

Oscar Graf

Oscar Graf Decorative Arts, Paris

Exhibited at *Showcase* in 2016; accepted into *TEFAF New York* in 2017 and *Maastricht* 2018

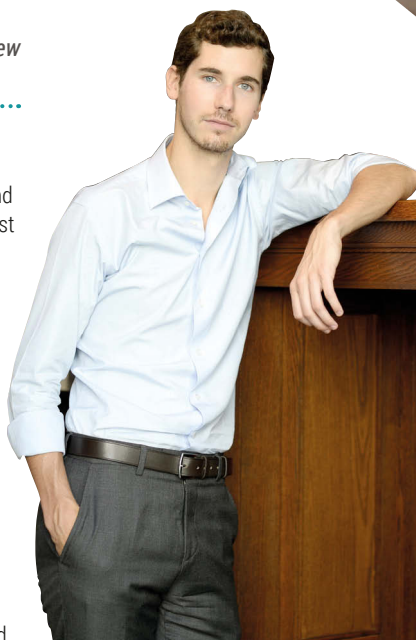
Oscar Graf is, perhaps, the model *Showcase* exhibitor. At 31, he's ambitious and scarily young – he opened his first gallery in Paris in 2011, aged 24, specialising in European and American furniture and decorative arts from 1870 to the First World War, with a particular focus on arts and crafts at the turn of the century.

Although *Showcase* was set up to encourage the participation of 'younger' dealers, that's not a qualification by itself, insists Graf. "They really want talented people, rather than young people. It's weird to say, but that's getting really rare. I personally fight against the common idea that we need to take in young people just because they're young. Young doesn't mean good."

Graf was attracted to the *Showcase* because of its unrivalled reputation and rigorous standards. "I'm all for really, really strict rules. Unfortunately, the fairs that are coming down are doing so because they are too soft. They take average exhibitors. *TEFAF* is the hardest to get into, and I really like that."

To be accepted, you must "give a good impression of yourself", says Graf, painting an admissions procedure that seems comparable with an elite military unit. So, for example, making niggly, time-wasting complaints about your stand will not go down well, while a coherent, impeccably researched effort to display fine-quality, interesting work in the best way possible, will impress them. "If you don't show it the right way, they're going to have a hard time imagining that you can improve within a year for the main event," says Graf.

Showcase was successful for Graf. Within three months of exhibiting, he had sold 75% of the stock he had shown there,



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and he was accepted into *TEFAF New York* in 2017. "I made a lot of money at *Showcase* because the stand costs you practically nothing, whereas the regular event can cost up to €100,000. I met new clients, even though it was only a few months after the Paris terrorist killings, and there was still a very particular atmosphere, a very awkward climate.

"I have great memories from the show. But my main objective was to show the *TEFAF* people what I could do. When I was accepted into the main event, it was an incredibly satisfying experience."

oscar-graf.com

Stanislas Gokelaere

Galerie Le Beau, 20th century furniture and decorative art, Brussels

Exhibiting at *Showcase* for the first time in 2018

Stanislas Gokelaere and his partner Céline Robinson specialise in 20th century furniture and lighting, focusing on the years from 1940-60, from the best Scandinavian, American, French, Brazilian and Italian designers. They opened their gallery in the Place du Sablon, Brussels, in 2014.

"We try to select historical pieces that are still relevant in the context of today and to current tastes," says Gokelaere.

"We have participated in several important fairs in Paris, Brussels and London. But *TEFAF* represents the highest standard of quality. The ability to participate in *Showcase* is an achievement, because it means we are doing things at the highest level. So that attracted us.

Also, the fair has expanded its design section. It is the most important art fair in the world and has become a major meeting point for design collectors."

The vetting went very smoothly, says Gokelaere, "but we really experienced the *TEFAF* culture. It's the highest level of vetting that we have experienced. It's what we expected, but it really is at another level.

"It helped that we had met the team in the past at other fairs. They saw the way we curated our booths and made our selections. I think it reassured them that we would not 'lower' the level of quality at *TEFAF*.

"We always put effort into all our fairs, but it's true that, for

TEFAF, we've been holding on to pieces and building up our selection. We want to make a clear statement about who we are, about our ability to source high-quality pieces.

"So, it's been a longer process in terms of curating, because we've held on to pieces that we didn't want to show anywhere but *TEFAF*. That's also why we have waited this long before applying to *Showcase*."

Gokelaere hopes that *Showcase* will broaden their client base, which is currently mostly French, and introduce them to international buyers and curators.

The gallery will, "without any doubt", apply to the main event next year. "It's the right time for us now. We already have some very demanding clients, we have the experience, and we have the pieces."

galerie-lebeau.com

Below: walnut and leather Chieftain chair, manufactured by Niels Vodder, 1949, one of the 20th century items on offer from Galerie Le Beau at *TEFAF* this year.



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Stanislas Gokelaere

