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AD20/21 and Boston Print Fair

by Jeanne Schinto

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Boston, Massachusetts

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The 37 exhibitors at the fourth annual AD20/21: Art & Design of the 20th & 21st Centuries in Boston April 7-10 came out with all the force and energy of a campaign. Tom Veilleux of Portland, Maine, unveiled several fresh-to-the-market sculptures by Elie Nadelman. Boston's Martha Richardson presented two pieces of *Sonambient* (sound sculpture) by Harry Bertoia that were delivered directly to her booth from their commissioning owners. Another Boston dealer, Normand Mainville of Machine Age, featured a rarity said to be one of only five examples—a double Chieftain chair by Denmark's Finn Juhl. Glen Leroux of Westport, Connecticut, arranged his double space with a 20th-century sofa, mirror, lamps, coffee table, dining set, and smaller touches, such as a cobalt blue cocktail shaker and glasses, that gave one the wonderfully uncanny feeling of walking onto a set for AMC's *Mad Men*.

A couple of years ago, promoters Fusco & Four invited the Boston Print Fair to be part of what they bill as "the only show dedicated to modern and contemporary art and design in New England." So besides dealers in furniture, decorative arts, paintings, and sculpture, there were 14 print purveyors. One of them was Boston's Haley & Steele, resurrected by its new owner, William Craig, a customer who "got caught like everyone else," as he put it, when its former owner, Julien S. Tavener, fled the country in 2005.

There were other new faces too and some regulars missing and missed. Most notable among the latter were New York City's Greg Nanamura and Jason Jacques and Boston's Landry & Arcari. But the new exhibitors, including New York City's Orley & Shabahang, sellers of antique and contemporary Persian carpets, offered showgoers something different and unexpected.

Nearly 600 people attended the Thursday night gala preview that benefits Boston Architectural College, New England's largest independent accredited college of spatial design, offering programs in architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, and design studies. While raising \$100,000, the event attracted many museum curators, some high-profile private collectors, and representatives of architectural firms and construction companies.

First-time exhibitor Peter Rudolph of McClees Galleries, Haverford, Pennsylvania, was pleased to note "an entirely different crowd" from the one he sees as a veteran of Fusco & Four's Boston International Fine Art Show, held every November in the same place, the Cyclorama at the Boston Center for the Arts.

Given the eclectic nature of the exhibitors and their wares, which ranged from Art Nouveau to contemporary works by living artists and designers, how they were received differed markedly from booth to booth. "Of everybody at the show, Tom attracted the museum crowd," AD20/21's co-producer and cofounder Tony Fusco said of Veilleux and his presentation of Nadelman's sculpture. "As you know, museums are like glaciers when it comes to making decisions, but they were interested in other pieces he had in his booth too."

Veilleux had chairs set up across from the Nadelman pieces, as if they were an ocean view, and indeed they were as energizing as a day in the open air. They included one of the artist's nearly life-size circus figures in galvano-plastique, a wounded stag in bronze, and a bronze female head. "They're the greatest things I've ever had," said the dealer, who seemed humbled by them.

Asked why he decided to debut them at AD20/21, Veilleux said, "The timing was right." He would say little else on the record, especially about potential buyers, but we saw him deep in conversation with Nonie Gadsden, a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), as well as with collectors Theodore S. "Ted" and Barbara L. Alford.

The Alfords were among those who donated funds to the MFA's 2002 purchase of Nadelman's *Resting Stag*, which is now on view in the museum's new Art of the Americas wing. Ted Alford is the son of Harold Alford (d. 2007), who founded two shoe manufacturing companies (one was Dexter Shoe Company) and later became a major shareholder in Berkshire Hathaway and a part-owner of the Boston Red Sox. If in a couple of years we see any of these Nadelman pieces in the MFA, we'll be sure to let you know.

Martha Richardson sold the larger of the two Bertoia sculptures to a buyer who did not attend the show but heard the pieces were being offered there and decided to act. "While it's true that I didn't sell it to someone physically at the fair, I definitely sold it because of the show," said Richardson, giving credit where credit was due. "I would not have gotten the piece, nor sold it, if it weren't for AD20/21. The piece came to me on consignment and arrived directly to my booth and then was shipped out directly from my booth. I sold a few other pieces and have strong, and real, interest in a number of others. It was a great show for me."

Susanna J. Fichera of Arlington, Massachusetts, and Bowdoinham, Maine, had success too. "I had a very good show," she said. "It was pretty quiet until Sunday afternoon. That's when most of it happened." She sold a black-and-white abstract etching by Robert Motherwell; a long, narrow landscape by March Avery, Milton Avery's daughter; a little (6" x 9") oil on paper on board of moonlit trees by George Hallowell; and another little, mostly blue picture of an interior by Joseph De Martini (c. 1896-1984). Then toward the very end of Sunday, she sold a large (80" x 35") untitled serigraph by Gene Davis (1920-1985), priced at \$5000. Number 48 of an edition of 144, it went home with a buyer who lives half a block away from the show's venue in Boston's fashionable South End.

