

The stand of Francis Maere Fine Arts Gallery also felt lively on the opening day; among the 19th- and 20th-century European paintings, Conrad Willems was building one of his large-scale architectural sculptures from hundreds of sandstone blocks. “Everyone is serious and I’m just having fun,” laughed the Belgian artist. “I wasn’t sure about BRAFA people being my type of collectors but I’ve already had wonderful conversations”—and one of his smaller, wall-mounted pieces sold just a few hours into the collector’s preview.



Maison Rapin at BRAFA.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAISON RAPIN

A new initiative this year is “Selected by BRAFA”, a group booth of five young dealers. A standout was the selection of elegant vintage jewelry put together by Sophie Derom. “I really pick the pieces according to my taste,” she says. “It’s a mix of signed and one-of-a-

kind designs by artists.” First to sell was a brooch with a “constellation of gemstones—amethyst, moonstone, tourmaline, ruby. It’s signed ED, but I don’t know who that is.”

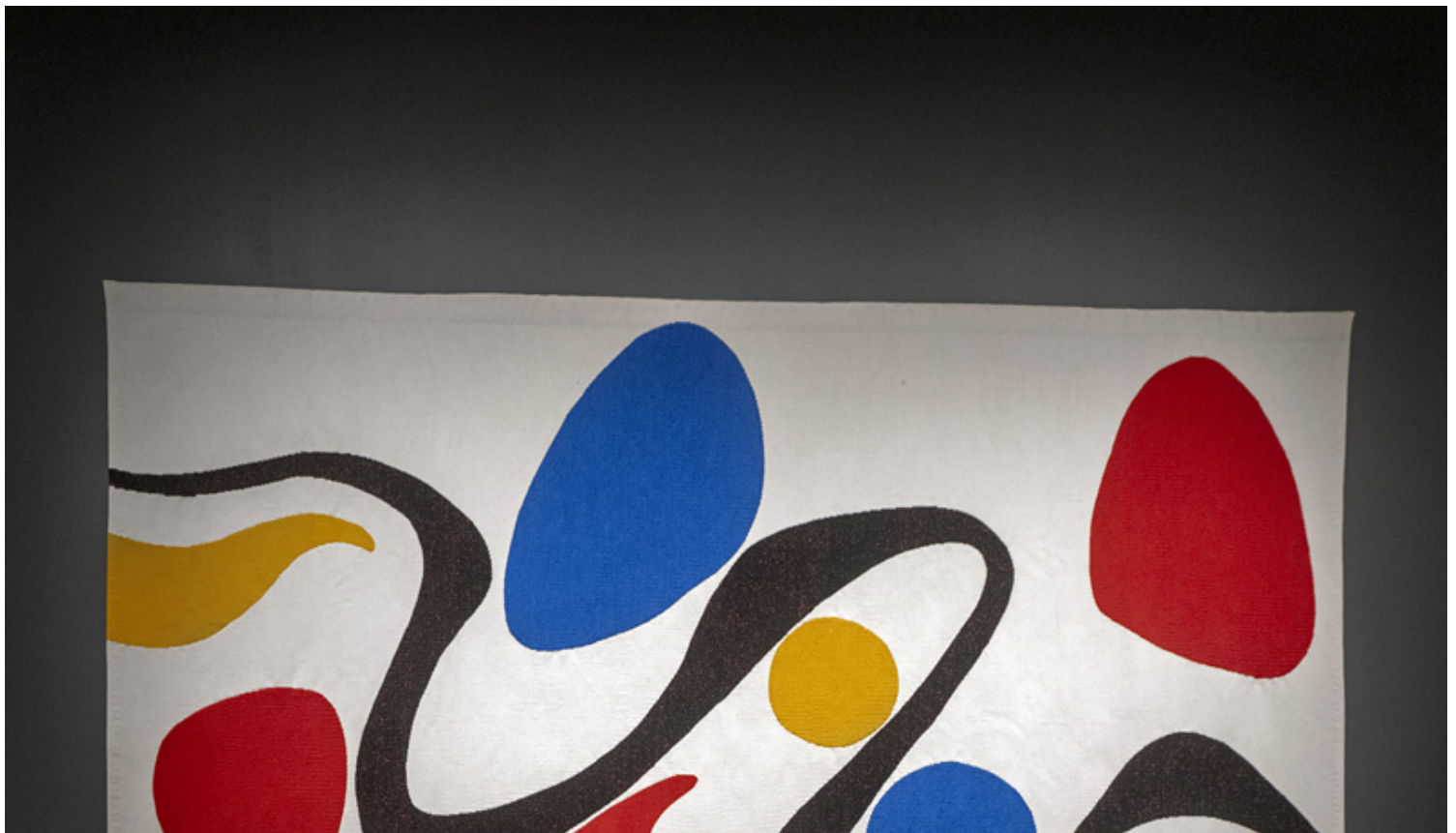
Derom recently opened a Brussels showroom in Sablon—the same neighborhood that Objects With Narratives is based in. The cutting-edge design gallery was founded three years ago by Nik and Robbe Vandewyngaerde and Oskar Eryatmuz, and is located in a landmark Beaux-Arts building: Grand Salon 40, commissioned in 1920 by furrier Raymond Malien and later commandeered as the sales rooms of Pierre Bergé auction house.





Stone Gallery at BRAFA.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF STONE GALLERY





De Wit Fine Tapestries at BRAFA.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DE WIT FINE TAPESTRIES

“Brussels is one the world’s best cities for design,” says Nik Vandewyngaerde. Their inaugural booth at BRAFA is titled “L’Élan Belge” (“Belgian Momentum”) and features a roster of exciting local creatives. A low and curvy cream sofa, one of their in-house designs (OWN editions), is surrounded by a pair of interlocking and organic patinated steel side tables by Jumandie Seys (€3,000 and €3,500 each), part of his Fragment furniture collection; and artwork-like coffee tables cast in crushed glass (€120,000) or

crafted in onyx (€65,000) by Ben Storms, a stonemason and sculptor based in Antwerp. Maverick multidisciplinary designer Lionel Jadot is represented by his Automatic Writing Chairs (€7,500 each), roughly hewn in MDF and resin with childlike markings, while Tanguy Tourrain's enchanting, nearly two-meter-high Tondel 03 lamp (€41,500) combines a burnt Poplar tree trunk with giant cast brass mushrooms.

At Maison Rapin, contemporary and vintage design sit side by side. "We love extravagant pieces," says the Paris gallery's associate director, Alice Aïda Kargar, pointing to the modular, leopard-print "Safari" Sofa created by Florence-based design studio Archizoom in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the show-stopping bronze chandeliers and mirrors—one encircled in a swathe of wheat stems; another edged in waterlily leaves—are by Robert Goossens, most famous for designing costume jewelry for Chanel.



Galerie Bernard De Leye at BRAFA.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF GALERIE BERNARD DE LEYE



# Discover the Highlights from BRAFA Art Fair in Brussels

The landmark 70th edition is characteristically eclectic, with several vibrant newcomers adding to the allure

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