

SEANKELLY

Rubinstein, Dan. "WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE: SEAN KELLY AND CHARIS TYNDALL ON CREATING CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CONTEMPORARY AND THE ANCIENT." *TEFAF*. September 8, 2021.

TEFAF



Callum Innes, Exposed Painting Delft Blue / Violet (2018), exhibited by Sean Kelly, and a Roman marble statue of Asclepius (c. 100-150 AD), exhibited by Charles Ede at TEFAF New York Fall 2019.

Key to the experience of TEFAF is the encouragement of dialogue between the past and present. Each time I visit TEFAF—either in New York or Maastricht—it brings thousands of years of human history into sharp focus, and the presence of each epoch represented at the fair enriches the others. This inclusionary approach makes a statement about the culture of collecting and results in rare opportunities such as encountering an Egyptian bust facing a Pablo Picasso portrait just down the corridor.

To celebrate this September's edition of TEFAF Online, where both the old and new will be experienced together virtually, I sat down with two leading dealers to investigate their interest in this dialogue between the ancient world and the present. I spoke with Sean Kelly, whose eponymous Manhattan gallery represents the likes of Marina Abramović, Kehinde Wiley, and Antony Gormley; followed by Charis Tyndall, director at Charles Ede in London, which expertly deals in art from the ancient world. Coincidentally, I'm not the only thing connecting these two across the centuries; their two galleries shared a booth together at TEFAF New York in 2019.

The below excerpts are taken from a special episode of The Grand Tourist podcast, "TEFAF: Where the Past and Future Collide," available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other major platforms.

What do you remember most about your visits to TEFAF?

Sean Kelly: The thing that I love the most about TEFAF is that it fits my personality like a glove. The fair is an opportunity to see all these wonderful things cheek by

SEANKELLY

jowl that are seemingly quite disconnected, but, of course, they're not. I collect Egyptian sculpture, contemporary modernist furniture, and antique jewelry for my wife. TEFAF is the only place that you can have all of that under one roof.

For me, it's all part of the same thing: I think quality is quality. I don't collect everything, but I do collect very broadly. So, when I visit any TEFAF fair, I feel like I'm the kid that got the golden ticket. Every time I go, I'm excited.



Janaina Tschäpe, Blue Moon, 2021. Casein, oil stick, and oil pastel on canvas. 249.6 x 393.7 cm (116 x 155 in.). Exhibited by Sean Kelly on TEFAF Online 2021. Courtesy: Janaina Tschäpe and Sean Kelly, New York.

Can you explain why you chose a painting by Janaina Tschäpe as the singular piece to present at TEFAF Online?

Sean Kelly: Janaina is an artist who has a particularly interesting cultural background, because she's both German and Brazilian. She was trained in Germany, and so she has this incredible formal capacity. She has this very analytical capacity, but it's married to a Brazilian sensibility. It's a very sensual kind of mentality that informs her paintings. They're extraordinarily vital and passionate, but they're very accomplished.

Her paintings have this extraordinarily large ambition. She's challenging her forebears like Joan Mitchell, Lee Krasner, and Jackson Pollock, but it's filtered through a very contemporary sensibility and a very contemporary sense of reflecting upon landscape and tradition and absorbing all these things. And we felt that it would be important to show one painting that really expressed that intent and focus deliberately and concentrate everybody on that conversation.

SEANKELLY

You collaborated on a booth at TEFAF New York Fall 2019, where your two galleries mixed works like a photo of Marina Abramović wearing a gold mask and a Hellenistic bust. Should this kind of dialogue happen more in the future?

Sean Kelly: I hope so, because the booth that we did in New York with Charles Ede was one of my favorite things we've done in 30 years. The opportunity to show a painting by Callum Innes next to a full-scale Roman sculpture was extraordinary and fabulous. My biggest "problem" was that I wanted to buy everything Charles Ede brought to the booth. I don't know if I was their biggest client over those five days, but I probably did as much damage as anybody else did—and happily. Seeing a carving—a Greco Roman votive carving—next to a Joseph Kosuth from 1968 can be completely mind-blowing.

