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## Women in the spotlight: all-female show in London

Plus, small is sweet at Sotheby's; records across the world for Informal Art; galleries' property woes

“The Art Market

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JUNE 2, 2017 by: Melanie Gerlis

Nearly 75 years after the legendary gallerist Peggy Guggenheim hosted one of the first all-female exhibitions in New York, London's Breese Little gallery has this week opened an update of the show with the same name, *31 Women* (until July 29). Guggenheim's 1943 exhibition encapsulated the shifting New York taste of her time, including works by Louise Nevelson, Kay Sage and Frida Kahlo, while the Breese Little show homes in on artists working or showing in London, says Henry Little, co-owner of the gallery. These range from British artist Eileen Agar, who was in Guggenheim's circle and whose compact “Fighter Pilot” painting (1940) is included, to Aimée Parrott, who left art school in 2014 and who provides a 2017 painting on latex, “Pelt”. Other artists include Gillian Wearing, Tracey Emin, Eva Rothschild, Angela de la Cruz and Rose Wylie.

Riffs on self-portraiture and the continued influence of surrealism link many works in the 2017 show. Progress has certainly been made in addressing the gender gap since 1943. “Our list could have gone on and on,” Little says. Prices range from £950 to £120,000.

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Sotheby's is challenging the notion that biggest art is best and plans an auction dedicated to small works on June 21, following its Impressionist and Modern sale. Latest additions to the “Actual Size” auction are Lucian Freud's tiny (10.2cm x 12cm) “Strawberries” (c1950) — this sold at Sotheby's in 2008 for £229,250 (with fees) and now has a £550,000-£750,000 estimate — and a 23.2cm x



Lucian Freud's 'Strawberries' (c1950)

18cm still life by Dutch Golden Age painter Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (c1610-12, est £2m-£3m). Both works are painted on copper, which heightens their colours.

Works previously announced for the auction include Pablo Picasso's “Femme assise” ink drawing (1906, 19.4cm x 14.6cm, est £800,000-£1.2m) and Joan Miró's “Tête d’homme” (1931, 27cm x 22cm, est £600,000-£800,000).

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Two record prices were made in a week for works from the lesser-known Art Informel (informal art) movement. The intuitive, often gestural abstract style was taken up predominantly by European artists in the late 1940s and 50s to express the horrors of the second world war, and its exponents include Italian painter Emilio Vedova (1919-2006), German-French artist Hans Hartung (1904-1989)

and the French-Canadian Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923-2002), whose “Vent du nord” (1952-53) sold for a record C\$7.4m at Heffel auction house in Toronto on May 24 (with fees, est C\$1m-C\$1.5m). A week later, Vienna’s Dorotheum auction house was rewarded for throwing its weight behind Art Informel works, in its otherwise average contemporary art evening sale on May 31, when Vedova’s “Tensione” (1959) sold for €650,000 (€792,500 with fees, est €150,000-€200,000), making another auction record.

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“Dealers holding on to the idea of a white cube gallery in central London are struggling, but there are also opportunities,” says Magnus Edensvard, the founder of Ibid Gallery, who this year closed his permanent London space after 16 years in the capital. The gallery still operates in Los Angeles, where it opened in 2016, and remains in business in London in new guises. Four wooden sculptures by the American artist David Adamo have been on view in the lobby of Finsbury Circus House in the City of London (the gallery did not confirm if sales were made). Next up is Scottish artist Christopher Orr, currently showing in Ibid’s Los Angeles gallery, with plans for a mobile show on a boat on London’s Regent’s Canal this summer. Not all projects will break the mould. During the Frieze fairs in October, the gallery will rent a traditional space in Mayfair to show Devin Ferrand.

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London stalwart Timothy Taylor is still committed to a gallery presence in London but is on the lookout for a new space now that rent and rates on his gallery have become “extortionate”, he says. “Gallery owners are spending their time paying rent rather than with artists,” he says. Taylor emphasises this is not a case of looking for something smaller, however: “You can’t represent established artists and estates in something that looks like a pop-up.”

Across the pond, Monica Eulitz, who has been sales director at the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation since 2010, joins as director of Timothy Taylor’s New York gallery on Monday.

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Galleries wait ages for a new artist and then four come along at once: Johannesburg’s Goodman Gallery last week added the British-Nigerian big hitter Yinka Shonibare to its roster as well as Samson Kambalu (from Malawi), Paulo Nazareth (Brazil) and Grada Kilomba (Portugal). Owner Liza Essers, who took over the space in 2008, says the new additions sum up her strategy of widening the 50-year-old gallery’s scope while still focusing on artists who address issues pertinent to the country. Nazareth tackles Brazil’s colonial history; Kambalu takes on issues of sovereignty; Kilomba, an academic, has published a book about racism. “It’s important to push against the world’s growing nationalistic, political agenda. We gallerists have a responsibility,” Essers says.