



**Barcelona
Symposium 2020.**

**TALKING
GALLERIES**

THE THINK TANK FOR GALLERIES

TALKING GALLERIES 08

Talking Galleries is the first international think tank dedicated to generating debate and knowledge in the field of art galleries and the art market. Since its foundation in 2011, it has provided a space for reflection that the art market was lacking. It has grown into an established platform for industry professionals, encouraging its professionalisation.

This book collects the key talks and panels that made up the programme of the 2020 edition of the Barcelona Symposium, the flagship event of this ever-evolving think tank for galleries. From 20th to 21st January 2020, the in-person two-day conference brought together leading experts and a diverse audience of art market professionals in a specialised context for exploring the peculiarities of “gallerism” at large.

This book was edited throughout 2020, when the world came to a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In light of this global crisis, the symposium offered a good picture of the art industry in a pre-pandemic era, reflecting at the same time many of the shared concerns that later became priorities. The topics discussed in Barcelona—such as the market for Millennials, the state of online sales, new approaches to gallery management or environmental sustainability—have become pressing issues to the art world’s agenda: the acceleration of digitization, the climate urgency and collaborative initiatives, among others.

While the pandemic propelled galleries and art market professionals to rethink and adapt to challenging times, I hope this publication will offer a valuable contribution for a better understanding of the art market ecosystem, then and now.

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Director



Georgina Adam
Joost Bosland
Matt Carey-Williams
Carolina Ciuti
Haro Cumbusyan
Mai Eldib
Till Fellrath
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Melanie Gerlis
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Claudia Schachenmann
Kenny Schachter
Tim Schneider
Allan Schwartzman
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Barcelona Symposium 2020
8th Edition

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Sessions

Alexander Forbes

serves as Director of Corporate Development & Market Intelligence at Artsy. He works cross-functionally across the Artsy organization to advise on company strategy and key internal initiatives. Previously, he was the Executive Editor of Artsy Editorial, which he grew to become the most-read art publication online.

Joe Kennedy

is the co-founder of Unit London. Using new technologies and pioneering approaches to digital media, the gallery is recognised for diversifying and expanding contemporary art audiences and has successfully launched and advanced the careers of numerous important contemporary artists. Kennedy is a young patron of institutions including Tate, V&A Museum and the Royal Academy and sits on Serpentine's Future Contemporaries committee.

Kamiar Maleki

is Director of Volta and Pulse Art Fairs. A London-based collector and curator with over 15 years of experience in the contemporary art world in collecting and patronage, Maleki has developed a significant interest in emerging artists, fostering numerous young artists' careers from an early stage. From 2016 to 2018 Maleki served as Director of Contemporary Istanbul.

Claudia Schachenmann

is the founder of BureauxSchachenmann, a Zurich-based agency that works in strategic projects around new developments in the global art world including the commercialization and popularization of art via physical and virtual art-hubs, real-estate related art spaces, and much more. Through her career, Schachenmann gained various experiences with different art market players. At Art Basel she was part of the New Initiatives and VIP team where she launched the "Global Patrons Council" and the first Art Basel young/emerging collectors' programme "NEXT".

Tim Schneider

is the Art Business Editor for Artnet News and the writer behind the Gray Market, the conversation-starting industry-analysis column. His work combines nearly a decade of firsthand experience in the gallery sector with insights gleaned from research into economics, technology, data analysis, and related subjects. In 2017 he released his first book, *The Great Reframing: How Technology Will—and Won't—Change the Gallery System Forever*.

Young Money: Understanding Millennial Collectors

SPEAKERS

**Alexander Forbes, Joe Kennedy, Kamiar
Maleki & Claudia Schachenmann**

MODERATOR

Tim Schneider



Young Money: Understanding Millennial Collectors

Tim Schneider (T.S.): Everybody, good morning, thanks for getting up early and being here with us. Before we move into the discussion phase, I just want to kind of set things up a little bit. So obviously, one of the major challenges that's facing our dealers right now is this question of how we connect with new buyers and who are those new buyers. I would argue that the most important demographic that they could possibly try to access is young people, which now means millennials and soon after them, Generation Z. So, what are we talking about when we talk about millennials? The definitions shift a little bit, but in general, it's people who were born between about 1980 and 1996. That means that this year they will all be somewhere between about 24 and 40 years old. Another important thing to think about here is that millennials are the last generation where some of them at least grew up without the Internet saturating every single aspect of our daily lives. When they come up, Generation Z won't have known any other type of world besides the one that we now live in.

