

## High Expectations For a Paris Biennale, Back in the Grand Palais

PARIS, Sept. 14 — After a multiyear, multi-million-Euro restoration, the Grand Palais here is welcoming back the prestigious Biennale des Antiquaires, which opens today and closes Sept. 24. Always among the most glamorous of the international fairs, this year's is decorated with real orange trees borrowed from the Orangerie at Versailles, designed by the fashionable decorator François-Joseph Graf.

The 111 dealers individually commissioned talent like the Paris designer Jacques Grange and the New York architect Annabelle Selldorf to create their booths. So there are 111 different environments beneath the magnificent glass roof of this Beaux Arts confection, which was built for the Exposition Universelle of 1900.

Expectations are high for this year's show. "There will be more than 7,000 objects spanning 3,000 years," said Christian Deydier, who specializes in ancient Asian artifacts and heads the dealers' syndicate that runs this fair. The offerings range from Chinese bronzes to illuminated manuscripts to modern furniture.

This year more dealers than ever are showing works by 20th-century masters like Jean-Michel Frank, Jean Prouvé and Charlotte Perriand. The total of these modern dealers is now approaching the number selling 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century antiques.

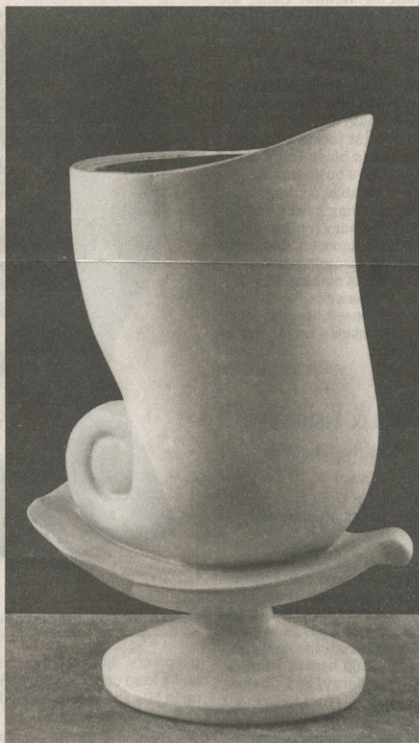
The Paris gallery Vallois, for example, is showing only Mr. Frank: tables, lamps, a jardiniere and upholstered furniture from the 1920's and 30's.

"How do you like my babies?" asked Cheska Vallois, co-owner of the gallery with her husband, Robert. "It has taken us a solid year to find these pieces, one by one. They are not from a single collection. We even bought back things we sold clients years ago."

They have an exceptional pair of leggy consoles in black patinated wrought iron, one with a parchment top, the other with a terra-cotta top. Tall, angular and lean, the tables have the grace and beauty of a newborn thoroughbred.

Mr. Frank (1895-1941), among the most influential Paris designers of the 1930's, came from a wealthy family of German origin. (The diarist Anne Frank was a cousin.) He began studying law in 1911, but after his two brothers were killed in World War I, which led to his father's suicide, he spent the early 1920's traveling and socializing with the Surrealists.

In 1930 he asked Adolphe Chanaux, a former student of Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, to decorate his Paris apartment, and they formed a company together. The Vallois booth displays some of their collaborations, including a low two-door chest of drawers covered entirely with the sharkskin



The Paris gallery Vallois is featuring works by Jean-Michel Frank, including a plaster vase he commissioned from Alberto and Diego Giacometti in 1936.

known as shagreen; a coffee table with ebonized wood and a shagreen top; and a tall cabinet in blackened wood with shagreen-covered doors.

By 1932 Mr. Frank had opened a shop and created a furniture line. He established his reputation with the understated but luxurious décor of a Paris apartment done for the taste setters Vicomte Charles de Noailles and his wife, Marie-Laure, and went on to work for other prominent families, including the Rockefellerers in New York. The gallery L'Arc en Seine is showing a pair of Frank tables with ivory marquetry created for the Rockefellerers in 1938.

Mr. Frank liked to collaborate with artists, and the Vallois booth has plaster lamps and vases that Alberto and Diego Giacometti made for him in 1936. "It was Frank's idea to work with the Giacometti brothers," Mrs. Vallois said. "Most of these pieces were commissioned for particular

clients."

One fascinating piece is a curved metal jardiniere with terra-cotta containers that fit into the top, side by side. "This flower stand is probably a unique piece, but we can't prove it," Mrs. Vallois said. "It's the first time it's been on the market."

In 1939 Mr. Frank left France for Argentina and eventually made his way to New York, where he committed suicide in 1941.

Other 20th-century dealers at the fair include Patrick Seguin, Galerie du Passage, Yves Gastou, Anne Sophie Duval, Downtown, Jean-Jacques Dutko, Jousse and Galerie 54, all from Paris; Yves Macaux from Belgium; and **Bel Etage of Austria, whose booth is a reconstructed apartment of the Viennese Secessionist architect Otto Wagner.**

Nathalie Peters, sister of Pierre Passeron, owner of Galerie du Passage, said their booth, designed by Mr. Grange, has a sycamore desk by Mr. Frank with a lot of "more colorful things" by the post-World War II designers Gio Ponti, Carlo Mollino and Verner Panton.

François Laffanour hired an architect to transform his Downtown booth into a concrete Corbusier-style room, complete with circular holes in the ceiling, to showcase Perriand pieces like a bookcase in aluminum and black lacquer; one of her extremely rare "lighting tables," a library table with a built-in light fixture; and a one-of-a-kind mahogany cabinet.

"When I was 20, I was living in the same building as Perriand, and we said hello every morning for 15 years, though we didn't know each other," Mr. Laffanour said. "Some 25 years later, when I opened the gallery, she came in and said, 'Oh, it's you.' Honestly, she didn't love seeing her things sold as antiques."

Ms. Duval has a remarkable pair of modern oak chairs created in 1928 by the practically unknown American designer, Eyre de Lanux.

Patrick Seguin, who concentrates on Le Corbusier, Mr. Prouvé, Alexandre Noll, Perriand, Jean Royère and Serge Mouille, has constructed a stand inspired by a building that Corbusier had designed in India a half-century ago.

Some dealers are selling things from as late as the 1960's. Mr. Gastou, for example, has an exceptional black Plexiglas backgammon table with an ingenious mechanism, designed by Jean-Claude Farhi.

The Biennale still has the great dealers of superb 18th- and 19th-century furniture, not all of it French. Didier Aaron is showing a magnificent oak and ebony Regency games table by George Bullock. Aveline has a pair of Claude-Charles Saunier cabinets with Japanese lacquer fronts. François Léage offers an important Louis XIV Boule desk.

Ariane Dandois has a pair of William Kent benches from Rushbrook Hall and a memorable 19th-century mahogany gueridon with a pâte-de-verre, trompe l'oeil top from Italy. The gallery Perrin has a magnificent Louis XVI writing table stamped by Simon Oeben. It all adds to the fun of roaming through this fair.