

Art

Why go to Brussels to experience art?

Luning Wang: Art capitals all over the world have their own style. In Brussels, you can not only see the pioneers and personalities of emerging artists, but also appreciate the patience and low-keyness of "old money" collectors.



Image: GettyImages

Updated on May 7, 2022 00:20 FT Chinese Network Columnist **Luning Wang**

Reminder from FTChinese.com: If you are interested in the content of FTChinese.com, please search for "FTChinese.com" in the Apple App Store or Huawei App Store, download the official app of FTChinese.com, and pay for subscription. Happy using!

Having visited many art fairs and private collections, I never expected to get a new inspiration for art collecting in Brussels.

Many people in the art world will make arrangements for Art Brussels after the opening of the Venice Biennale half a month ago. Although this art fair, which was born in 1968, is the second "oldest" in Europe (the first "old" is Art Cologne), it has always maintained its role as a collector to explore and excavate emerging art.

The reputation of the artist platform.

Unlike Art Basel, a large-scale cultural event that revitalizes the art ecology of a city and successfully linked art with fashion, real estate, film and television, and even technology and other industries, the surrounding area of Brussels Art Fair is different. There is no exaggerated party at all, and the collectors who attend the VIP event at the exhibition are also simple and low-key. The fair provides visiting collectors and art lovers with an opportunity to return to a journey of pure art exploration: where people discover new artists, learn new knowledge, and exchange and share their insights on art collections.

Even if the art capitals with their own characteristics all over the world will have a complete art industry chain to some extent, and the various branches of the industry will also support each other, but some places are more artist-oriented cities, and some are Tibetan Places where families are relatively concentrated - such as Berlin, belong to the former. The city's low rent and free and open atmosphere are very friendly to artists, making it a good place to discover new talents in the art world. Of course, many successful artists are also happy to settle here. However, Berlin does not necessarily have a large group of collectors that can promote a strong business atmosphere. In contrast, the south of France is definitely a paradise for collectors, and there are many world-class collections hidden, but most of the anecdotes about the artists themselves stay in the last century, unless it is Bernar Venet, who established his own An art foundation that exhibits blue-chip artists of the same period as itself.



Mendes Wood Gallery's booth at Art Brussels, photo: Kristien Daem

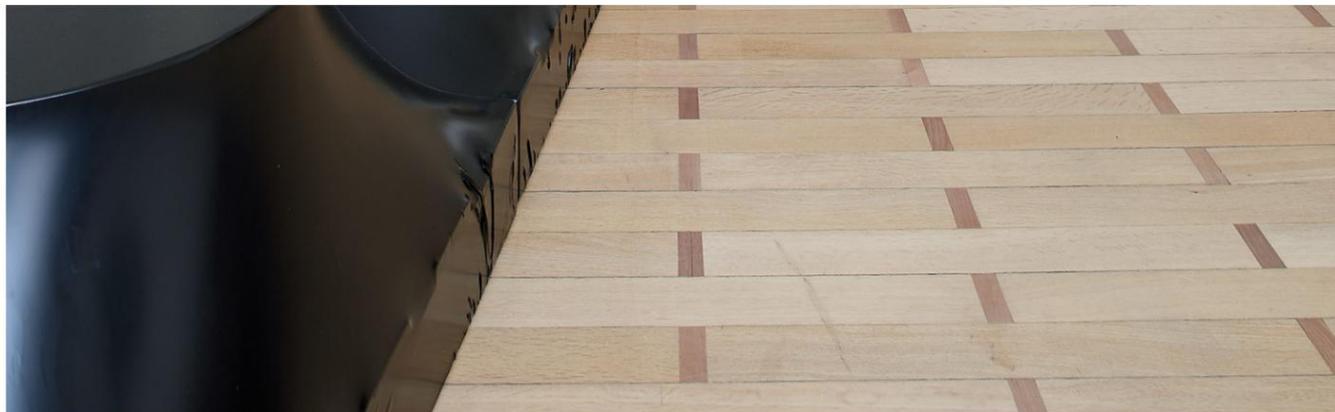
Unlike the previous two, Brussels is an artist-friendly city with a strong collecting tradition. Even in commercial exhibitions such as Brussels Art Fair, the organizers attach great importance to the output of curatorial content, and hope that by dividing different exhibition areas, it is convenient for collectors to explore the works of artists at different stages of their creative careers— —PRIME area focuses on successful and mid-development artists, DISCOVERY focuses on emerging artists, REDISCOVERY rediscovers talented people ignored by the market, INVITED provides a display platform for non-traditional galleries, and SOLO provides solo exhibitions for artists space. Many artists tend to have the opportunity to have solo exhibitions at commercial exhibitions. Although selling their works at art fairs means commercializing their works for them, it is difficult to highlight the artistic value without highlighting the process and concept of creation. Solo exhibitions at the exhibition can allow collectors who are in a hurry to build a deeper impression of the artist and gain a deeper understanding of the artist's creation.

