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METHOD IN HIS MADNESS? THE MANY FACES OF MESSERSCHMIDT

PLUS AN INTERVIEW WITH JOAN JONAS
CARAVAGGIO GOES DUTCH · A NEW LEONARDO?

PREVIEW

Salon du Dessin

Melanie Gerlis selects her highlights of the fair

1. *Le phare de l'hospice à Honfleur*, 1865, Claude Monet (1840–1926), ink on paper, 17.5 × 28.5cm. Hélène Bailly Gallery (€200,000–€300,000)



For a small art fair, the Salon du Dessin in Paris (21–26 March) certainly punches above its weight. This edition, its 27th, boasts only 39 galleries – events such as Art Basel, Frieze and TEFAF Maastricht host hundreds – in the Palais Brongniart, the highly manageable former stock-exchange building. As ever, though, the fair encourages a city-wide concentration on its niche but deep collecting category.

'The entire drawings world congregates for the Salon in Paris,' says British art specialist Lowell Libson, whose gallery is new to the fair. Among the works he is bringing are a group of 10 Constable drawings and two oil sketches on paper made between 1806 and the 1820s, including a pencil drawing, *East Bergholt Church: The Porch* (1814, €95,000; Fig. 2). 'We're excited to bring Constable to Paris; it's the only city where he had real success,' Libson says. The Salon is also something of a marketing platform for the gallery, which at the beginning of the year announced that director Jonny Yarker was to become a named partner in the business. 'It's an opportunity to demonstrate our new branding,' Libson says.

His gallery is one of five newcomers this year – all of whom hail from outside of France. Three are specialists in modern and contemporary art, including Omer Tiroche Gallery, from London, which brings pieces by artists including Pablo Picasso, Alexander Calder and Jean-Michel Basquiat (booth range €25,000 to €1m). The offerings from New York-based Rosenberg & Co. include an early Henry Moore drawing, *Seated Nude* (1929, €79,000; Fig. 3), which gallery founder Marianne Rosenberg describes as 'already displaying strong sculptural aspects', and Georges Valmier's gouache and collage *Personnage debout* (1920; €30,000), as well as contemporary works by British artist Ann Christopher, among others. The Salon, Rosenberg says, invites 'a refreshing level of connoisseurship'.

At the core of the fair – 19 of the 39 galleries – are the French old-timers, who also champion the event. Paris dealer Hélène Bailly says she is 'proud' to be showing again at the Salon. Works she is bringing include Claude Monet's *Le phare de l'hospice à Honfleur* (1865; Fig. 1), priced between €200,000 and €300,000 and the only ink drawing known



2. *East Bergholt Church: The Porch*, 1814, John Constable (1776–1837), pencil, 12.4 × 9.2cm. Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd (€95,000)

by the artist. Monet drew the work, which is recorded in Daniel Wildenstein's catalogue raisonné, when he was only 24, to promote the first painting he had accepted to the influential Salon des Beaux-Arts.

As Bailly says, 'people come from all over the world because drawings are such a particular category'. Their appeal, she says, is that '[they] come straight from the heart, from the line, they can't lie'; Omer Tiroche describes drawings as 'a personal and intimate vessel for artists'. Paris-based drawings dealer Louis de Bayser, who has been chairman of the fair since 2014, warms to the theme. 'Officially "dessin" or "drawing" means an original work made on paper, but there's more to it than that. What collectors are after is the moment of creation, the point when an artist uses paper to begin establishing what comes later.' He has a prime example of such a work this year: *Head of Saint John the Baptist* by Cesare da Sesto (c. 1520; price undisclosed). The Lombard artist was a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci and admirer of Raphael. This red chalk on red preparation work, which De Bayser says is still in 'very good condition',