

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



BEYOND ART, FIVE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT FRIEZE LONDON

The grey paint

At Frieze Masters (for art created before 2000), every stand in the pavilion designed by architect Annabelle Selldorf is painted a special shade of grey. Frieze should produce it.

The stand furniture

Those original Jean Prouvé chairs and tables or that little set by Martino Gamper speak volumes for a gallery in the absence of its own architectural space.

The looks

Although fashion-show attendees' outfits are over-recorded, I think photographers and bloggers are missing out on some pretty hardcore fashion action at Frieze.

The catering

It's well-documented already, but the catering from the likes of Bocca di Lupo at Frieze and Locanda Locatelli at Frieze Masters is a stroke of genius, keeping collectors on site all day.

The crowd

At no other time does London's population swell with such an international crowd of cross-discipline creatives and industry chiefs.

01 Frieze vs front row

Art and fashion vie for the ultimate show and sell

October brings Frieze London, my favourite time in the city and a welcome change from the month-long fashion circuit that precedes it – or is it? It's not that I see more fashion designers among the Regent's Park art stands than at any other event, or that fashion and art are long-term bedfellows; it's that I can't help but notice parallels in the way the two markets operate.

Luxury labels are experts in creating value (or should I say margin) above and beyond the cost of the best raw materials, workmanship and logistics. It's the labels' carefully crafted allure that brings in higher prices. But art takes that to another level; no one considers the cost of raw materials in, say, a painting, because reputation and supply are so expertly managed.

Fashion stores pull out all the stops for high spenders, with VIP shopping suites and bespoke ordering, but nothing beats the thrill of being shown an artwork in a viewing room, away from the public gallery. Luxury labels love theatre; visit any handbag counter in Bond Street and chances are your Chanel, Dior or Bottega Veneta bag will be shown to you by staff wearing gloves, then laid atop a special suede tray. For Frieze theatre, try asking a price, like I did once at Waddington Custot Galleries. Despite there being just four works on the stand, the gallerist went over

to her console, opened a drawer, pulled out a folder, looked a sheet of paper up and down, and only then informed me it was \$4m plus tax (for a delightful mini John Chamberlain).

Both fashion and art share an obsession with invitation hierarchy. In fashion it's a place on the prized first or second row that gets everyone in a tizz, but try to fathom the art fair preview of the preview of the preview, where the days or hours before the 'public' viewing are what count.

Just as speciality stores such as Colette and Dover Street Market are now an almost essential launch pad for important new fashion products (Nicolas Ghesquière's debut Louis Vuitton collection recently popped up at the latter), with art, it's not what you sell but who you sell to, a handful of collectors or collections being the key to future success.

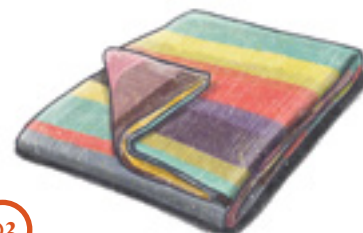
And, of course, both teams speak the speak; commentary from both camps often goes, quite deliberately, over customers' heads. Fashion communicators can be rather brainwashed about the 'genius' of their creators or the 'artisanship' of their (usually industrial) production. But when I took some official tours of the Frieze Masters fair, in which the guides offer a personal view, I was delighted by the use of 'naff', 'tacky', 'trophy piece' and 'probably not their best work'. With opinions, Frieze trumps fashion. ★ www.frieze.com



02

Reissue wish list

A cutlery icon, sadly out of production, Matteo Thun's rather baroque 'Hommage à Madonna' for WMF was made as a limited edition back in 1986. Just what I need to bring glamour back to the table. www.matteothun.com



03

Raft of craft

Cashmere blankets by The Elder Statesman (pictured) and jewellery by Maiyet are among the handcrafted goodies in the new Krafted collection at Lane Crawford's Blitz space in Hong Kong. www.lanecrawford.com