Charis Tyndall: What we really loved is we would have discussions with Sean at the booth, and I would see some of his pieces and say, "Oh Sean, do you know what? I think actually I've got something that really resonates," and we would create a pairing. Then I would hear him talking to someone at the booth about one of his pieces that we had paired together, and I would think that there's yet another layer as to why these two objects worked well next to each other. The pieces have been talking to each other this whole time in a way that we didn't appreciate, because I hadn't heard someone explain a particular bit of knowledge about the artist who created it.



Charles Ede is showing three pieces for TEFAF Online. How are these pieces in dialogue?

Charis Tyndall: There's a nice way to flow through them, because we were asked to have a narrative for the objects we present. Each of them we haven't shown before. It's the idea of the expansion and contraction of time. We live with antiquities now, and people look at them and dismiss them as being done by a singular idea of ancient man. I think that's all very subjective, because if you look at when man was

SEANKELLY

creating the pyramids—and then you look at the Romans—that timespan was the same between the Romans and us today. So when we refer to all of those people as though they're one version of ancient man, it just doesn't make sense.

For example, the first object that we have is an Egyptian head made of quartzite. It dates to The New Kingdom, so around 1300 BC. It's a beautiful, very finely carved head. It's quite a likeness. He has a beautiful tripartite wig, and he's got a false beard on as well. At the same time as that piece was being made in Egypt, further north in the Aegean there was someone creating our second object: a water vessel that has a heavily stylized, very abstract image of an octopus with tentacles writhing all around it, and it even looks a little contemporary. Incredibly, these two objects were living in the world at the same time. Today we have the ability to create things in true likeness, in abstract form. Sometimes people forget that about ancient man. Even back then they had all the same capabilities that we do now. Maybe not with the same technology, but they wanted to make things in either a likeness or in an abstract form for a specific reason. And I'm interested in exploring those reasons as to why.

The third piece, a gold ring, is Hellenistic. The others are made by Greeks and Egyptians, so you would think they're worlds apart, but they weren't. The ring is showing a sexually aroused satyr, so again it's projecting the natural world like the octopus. And yet, these two pieces were created 1,000 years apart. By the time this ring was made, the Mycenaean culture that created it had ceased to exist. We still refer to them all as being Greek, because that's geographically where they were from, but they didn't know much about each other. That's what I love about our objects—this idea of the constriction of time is, in fact, a huge expansion of physical time.



Mycenaean Hydria with Octopus Decoration, Late Helladic III, circa 14th century BC, Greece. Terracotta. Height 18.3 cm (7.2 in.). Exhibited by Charles Ede on TEFAF Online 2021. Courtesy: Charles Ede Ltd.

SEANKELLY



Head of a Male from a Votive Statue, New Kingdom, late 18th Dynasty, circa 1330 BC, Egypt. Quartzite. Height 14.9 cm (5.9 in.). Exhibited by Charles Ede on TEFAF Online 2021. Courtesy: Charles Ede Ltd.

Do you wish there were more opportunities for these kinds of dialogues and collaborations?

Charis Tyndall: I would, and I'd love to do more carefully curated shows, too. I think the idea of each gallery having its own exhibition space in major cities is going to change, because that's not the way people live now. We recently did a show with someone who deals in fine furniture—a lot of mid-century pieces and Art Deco—and it was really fantastic. He had some beautiful Scandinavian furniture with some Egyptian stone vessels on it, and I thought it was incredibly sexy. And it was nice to be around. It helps you imagine how things would look if they were in your own home. I think the lockdowns taught us this: Enjoying your immediate environment is so important, and it affects the entire attitude of your day.

These interviews have been edited and condensed.

*Dan Rubinstein is a writer, editor, and consultant specializing in design, interiors, architecture, art, and culture. He is the host of the podcast *The Grand Tourist with Dan Rubinstein*.*