Belgians have always had a strong collecting tradition, and Brussels is said to be the city with the highest concentration of collectors in the world. Unlike many collectors in emerging art markets whose collections are speculative, investment, or purely "vanity projects", there are many "old money" generation collections here, as well as pure

"Poor" collectors who love art - their collections are not necessarily expensive, but they have a unique aesthetic perspective, and it reveals the collector's thirst for knowledge and curiosity.

The collector community in Brussels is very close to each other and loves to share. This is also because of the cooperation with Paris, London. Compared with famous art cities such as London and New York, housing prices in Brussels are lower, which is not only for artists and new galleries. Being friendly, for collectors, also means that there is more space to do projects that support artists.





The Embassy is exhibiting works by young artist Simon Sutcliffe "Prism Shift". Photo: Simon Sutcliffe

Elena Soboleva, global online sales director at Zwirner Gallery, and her husband Ronald Rozenbaum, a Brussels-based financier and collector, bought the old Lebanese embassy house and renovated it into a space that combines private residences and art projects. The space on the first floor of the building is dedicated to exhibitions for young artists. During Art Brussels, they presented the exhibition "Prism Shift", which featured the work of four students from the Städelschule in Frankfurt.

According to Elena Soboleva herself, it is common for collectors to establish their own art project space in Brussels, but it is rare in New York. The couple's project space is not as full of exhibition plans as other cities' art spaces, because this project is completely out of interest, they will spend time looking for suitable artists, and only when they find them will they do exhibitions, not purely Exhibition for exhibition's sake.



Panoptes Collection, Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde

"Never impatient or impatient" is another feature of this city. Collectors here have a special preference for conceptual art, and different individuals maintain their own unique collection perspectives. Another private collection in Brussels, Panoptes, founded in 2015, is dedicated to showcasing works of art that focus on material, abstraction and perception. These non-traditional shelf artworks require the viewer to interact, listen, perceive space and technology. influence on the appreciation of these works. The founder, Emilie de Pauw, came from a family of collectors, and when her grandmother died, she left her a large collection of items. So far, Emilie continues to acquire new works of art, and she spends a lot of time researching before collecting. The exhibition in the Panoptes exhibition space also needs opportunity and only after she is truly convinced of the artist's creation. Currently on display at Panoptes are the works of Bernhard Leitner, a leading figure in sound art.

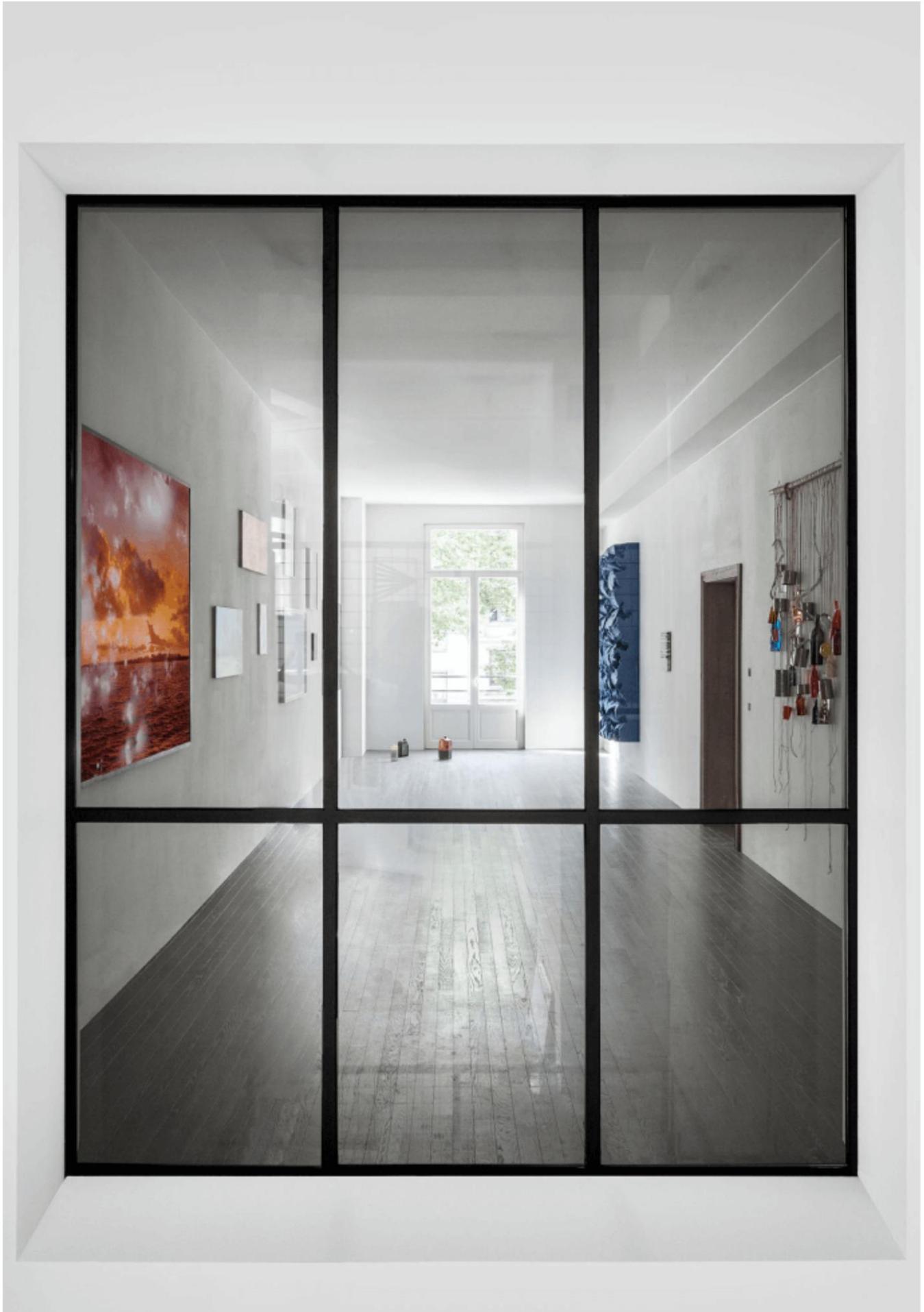
Collector Alain Servais, known for his uncomfortable-looking conceptual works, turned the apartment he lived in for 10 years into a private collection showroom and artist-in-residence – The Loft. Beautiful, but every piece is thought-provoking. Another major local collector, Frédéric de Goldschmidt, recently created Cloud Seven, an art space that combines exhibitions and residencies. Predominant tones and minimalist pieces created by rediscovering everyday materials. with New York, London, etc.

