

art & auction



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Ashcan Knockouts

The Hunt for
Art Thieves

Old Wine,
New Auctions



talk of the trade

New York

"I like being a destination, slightly off the beaten path," declares Stuart Parr, gesturing around his immense TriBeCa gallery. "I prefer to meet people who have had to make the effort to meet me." True, it's not exactly a place you'd drop into to get out of the rain. Located on the ninth floor of a forbidding old industrial building at 67 Vestry Street, Parr's gallery, which reopened last month after extensive renovation, boasts not only some of the most sought-after 20th-century furniture in town—including pieces by Frank Lloyd Wright and Kem Weber—but sweeping views of the financial district and the Hudson River.

At 28, Parr has a burgeoning reputation in 20th-century decorative arts—and an instinct for drawing a crowd. This autumn he created a sensation at New York's Modernism show by arranging his booth around a massive rosewood and aluminum billiard table designed by Donald Deskey (which he sold on opening night).

Parr is best described as an intuitive dealer. "I didn't learn who Charles Eames or Marcel Breuer was until seven years ago," he admits. "But I've been drawn to their furniture since I was eight." He grew up in Sacramento and Beverly Hills and at 19 moved to New York, bent on an acting career. But soon he was dropping by the old Fifty/50 gallery, occasionally selling things he'd found at flea markets or the Salvation Army.

Two years later, Parr decided to go into antiques full-time. With \$200 and a borrowed car, he drove to Philadelphia, where he stumbled upon an old department store in a run-down neighborhood. "What a find," he says. "I bought rolls of linoleum, toy airplanes and other postwar goodies to sell back home, and parlayed the \$200 into \$5,000 by the end of the week. It was the beginning of my madness."

Parr was soon doing the Triple Pier shows and collecting private clients, including designer Valentino and photographer Annie Leibovitz, for his chief specialty, 1930s anodized aluminum furniture made by Warren McArthur. He first discovered a McArthur chair at a flea

Stuart Parr: Drawing a Crowd

market. "I'd never heard of him, but I was struck by how different the piece was from any furniture I knew," he remembers. Now, says Parr, "I'll go anywhere to find good stuff. Would you believe I even found some McArthur furniture at a dealer in Melbourne, Australia?" He has also bought the licenses of all McArthur designs and sublicensed some of them to the German ClassiCon firm for reproduction in Europe.

Parr acknowledges that McArthur furniture has gone from historical footnote to far wider recognition in the relatively brief time he has been in business (a chair and vanity, for instance, brought \$10,350 at Christie's this December). Nonetheless, he dismisses suggestions that the wave might be only a fad: "Fads have a time limit," he says. "This furniture is timeless." *Barrymore Laurence Scherer*



"I prefer to meet people who have had to make the effort to meet me," says Stuart Parr of his out-of-the-way TriBeCa gallery.

Buenos Aires

Christo Comes to Argentina

Though collectors in Buenos Aires are, on the whole, a very private lot, one tendency is becoming clear: the market here is growing more and more international. The traditional collectors—those who bought Impressionists in the late '80s—may be less active now, but a new class of financiers are

investing in a variety of modern and contemporary work, both local and international.

Several galleries have started to introduce the kind of contemporary art that would pass muster in any world art capital. Three years ago, dealer Ruth Benzacar imported Joseph Kosuth, who did an installation based on a Borges text. Diana Lowenstein of Der Brücke Arte Internacional last year brought the Paris-based Milanese painter Valerio Adami out for a show. The most active big-name hunter in town, however, is Federico Klemm, whose Galería Klemm Arte Contemporáneo, at Calle Marcelo T. Alvear 636, has, since its founding three years ago, hosted shows of Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe and, jointly, Fernando Botero and Matta. Though none of these events could be called a financial success, they drew large crowds of viewers.