

## ART &amp; AUCTIONS

## Recalling Warriors of Old

[ Collecting

By MARGARET STUDER



Swiss and German auctions of antique arms and armor will recall Roman legions, medieval knights, Ottoman nobles and samurai warriors of old Japan.

Swiss auctioneer Fischer in Lucerne will hold a two-day sale next Thursday and Friday with more than 1,000 objects, including beautifully crafted swords, daggers, guns, body armor, shields and helmets. In addition, around 1,000 lots are up for sale in a silent auction where written bids must be in by Monday.

"This is a niche market with a very international buying public," says managing director Kuno Fischer. The sector, he explains, is driven by collectors' interest in history, ornamental objects and the development of weapons.

On the front cover of the Fischer catalog is a striking bronze facial mask of a Roman helmet from the first century that could be a modern sculpture. The finely chiseled features create a scary feel. The mask is estimated at 30,000 Swiss francs to 40,000 francs (€24,980-€33,306). On the back cover, a high-ranking Japanese samurai looks splendid sitting on a trunk in full battle dress. The elaborate 16th-17th century armor is expected to fetch 29,500 francs to 34,000 francs.

A rare golden Ottoman helmet, with a peaked top, from around 1600 is expected to fetch 50,000 francs to 80,000 francs. The decorative helmet features Arab script and engraved flora.

"There is a lot of interest from the Middle East, particularly in Arab objects," Mr. Fischer says.

The halberd (an ax blade mounted on a long shaft with a useful hook for grabbing enemies)

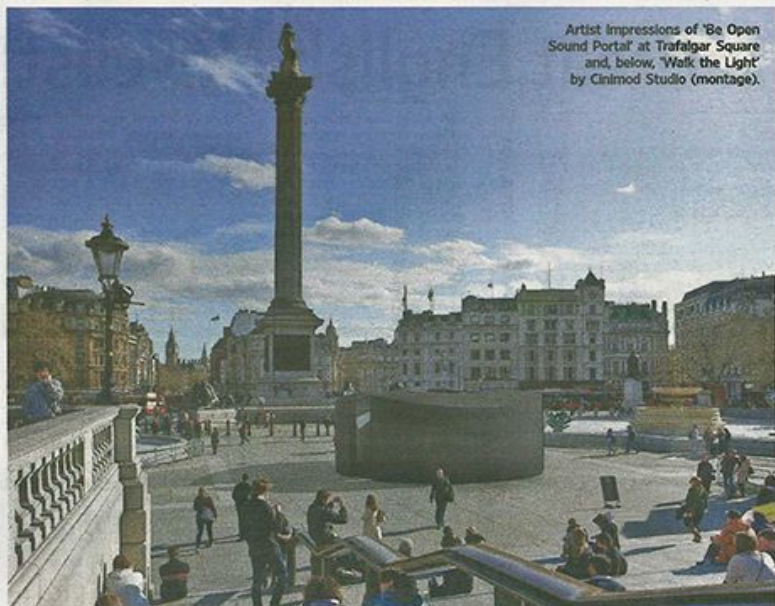
is well-represented in the sale. In the Middle Ages, Swiss farmers fighting the imperial Hapsburgs were particularly fond of the weapon, using it to toss noble knights off their horses. Today, Papal Swiss Guards still carry halberds on ceremonial occasions. A decorative German halberd from around 1580 is estimated at 20,000 francs to 25,000 francs.

The 17th century is particularly popular with collectors, notes Mr. Fischer. Among his offerings are a rare German wheel-lock hunting rifle from 1610-30, superbly decorated with scrolls and a bust of a hunter (40,000 francs to 50,000 francs); and a dashing German rapier from 1610 ornamented with the legend of Hercules killing Hydra, the monster many-headed snake (15,000 francs to 18,000 francs).

The Fischer sale will be followed on Oct. 14-23 by an auction at Germany's Hermann Historica in Munich featuring arms and armor, hunting collectibles, orders and decorations, as well as other object of historic military interest.

Among the rare works will be a Bronze Age helmet from Central Europe created 1,000 years before the birth of Christ, with an auction starting price of €12,500. The auction house describes as "sensationally rare" a pair of German Gothic gauntlets, metal gloves used to protect knights, from 1470-80 A.D. with a starting price of €10,000. Two 17th-century Middle Eastern wrought-iron chamfron, which protected battle horses' faces, will begin bidding at €9,000 and €12,000, respectively.

