



STUART LOCHHEAD
SCULPTURE

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture to exhibit rare Roman Vase owned by Emperor Nero and Four Masterpieces of French Renaissance Sculpture at TEFAF Maastricht in 2026

TEFAF Maastricht, 12th – 20th March 2026 – Stand 108

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture has announced the display of two major works for the 2026 edition of TEFAF Maastricht: a **rare Roman vase** commissioned by **Emperor Nero** (37-69 AD) for his Roman palace, and a **set of four architectural Terms from the French Renaissance**, executed for the **Château d’Oiron**.

Nero’s vase was discovered around 1721 in the so-called ‘Baths of Augustus’, a misnomer used to describe the ***Nymphaeum*** of the emperor’s *Domus Transitoria*, a sumptuous residence linking the Palatine Hill to the Esquiline, later expanded into the legendary *Domus Aurea* following the fire of Rome in 64 AD. The *Nymphaeum* was the most lavish room in the palace, richly adorned with exotic marbles, frescoes, sculptural ornament and elaborate water features. Its discovery marked a turning point in the history of antiquarianism in the eighteenth century.

Carved from a single, monumental block of Egyptian granite, the vase stands as a testament to the extraordinary skill of artisans working in Alexandria, and to the reach of Rome’s imperial power. Quarried in the southern region of Aswan, this granite was prized in antiquity for its durability and ranked among the most prestigious stones available to Roman patrons. Its extraction, transport along the Nile, carving, and shipment across the Mediterranean required a complex logistical network under imperial control.

Nero’s vase was acquired shortly thereafter by the British Grand Tourist William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, for Parkstead House, famed for its collection of antiquities. It was subsequently purchased by Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle, at Bessborough’s posthumous sale in 1801, and remained at Castle Howard for over two centuries. Remarkably, it is offered on the market for only the second time in nearly two millennia.

The **four, life-size terracotta Terms** once formed part of the exterior decoration of the Château d’Oiron, widely celebrated as a ‘*petit Fontainebleau*’ and a masterpiece of French Renaissance art and architecture.

Expanded at the turn of the century by **Claude Gouffier** (1501–1570), Grand Maître and close confidant of King François I, Oiron was conceived as a statement of erudition, power, and artistic innovation. Gouffier drew heavily on Italian models circulating at Fontainebleau and the antique revival fostered at the French court. The sculptures' distinctive style is unmistakably linked to the Italianate culture of Fontainebleau inspired by François I.

Originally set within niches on the north façade of the château's Great Gallery, the Terms represent different deities, such as Bacchus, Venus, Mars, and Faunus, and formed part of an *all'antica* decorative programme that included marble medallion portraits of Roman emperors. **Of the ten original sculptures, only the present four survive today, together with a fifth now in the Louvre.** They were acquired by John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1906), inherited by his son, and placed on temporary loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in the early twentieth century.

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture is renowned for presenting exceptional works that captivate world-class museums and has a history of significant museum sales at TEFAF Maastricht. Notable successes include a bust by François Girardon acquired by the Château de Versailles (2020), a French Renaissance *Madonna and Child* sold to the Kimbell Art Museum (2022), and a rare terracotta relief by Massimiliano Soldani purchased by the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts (2023). In 2024, a rare cast of *Striding Mars* by Giambologna was acquired by the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

Notes to Editors

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