



ART: DIARY OF A SOMEBODY

Rebecca Hossack - Day 3

The gallerist has a Midas touch at Lapada



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REBECCA HOSSACK

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I meet Brett, our tattooed technician, at the gallery at 8.30am to collect some pictures to take down to the Lapada Art & Antiques Fair in Berkeley Square. We need to replace the sold works on our stand, and all new pieces need to be "vetted" by the fair committee. This is an important process, carried out by a panel of accredited experts - Lapada works hard to ensure that all the works sold by its members are of the highest quality and are of assured provenance.

Walking into the fair past the tantalising displays of art-nouveau pottery, antique brass telescopes, modernist jewellery, Edward Bowden watercolours and 19th-century miniatures, we pause by a stand full of

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dark-oak furniture dominated by a massively carved Elizabethan four-poster bed (and the even more massive trunk of one of the Berkeley Square plane trees). I particularly love a medieval carving of a curious-looking camel from an old ceiling boss, and also a very simple earthenware bowl from the beginning of the 16th century. There is something very touching about the extraordinary survival – over the course of 500 years – of a mundane object that would have been in use every day.

The dealer – Paul Beedham – is on his stand already, preparing for the coming day. He shows us an imposing triangular oak chair that used to belong to Justice Popham. Sir John Popham was Lord Chief Justice at the end of the 16th century and presided over the trials of – among others – Mary, Queen of Scots, Sir Walter Raleigh and the Gunpowder Plotters. After a hard day meting out death penalties to such luminaries he would come home and settle himself in this ornately carved throne. I sit down on it (it's surprisingly comfortable) and have that delicious feeling of direct contact with the past.

The new pictures safely approved and hung on our stand. I head off to The Third Space gym in Marylebone. It is stylish, calm, not overfull with testosterone-charged men, and has a great pool. Doing an art fair takes a real physical toll on you: standing for 10 hours a day, carrying heavy pictures, drinking large quantities of champagne. The fair this year has been sponsored by Lanson, and to mark the occasion they have produced a particularly drinkable special cuvée – Lanson Père et Fils. Inevitably there is a price to pay the following morning. Nevertheless, a brisk work out at the gym can discharge the debt – and get me set up for the coming day.

Another virtue of The Third Space gym is that it is next door to the delightful Marylebone Hotel. I nip into its restaurant – the 108 Bar – for breakfast: a modish green juice involving carrots, ginger and, of course,

kale; then two poached eggs and some gluten-free toast, which is particularly good.

When I arrive back at the fair, Georgia is showing a woman our display of aboriginal paintings. They all come from the Central Desert, where the aboriginal painting movement began in the early 1970s. She is fascinated by the strength and subtlety of the apparently abstract designs, and amazed when I explain how the images also contain a mass of specific information about the land. She decides to buy the whole installation – a very good start to the day.

In the evening there is another reception at the fair – a charity gala in aid of the National Osteoporosis Society, with a dinner afterwards at the on-site pop-up restaurant and an auction overseen by the incomparable Henry Wyndham of Sotheby's. It is a very jolly event, carried along on a rippling tide of *Lanson Père et Fils*. There is an assured elegance about Lapoda's setting that raises the occasion – as it raises the whole fair – out of the ordinary.

At dinner I find myself at a table with two Qatari sisters decked in sumptuous gold-embroidered Mack robes. Sara, the older sister, is a fashion designer – and, it turns out, the creator of the wonderful outfits. I feel a strong need to have a gold-embroidered cape of my own.

Once again it is after midnight when the party breaks up. As I am heading out, Mr Beedham, the oak dealer, comes over to tell me that the three objects that I touched on his stand in the morning – the carved oasel, the earthenware bowl and Justice Popham's chair – had all sold during the course of the day. He thinks I may have magic powers and asks if I can come and touch a few more things before the fair starts tomorrow.

Bebecca Hossack studied at Christie's and worked at the Guggenheim in Venice before opening her first gallery on Charlotte Street in 1988. She now has two further galleries – on London's Coventry Street and on Met Street in New York. Born in Melbourne and serving at the Australian cultural attaché in London between 1993 and 1997, 3005 was the first gallery in charge to exhibit aboriginal art. The Lapoda Art & Antiques Fair takes place in Berkeley Square, London W1, from September 24 to 28 2014. www.officialhossack.com @BebeccaHossack