



Hedge funder's French connection

Museum of ancient & modern to open

MOUGINS. A UK entrepreneur who set up the world's largest commodity hedge fund will open a museum for his vast antiquities collection in the south of France this month (10 June). Christian Levett, who founded the London-based hedge fund Clive Capital in 2007, will show around 700 ancient works in his Museum of Classical Art in Mougins (MMA), a village between Cannes and Grasse. "Buying a building for my collection was prohibitive in London because of the expense," he said. Instead, he has converted a four-floor, 550 sq. m medieval house into a museum. "The cost of buying the main building, plus an office building, and fitting them out was less than €7m," said Levett, who owns two restaurants in the area.

The museum's Egyptian gallery houses material that "represents the complete span of Egyptology, from the Old Kingdom (2686 BC-2181 BC) to the Ptolemaic period (332-330 BC)", notes the museum website while the Greek gallery will house works such as an Apulian red-figure hydria (around 370 BC). Mark Merrony, the editor-in-chief of *Minerva*, *The International Review of Ancient Art & Archaeology*, is the director of the new institution. A target of 20,000 visitors and an admission fee of €15 have been set for the first year.

Levett is not just an antiquities buyer. He is interspersing ancient works, such as a first or second-century bronze statue of Aphrodite (below), with 100 classically inspired pieces by artists such as Marc Chagall, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Henry Moore, Giorgio de Chirico, Marc Quinn and Antony Gormley, tapping into a trend for showing antiquities alongside modern and contemporary art.

"My antiquities were mounting up in storage," says Levett. "The first items that I bought were an ancient Greek battle helmet, and an Egyptian cartonnage mask, both for about £6,000. It blew my mind that I could buy ancient art at that price." His latest purchase is the Crowe Hall urn, which sold for £445,250 at Christie's London in December to a European dealer. Levett bought the first-century piece at the Tefaf Maastricht fair for "considerably less than €1m". ■

Gareth Harris