Normand Mainville of Machine Age likewise felt the show was a success, although his hard-cash sales were few. "It was a good show—in fact, it was excellent," he said. "I just delivered a table this morning to a client. Many people took our card and want to stop by, so we'll see what's going to happen."

With a retail space in Boston, Mainville is in a particularly good position to take advantage of follow-up. He considers the show a valuable marketing tool more than a place to do or die. Many people he saw at the show knew of him but didn't realize he had a shop in Boston, he said. "And they loved the booth."

It was a double booth, which featured, for example, a rosewood cabinet by Harvey Probbler, \$5600; a rosewood sideboard by Kofod Larsen, \$5800; an Art Deco torchiere floor lamp, \$1975; a chrome sculpture by David Brown, \$1800; a six-panel Art Deco screen by Jacques Chailou, \$6950; screenprints by David Roth, \$950 each; and serigraphs by Shalom Gabay, \$850 each.

Robert James Walsh of Quebec, Vermont, and Montreal, Canada set up an extremely eclectic booth filled with a mix of antique and contemporary furniture and decorative arts. Like Mainville, he sold some items with hope for follow-up. "We didn't have a lot of sales, but we have a lot of interest in things and made a lot of contacts," he said. He listed a pair of 1950's Florence Knoll parallel-bar chairs; a signed 20th-century chrome and semiprecious stone letter opener in the shape of a praying mantis; some bookends; a 1905 eight-volume set of *History of English Literature* with leather bindings; and four necklaces by contemporary artist/poet Beatriz Lopez Bruneau, originally from Venezuela, now living in Canada.

Walsh was one of several dealers who encountered a man from China touring the show with a woman serving as his interpreter. The man expressed interest in Walsh's Poc A Poc contemporary dinner service designed by Marc Pascual. *The Asian* also was taken by Telescopes of Vermont, said Russ Schleipman, whose company produces a "remanufacture" of Russell W. Porter's design of the 1920's, priced at \$59,000.

"They came back three times," Schleipman said of the man and his interpreter. "He was impatient and a little brusque with her. She was sweet but caught between me and him, translating. She was scribbling down information, then turned to me and said, 'We'd like two. Do you ship overseas?' I said, 'Absolutely.' She gave me his card, which had an address in Beijing. She said they deal in art."

Schleipman, hopeful but skeptical, wondered if they might be planning to copy the telescope. If so, he knew from his own experiences that it was far easier said than done. "It could take them five years," he predicted.

Speaking of the mysterious East, print dealers Veronica Miller and David Mota of Egenolf Gallery, Burbank, California, who sell Japanese prints, were satisfied with their results. "There are people I get to see only once a year, and they did come out," Miller said. "Some of the curators I'd invited came. I did make some sales, and it's important, even in the lean times, always to be reaching out and meeting potential new collectors."

Miller and Mota did two other print fairs, in Chicago and Washington, D.C., in the weeks leading up to AD20/21. It required a month on the road but was worth it for many reasons, Miller explained. "These are all places where we have built up a clientele over years and years. I like to be in touch with them and be updated on what their collecting interests are. Not only do we make a profit, but we also never know what the follow-up is going to be—and we just love coming to Boston."

There was, as usual, high praise for Fusco & Four, whose efforts include advertising on public radio; a series of educational programs throughout the weekend; and the presentation of an annual lifetime achievement award, this time bestowed upon Massimo and Lella Vignelli of New York City. "Tony puts on a great show. It's a class act and feels good to be there," said Tony Decaneas of Revere, Massachusetts, who sells photography.

Decaneas, however, felt frustrated. "My conclusion after this show is that the economy is still reeling," he said. "I didn't really see people coming to spend money. I have done this show another time [when he was owner of another photography gallery, Boston's Panopticon], and there was business that took place afterwards. This time, I didn't get the feeling that would happen."

Even if follow-up did take place, Decaneas wasn't going to be appeased. "If it's all about establishing contacts, I feel I can do that on my own without that venue," he said, mentioning that he and Panopticon's new owner, Jason Landry, were planning to "do more seminars about collecting photography."

Decaneas didn't mention the weather, but others did. It was gorgeous—the first real spring weather of the season after a hard winter—and that presented a problem. Tom Clemens of Boston's Gargoyle Gallery Fine Prints & Books said, "I have one or two good follow-up possibilities, and I heard the same from people around me, but generally I thought the buying interest and level of intensity was substantially less this year. I think the weather had a lot to do with it." Clemens said he noticed that some of his regular, more serious buyers didn't show up, and some of the browsers, who might have normally spent more time to find something they liked, "kind of skipped through and didn't really spend."

