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The Best of the Best 2003: Art Galleries - David Tunick

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A few years ago, Peter Galassi, head of the photography department at New York's Museum of Modern Art, decided to deaccession a number of photographs by French photographer Eugène Atget. The time seemed right to sell 1,000 duplicates that were in the museum's collection and use the anticipated \$20 million in revenue for new acquisitions. After some deliberation, Galassi asked David Tunick to handle the sale.

At first glance, it was a surprising choice, as Tunick's 37-year-old eponymous Manhattan-based gallery deals in drawings and prints that were created from the 15th through the mid-20th centuries. Galassi told *Antiques* and the *Arts Weekly* that he was swayed by Tunick's "solid reputation for straight dealing and fairness." A symbol of this reputation was apparent in March at Tunick's TEFAF Maastricht booth, where he provided a laminated, letter-size sheet of stationery that listed prices for every item on display, from Atget photos to Rembrandt etchings to Toulouse-Lautrec color prints. "I don't think prices need to be hidden," explains Tunick. "I never liked the bazaar aspect of the art market. I swore I would never be like that."

Openness clearly has its rewards. By the second day of the fair, the laminated sheet was decorated with several red dots, each marking an item that had been sold.

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