

# murky market

been taken, with further news to come," he says.

As well as a number of suspected fakes on the market (more in drawings than in paintings, says Wayne), complicating the field has been an epic battle between two specialists, Christian Parisot and Marc Restellini, which aired publicly for more than a decade through the 2000s.

Now the Paris-based Institut Restellini has announced that it will publish a catalogue raisonné for paintings at the end of this year, with drawings to follow. The institute was founded by Restellini, an art historian who since 1997 had been working under the auspices of, and financed by, the Wildenstein Institute, on a Modigliani catalogue. That relationship came to an end in 2015.

His catalogue raisonné will be online only, with paid access. According to the researcher Marie-Christine Decroocq, the new catalogue will have around 100 more works than the 337 in Ceroni. No more details are currently available.

Decroocq said that the publication is being financed by fees charged by Restellini for his expertise and for issuing certificates of authenticity. The research is being carried out in collaboration with the Fine Arts Expert Institute, a body based in the Geneva freeport that belongs to the Swiss art shipping and storage "king" Yves Bouvier.

How much validity will the market give to the new online publication? An auction house specialist says: "We will have to wait and see exactly what the catalogue consists of before judging it." *Georgina Adam*

## SELF-PORTRAIT OR CHOCOLATIER?

Claims by the billionaire art dealer David Nahmad that Seated Man with a Cane (1918), the Modigliani painting at the centre of a restitution case, is a self-portrait have been strongly rebuffed by Mondex, the company trying to retrieve the work on behalf of Philippe Maestracci, the grandson of the Jewish gallery owner Oscar Stettiner. In an article in the New York Times on 12 June, Nahmad says a 1947 court document from a French bailiff refers to the painting as "a picture representing the painter Modigliani painted by himself". But a spokesman for Mondex says the bailiff "made an error" and that the painting is the same one seized from Stettiner; he says that a letter, filed in a New York court on 25 May and written by Eve Livengood, a descendant of Jean Van Der Klip, who bought the work in 1944, says that the painting remained in the family's possession until it was sold at Christie's in 1996. Mondex's spokesman also notes that research by the Modigliani specialist Marc Restellini concludes that the sitter is Georges Menier, a French chocolatier. Nahmad's lawyer declined to comment. *A.S.*



Modigliani's Seated Man with a Cane (1918)

## London and New York exhibitions ring the changes over four millennia

The Medieval specialist dealer, Les Enluminures, has put together a show of 45 finger rings that span four continents, from the Bronze Age to the present. Rings Around the World opens at Sam Fogg's gallery in London (2-11 November) before traveling to the Les Enluminures space in New York (17 November-2 December).

The exhibition will show the "universality of rings... how certain ideas and forms occurred across cultures and through time," writes Sandra Hindman, who founded Les Enluminures and co-authored the exhibition catalogue with the jewellery historian Beatriz Chadour-Sampson.

For the show, English Renaissance-era rings with religious inscriptions will be on a par with a jade Chinese philosopher's ring (17th century) that is carved with the message 'quit alcohol'. An ancient Egyptian ring (around sixth-first century BC) that depicts a cat and her kittens shows the enduring theme of jewellery as a talisman; the animal was thought to guard pregnant women.

The rings come from collectors that are well-known in this field, such as the New York-based diamond dealer Benjamin Zucker. They range in price from \$8,500 to \$150,000. One ring, by the Chinese contemporary designer Wallace Chan, is not for sale. *G.A.*



The show includes a 17th-century ring from China and an Ancient Egyptian ring featuring a cat and her kittens

## Sotheby's moves Middle East auctions to London

Sotheby's is to stage its next auction of Middle Eastern art in London in October, rather than return to the Gulf, the auction house has confirmed. It ran sales in Doha between 2013 and 2015, but turned in stronger sales in London in April. These included the £600,000 hammer price (£725,000 including buyer's premium) achieved for Mahmoud Mokhtar's *Au Bord du Nil* (1920s), the highest price ever for a work of Arab sculpture, and the highly successful single-owner sale from the collection of the Iranian artist and curator, Fereydoon Ave.

Sotheby's will keep its Doha presence and is adding a Dubai office, says its Middle East specialist Ashkan Baghestani. But London opens the market to a broader collector base, he says, in particular to institutions with dedicated Middle East curators. Sotheby's sale of 20th-century art from the Middle East is on 17 October. *T.C.*

Mahmoud Mokhtar's *Au Bord du Nil* (1920s) sold for £725,000 at Sotheby's



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