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Early Meissen birds (€79,900); a 1534 portrait by Lucas Cranach the Elder (€1.2 million); 'Treat of a Man,' 1903, by Pablo Picasso (€3.1 million)

Maastricht's Fine-Art Feast

From Old Masters to Modern Works: Our Guide to This Year's TEFAF Fair

By MARGARET STUDEF

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THE TOP ADVICE from veterans of the International Fine Art and Antiques Fair, which opens Friday in the Dutch town of Maastricht: Wear comfortable shoes.

The sprawling fair (dubbed TEFAF after its organizer, The European Fine Arts Foundation) is at the top of Europe's arts calendar, attracting more than 200 of the world's leading galleries. On view: paintings, from Old Masters to modern works; art from ancient civilizations; tribal pieces; antiques through the ages; porcelain; silver; antique and modern jewelry; old books and manuscripts; antique globes and scientific instruments; and ancient arms and armor. Sales at TEFAF are considered a barometer of the market, setting the tone for the rest of the year.

"The diversity is incredible," says Dorothee van Hoel, an art historian and managing editor

of Residence, an Amsterdam-based interior-decorating magazine. She has visited the fair for the past five years—not so much to buy, but to look, as dealers make an effort to showcase their very best pieces. "It is like visiting a museum, but you can also talk to the people who are selling and ask them all kinds of questions," she says. The fair had about 65,000 visitors last year, even as the prospect of war in Iraq put a damper on travel.

New York fine-arts dealer David Tunick, who has shown his wares at TEFAF for the past six years, says he meets collectors from around the U.S. who may not make it to his gallery in New York but do get to Maastricht, attracted by the ambience and enormous variety. A highlight on Mr. Tunick's stand this year: seven drawings by French master Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806). The drawings were made to illustrate Ludovico Ariosto's "Orlando furioso," a celebrated Italian Renaissance poem filled with ro-

mance, warring knights and magic castles that has inspired many artists. They are offered as a group for around \$50,000 (\$257,000) or separately for \$30,000 to \$75,000.

This year dealers are cautiously optimistic. U.K. arms and armor dealer Peter Finer—whose stand each year is one of the most exotic with knights' armor, medieval swords and old-world pistols—says, "The foot-good factor is back this year. People are more willing to spend their money." On his stand is a pair of 18th-century model canons (each 50 1/2 inches, or 128 1/2 centimeters, long) made for Count Grigory Alexandrovich Poterskin and priced at around €175,000 for the pair. Mr. Finer expects the rare Russian antiques to be of interest because an increasing number of Russian buyers are visiting international fairs and auctions. Also on Mr. Finer's stand are an 11th-century Viking sword (about €90,000) and a

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