THE FINANCIAL TIMES
ONLINE/DAILY
29 OCTOBER

The Art Market Collecting

The art market enters its 'safety first' era

The last fortnight of fairs and auctions prove collectors are willing to spend — but paintings of fairytale forests and old-school photography suggest experimentalism is out

Melanie Gerlis

Madge Gill 'Untitled' (1954), Gallery of Everything © Courtesy of the Gallery of Everything

Outsider art

Art from outside the traditional canon is about as experimental as the current market allows, notably through self-taught and indigenous artists. At Frieze Masters, the Gallery of Everything sold out its works by Madge Gill, including a work each to London's Tate Collection and National Portrait Gallery. The self-taught artist (1882-1961), who featured in the recent Grayson Perry exhibition at the Wallace Collection, comes with a compelling back story. Born Maude Ethel Eades, Gill had a miserable childhood and later turned to drawing while believing she was possessed by a spirit guide. The resulting works, mostly made in ink on card (though there are textiles too), are intricate, obsessive and heavily decorated — often self-portraits in her spirit guide's name of Myrninerest — expressing "belief coming out of a brush", says gallery owner James Brett. Such spirituality has latterly been left out of the narratives of revived artists, he says, but is now finding an audience. "In the machine age, there is a thirst for connection," Brett says.