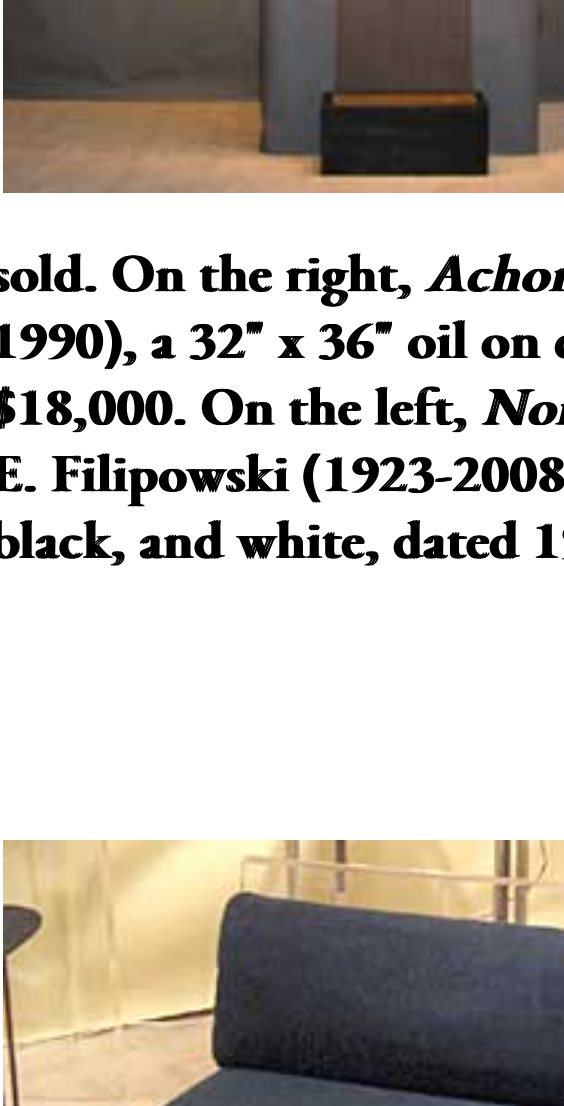
Fusco certainly was aware of the effect the weather was having on the show's attendance. "It did affect the gate. People wanted to be outside. On Saturday and Sunday, we heard that Newbury Street was absolutely mobbed, but nobody was going into any of the galleries." Still, he differed with those who felt the weather kept serious collectors away, and like his most optimistic dealers, he felt the future holds great promise. "This show has forward momentum," he stated.

Meanwhile, he and his co-producer, Robert Four, will continue to modify it. Next year, for example, they are planning to have it in March, not April. Partly that's because of where Easter and Passover fall, but it's also because they are always thinking about what's best for business in times that continue to be challenging for everyone.

For more information about 2012's AD20/21 or the Boston Print Fair, call Fusco & Four at (617) 363-0405 or visit (www.AD2021.com). For more information about Boston Architectural College, visit (www.the-bac.edu).



The nearly life-size (49" x 19½" x 24") circa 1925 *Scated Woman* with *Raised Arm*, made of galvano-plastique, is pictured on the cover of *Elie Nadelman* by Lincoln Kirstein (Eakins Press, 1973), along with three similarly sized sculptures by the artist. The cover's setting was Nadelman's Riverdale, New York, apartment, where he and his wife, Viola Spiess Plannery, established the groundbreaking Museum of Folk and Peasant Arts in 1926. In her 2006 biography, *The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the Modern Art Market*, Lindsay Pollock wrote that while Halpert was the first dealer to promote the sale of folk art, "packaged as a distinct entity, not just jumbled in with other American antiques," she neither discovered nor named it. That distinction usually goes to the Nadelmans because of their museum, which was also a shop. Among many others, legendary dealer Mary Allis (1899-1987) of Connecticut is said to have gone to Riverdale to buy folk art from them.



These two images of *Bowsprit* by Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) were framed together and priced at \$14,000 for the pair by William P. Carl Fine Prints. The pencil on tracing paper was probably done in 1930, said Carl. The wood engraving from an edition of 120 dates from the same year.



The focal point of the booth of Martha Richardson of Boston was the 72" tall *Sonambient* (sound sculpture) by Harry Bertoia (1915-1978), in beryllium copper and brass, seen at center. It sold. On the right, *Achomawi III* by Ludwig Sander (1904-1990), a 32" x 36" oil on canvas, signed and dated '65," was \$18,000. On the left, *Non-Objective Composition* by Richard E. Filipowski (1923-2008), a 47" x 37" oil on canvas in red, black, and white, dated 1949, was \$38,000.



Bridges Over Time asked \$4800 for the 1970's Lucite chair signed by Gary Gutterman. Dealers Ed and Betty Koren said the removable cushion retained its original Ultrasuede fabric.

