



Venus, 500–200 BC
Chupícuaro culture, Michoacán,
Guanajuato state, Mexico
Polychrome ceramic, ht 55cm
Martin Doustar, €750,000

The necropolis of Chupícuaro contained many types of ceramic offerings, but none more spectacular than these large female figurines. While this culture is little understood, it seems reasonable to see these distinctive, hand-modelled figurines as fertility figures, given their wide hips and gently swelling bellies, and the bold step-fret patterns of their painted and highly burnished surfaces as an echo of body paint. Newcomer Martin Doustar is exhibiting this second-largest known example of the type in TEFAF's 'Showcase' section.



Merli Futuristi (Futurist Blackbirds), c. 1924
Giacomo Balla (1871–1958)
Oil on canvas, 66 × 146cm
Botteganica, price on application

Balla's visualisation of the sounds of city life is well known but in the 1920s he turned to the countryside and landscape. In this blackbird's song he composes a harmony of sound, rhythm and complementary colour; he used the same composition again to experiment with different colour combinations.



Offrande du Soir, 1960
Alfred Manessier (1911–93)
Oil on canvas, 300 × 150cm
Applicat-Prazan, €260,000

Demoralised by the war and the occupation of France, Manessier left for a three-day retreat in a Trappist monastery in 1943 and experienced a religious awakening. He also 'felt profoundly the cosmic link between sacred chanting and the world of nature'. A visit to Provence in 1958, where he was fascinated by the appearance and movement of the river Verdon, led him to incorporate abstractions of the Provençal landscape into his mystical works. The result was an intensity of colour and a technique of painting in which slabs of luminous pigment resemble mosaics or stained glass – a medium he also worked in. The themes of the Passion and the Resurrection recur in these paintings, often entitled 'offerings' or 'litanies'. In 1962, this canvas was among the large-format works in the French pavilion of the Venice Biennale, which won him the Grand Prix for Painting – his friend Giacometti won the sculpture prize.