

BRAFA ART FAIR



Francis Maere, Vice-Chairman of BRAFA ©Arnaud Maere

Francis Maere’s ambition is to promote and publicise Belgian art from 1880 to 1940 on an international scale, in particular Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism and Expressionism, without forgetting the beginnings of Surrealism and the abstract painting of the 1920s and 1930s. He has been the Vice-Chairman of BRAFA since 2012, and his gallery “Francis Maere Fine Arts” is located in a town house in the centre of Ghent.

The next BRAFA will be held from Sunday, January 28th to Sunday, February 4th, 2024. How do you envision this 69th edition?

Like a high mass of art in Belgium and Europe. This is the third time we have held the Fair at Brussels Expo, and the venue is much appreciated by exhibitors and visitors alike. For BRAFA 2024, we wanted to further diversify the range of specialities on offer, which is one of the main objectives that the Board of Directors set for this 69th edition.

BRAFA is now firmly established at Brussels Expo. What do you think are the advantages of this venue for exhibitors and visitors?

The site was designed as an exhibition venue, which simplifies logistics for our exhibitors. A second advantage is certainly its geographical location, close to the Brussels Ring Road and the airport. Brussels Expo is also easily accessible by public transport.

Are you satisfied with the current size of the Fair?

BRAFA 2024 will be hosting just over 130 exhibitors. It's an ideal size for the Fair, since art lovers can visit it in a day without being overwhelmed by an overabundance of works. That said, we could expand a little, whilst being mindful to safeguard the quality of the Fair. This is certainly the most important point we consider when selecting new applicants.

Modern and contemporary art are very much in vogue. What is the Fair doing to preserve its eclecticism?

We keep a close eye on market trends, and of course we have some very good galleries in modern and contemporary art. The BRAFA Board examines applications from potential new exhibitors from Belgium and abroad, bearing in mind that what appeals to our visitors is the abundance of specialities ranging from Antiquity to contemporary art.

The Paul Delvaux Foundation is the guest of honour at BRAFA 2024. This isn't the first time you have showcased an institution. What is the purpose of this approach?

Whereas Paul Delvaux, as an artist associated with Surrealism, is recognised beyond our borders, the Paul Delvaux Foundation is less so. Since BRAFA has an international impact, by definition it is able to showcase Belgian institutions abroad. At the same time, having a guest of honour at each edition gives the Fair a sort of guiding principle, and the galleries play along by exhibiting related works. This creates an interesting dynamic.

Can you give us three good reasons to visit the Fair in January 2024?

At BRAFA, collectors know they can buy high-quality works with complete confidence. The Fair's conscientiousness sets it apart from other events of the same kind. One of the reasons for this is the range of specialities on offer, from archaeology to contemporary art, tapestry and gold- and silversmithery. Finally, it's a fair where you can find works at a wide range of prices, giving art lovers plenty to tempt them.

What is BRAFA's position on the art market?

We have the great advantage of being the first in the calendar of fairs. BRAFA is therefore a barometer of what the art market will be offering over the course of the year.

How do you see BRAFA developing?

It's essential that we retain our position in the calendar and continue to present the very best of Europe's art market at the Fair.

What are your hopes for BRAFA over the next 10 years?

A good Board that will continue to effectively manage the Fair. I think, and this is my personal view, that we could aim to be number 1 or 2 amongst the international fairs.

Do fairs still have the same appeal for galleries?

Over time, we've noticed a change. There is a sense that some galleries are abandoning the idea of taking part in fairs because the financial stakes are so high. Despite this, BRAFA still has a bright future ahead of it. We have more than 130 exhibitors signed up for the next edition, which proves the galleries' interest in our fair.

How do market trends emerge, and by what means?

It's an interaction between dealers who promote certain movements on the one hand, which is one of the most interesting aspects of our profession, and collectors' lifestyles on the other. It's true that everything is changing more quickly than it used to: fashion, artists, etc., so we have to keep a close eye on the market and its developments.

Can art still be considered a safe investment these days?

It has always been. If you buy a quality work, it will still be worth something in a few years' time. This is an obvious point to bear in mind for anyone wishing to start collecting works of art. Of course, you have to buy a work of art according to your desires, but quality is also important. BRAFA has a role to play in this regard, offering art lovers the very best.

You are the Vice-Chairman of BRAFA. Could you tell us more about your role within the Fair and what that means for you?

My role as Vice-Chairman of BRAFA involves promoting the Fair in the northern part of Belgium. There is still work to be done, because there are still people in Belgium who are not familiar with BRAFA, and they are missing out on a very fine event.