Robert Weis, head of Hermann Historica's antique arms and armor department, says that newcomers are building up collections. And, he adds, established and new European, American and Middle East aficionados are joined increasingly by Chinese collectors: "Luckily, we have a next generation of collectors coming up."



Artist impressions of 'Be Open Sound Portal' at Trafalgar Square and, below, 'Walk the Light' by Cinimod Studio (montage).

An Experiment in Acoustic Design  
The London Design Festival Celebrates a Decade of Ingenuity

By EMMA CRICHTON-MILLER

Later this month, Trafalgar Square, the patient host to many of London's most spectacular installations, will be invaded by an enigmatic rubberized black structure. Far from Nelson's column or Anthony Gormley's populist 2009 experiment "One and Another," when 2,400 people took up their place on the Square's empty fourth plinth, this large object offers nothing to the eyes. It is only if you go inside that you will discover its meaning.

From Sept. 19-23, the "Sound Portal," a collaboration between the London Design Festival and the Be Open Foundation, is an experiment in acoustic design: design that you cannot see, but which can transform your perception of space. Acoustic engineering firm Arup has designed the portal, drawing on pioneering ambisonic technology that changes the way we experience sound in large public spaces. Inside the portal, five sound artists, commissioned to produce work that stretches the technology's creative potential, will let visitors escape the chaotic hub-bub of the square and enter a parallel universe shaped by sound alone.

The "Be Open Sound Portal" is a flagship project of this year's London Design Festival (Sept. 14-23). Founded in 2003 by Ben Evans and Sir John Sorrell, as what was at first more of an insiders' party, the annual jamboree has become an increasingly visible, citywide celebration of design, reaching out to draw the public in.

In addition to the parallel trade fairs Decorex and 100% Design to the west of the city, the rougher-edged designjunction in an old Royal Mail sorting office in New Oxford Street, and the international showcases Super Brands and Tent London, in the east, temporary "Design Districts" throughout the city will feature special exhibitions and performances to introduce visitors to the latest products of designers' wild imaginations and focused ingenuity.

Since 2009, however, the main



public interface of the festival has been the Victoria and Albert Museum, the organizational hub and site of some of its most ambitious landmark commissions.

This year, to honor the 10th anniversary of the festival, the museum is opening up spaces usually inaccessible to the public.

In the cupola of the ceramics wing, London-based designer, digital artist and filmmaker Keiichi Matsuda will suspend a giant, sculptural lantern, a digital installation that captures the dizzying complexity of London and represents it as something beautiful. "Prism," like an airborne iceberg, is constructed of a series of screens, where fast-moving data streams—transport information, economic statistics, the dry stuff that tracks London lives—are translated moment by moment into vividly colorful shapes and patterns.

In parallel, conceptual designer Rolf Sachs has been let loose on the V&A's ornate Henry Cole Wing Grand Staircase. "The Journey of a Drop" dramatizes the fall of a drop of liquid, an event engineered by gravity and surface tension. Individual drops of colored ink will be released from a great height, falling through the air into a vast vat of illuminated liquid, where they will burst into a cloud of color before expiring.

Meanwhile, Dominic Harris and Cinimod Studio's interactive lighting installation in the V&A Exhibition Road Tunnel Entrance will transform visitors' arrival at the

museum into sweeps of a light beam, ushered by bands of colored light, making physical movement aetherial. Once inside, the prolific Japanese designer Oki Sato will then play with visitors' responses to the individual galleries, inviting them to sit on a series of solo chairs he has placed throughout the museum, each of which has been subtly morphed to mimic its surroundings, offering a quirky perspective from which to admire contemporary design's rich historic hinterland.

But while design may beguile and dazzle with its beauty and brilliance, it is also an industry at a turning point. Rapid technological advances, making all things possible, are offset by ever-growing environmental issues and a weakened global economy.

This year the London Design Festival is organizing a one-day Global Design Forum (Sept. 18, Central St. Martins Campus, King's Cross) to debate these issues. One new way of thinking about design is on view at the very end of the festival. In "Design for the Real World" (Sept. 21-Oct. 3), the RCA's Sustain initiative, in collaboration with the RCA's Helen Hamlyn Centre of Design, will display a range of projects that use design to address major social and environmental challenges.

"Design is not about selling more stuff," says Clare Brass, the team leader of SustainRCA. "You can use it to address significant issues. I think this is the way forward for design."



Clockwise from left, a decorative 16th-century German halberd; a first-century bronze facial mask of a Roman helmet; Japanese samurai armor from the 16th-17th century.

Courtesy of Fischer, Lucerne