On the walls of the big collectors in the art metropolis, there are several market celebrities who are common in major exhibitions and auctions.

The works are not the same, the collection of Brussels collectors is more thoughtful, which is not only due to the collector's own bias towards art

The enlightenment about art that Haohe has gained from growing up is also due to the fact that they are more pure in sharing art.

original intention.



Frederic de Goldschmidt Collection, Cloud Seven Space

If people in the art world don't want to attend any of the global exhibitions, they must show the attitude and quality of "Miss Universe" and "Mr. Universe" - travel abroad at least twice a month, use the hotel as their home, and travel to various places. The customs and the way of doing business are kept in mind. After going through the exhibition for a long time, I realized that each art capital that gathers international friends has its own "local character". American art dealers, most of them don't have the patience to tell you about art. Ask about the works at the booth and they will tell you that they are sold, the artist's waiting list is very long, which institution has taken them, and some people will even ask you to question them "words Poor", the description of the art work is the word level of the English IELTS pass line. But in Brussels, the gallerists are more patient and visibly more passionate about their art. The geographical advantage of Brussels makes it easier for collectors across Europe to travel, so many international galleries also choose to open their spaces in Brussels rather than London and Paris.

Nino Mier, the founder of Nino Mier Gallery, told me that his gallery was originally established in Los Angeles and chose Brussels because the city is in the center of Europe and the art market has always been very active. In addition, his gallery in Brussels is located in the Sablon area, with a six-storey villa, it is almost impossible to find such a "luxury" space in Paris. It is for this reason that many young galleries are choosing to open spaces in Brussels, and the city has become increasingly important in the contemporary art world.

Some of my friends in the domestic art circle have told me about the "strange" character of the Belgians - while many galleries are eyeing the Chinese market and quickly opening up locations, the business strategies of some galleries in Brussels are still focused on Europe, not looking for a Chinese representative.

Gallery owner Rodolphe Janssen says he has two of his gallery's spaces in Belgium, but is reaching out to new collectors by participating in art fairs around the world. Although art brokers are now not fixed in one place and do business all over the world, it is still very important to establish a gallery brand in one place. Rodolphe Janssen said, "Where do you go when you want to buy a beautiful tailored suit?" I replied, "Savile Row in London, of course", "Yes, where do you go when you are looking for art, do With word of mouth, people who want to buy the artists you represent will of course come to you."

The short trip to Brussels made me realize once again the infinite potential of art to bring people's endless desire for knowledge and exploration and to maintain close contact with new things. But after the exhibition, it is still difficult to invite gallerists and collectors to sit down and have a good chat about art, not necessarily because they are unwilling, but because these "trapeze"-like collector industry workers are flying again immediately. Next stop - "The focus of the art market in May is New York, see you in Europe in June." A collector told me. This is the joy of being in the art world, and if you want to immerse yourself in it, you will live

Live and work are integrated, find your place in the bustling art world, I hope you and I will grow into

Someone who can only be chased by someone else by plane.

“ ”

The column "Picasso and the Single Girl" observes cultural phenomena, dialogue with industry leaders, Author Wang Luning, and analyzes

Wang Luning Lives in London and works in art consulting. Personal public number: Picasso and the single girl

(This article only represents the author's personal opinion, the pictures in the article are provided by the author, the editor's post

Box: zhen.zhu@ftchinese.com)

Copyright statement: The copyright of this article belongs to FT Chinese. Without permission, no unit or individual may reprint, copy or use it in any other way.

Use of this article in whole or in part is subject to infringement.