a painting by Michael Krebber on Paley's stand, which went to a Belgian collector (\$75,000), and a number of paintings by Sadie Laska shown by the US dealer Canada at prices between \$4,000 and \$14,000. Wilfried Lentz found a European collector for Doug Ashford's "Next Day (2015-16)" — a reprinting of all the pages of the September 12 2001 issue of the New York Times overlaid with coloured abstracts (€50,000).

Independent has faced a number of challenges. "It's a big investment," says co-founder Elizabeth Dee, who did extensive work on the venue, doubled her team, and greatly increased the number of exhibitors (72) compared with the New York event (45). "Brussels has been growing and evolving as a hub of contemporary art," she says. As for last month's terrorist attacks, Dee points out that none of the exhibitors pulled out. "This is not going to stop the momentum," she adds. Independent ends tonight.

Georgina Adam is art market editor-at-large of The Art Newspaper

Main photograph: Art Cahn International