**“WE SHOULDN'T ASSUME THAT
MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z ARE GOING TO
AUTOMATICALLY BECOME COLLECTORS
JUST BECAUSE THEIR PARENTS OR
GRANDPARENTS WERE.”**

One important thing about these two groups is that over the course of the next ten years, economists estimate that they are going to receive a good chunk of somewhere between \$15 and \$68 trillion in assets that are going to be passed down by the baby boomers. Baby boomers, for reference, people who were born between 1946, right after World War II, and 1964, which means that they will be between 56 and 74 years old this year. Some of those assets they're going to be handing down are artworks, but a lot of them are not. And those other assets can certainly be used to buy a lot more artworks.

Now, the important point here is that we shouldn't assume that millennials and Gen Z are going to automatically become collectors just because their parents were or their grandparents were. This is especially important to think about because millennials and Gen Z have become increasingly vocal about how sharply they disagree with older generations, specifically the baby boomers on a whole variety of different ways that they have chosen to live their lives. Nothing embodies this better than the phrase. "Ok, boomer."

"OK, boomer", as some of you probably know, is an online meme that has basically taken over the world over the course of the past six months or so. It's basically a comeback that the younger generation, specifically millennials and Gen Z, have had towards baby boomers who have taken up this trend of just launching into these tirades about the way that young people live their lives and how it's all wrong. "Ok, boomer" is a response to any kind of this criticism; but it's not just a way of saying your criticism doesn't apply to the world I live in, it's a way of saying that your criticism doesn't apply to the world I live in specifically because your generation screwed things up so badly for us.



So, if you want to criticise millennials for, say, not having better jobs or bigger bank accounts, they'll say, "Ok, boomer", back to you. And it will mean we don't have those things because boomers blew up the economy in 2008 when we were trying to enter the workforce and now we're behind for a generation. If you want to criticise a millennial for, say, extending a business trip because they want to take a low emissions train instead of flying somewhere, they'll hit you with an "Ok, boomer". And that means I want to do these things because your willingness to take planes and burn fossil fuels at every conceivable opportunity is now subjecting millions of people around the world to

catastrophic climate change. And by the way, the boomer legislators don't even want to acknowledge it, let alone try to change it.

I'm giving you all this background, because I think that we've now reached the "boomer" moment in the art market. The reality is that many young people are as turned off by boomer-implemented and boomer-sustained policies about the way that art is supposed to be bought and sold as they are about boomer-implemented and boomer-sustained policies about everything from the economy to the environment to politics and much more. In short, this is not going to be a problem that we're going to fix just by galleries going out and starting Instagram accounts. Instead, it demands we take a hard, hard look at every single way that we have thought about how the business works. We have to ask ourselves whether these things are doing more to bring young people in today or keep them out forever. And that is what we are going to investigate today with these four brilliant panellists and millennials who happen to be over here to my left.

**"MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z HAVE
BECOME INCREASINGLY VOCAL ABOUT
HOW SHARPLY THEY DISAGREE WITH
OLDER GENERATIONS."**

Alexander Forbes, immediately to my left, is the director of corporate development and market intelligence at Artsy, where he works across the organisation to advise on company strategy, develop key internal initiatives and grow the company through partnerships and acquisitions. Previously, he was the executive editor of Artsy Editorial and earlier the European market editor for Artnet News in Berlin and bureau chief for Louise Blouin Media in German speaking Europe.

To Alex's left is Joe Kennedy. Joe is an entrepreneur and co-founder of the gallery Unit London, which uses new technologies and pioneering approaches to digital media to expand the audience for contemporary art. He's a young patron of Tate, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts. He also sits on the Serpentine's Future Contemporaries Committee and was recently named co-chair of MTV's Re-Define program, as well as one of Forbes' 30 under 30 entrepreneurs.

Claudia Schachenmann, to Joe's left, is an art strategy consultant and the founder of BureauxSchachenmann, a Zurich-based agency that advises on real estate-related art spaces, physical and virtual art hubs and much more. She previously

worked as a key part of Art Basel's New Initiatives and VIP team, where she launched the fair's Global Patron' Council and the NEXT programme for young and emerging collectors in Basel, Miami Beach and Hong Kong.

And last but certainly not least, Kamiar Maleki is the director of the Volta and Pulse Art Fairs. From 2016 to 2018, he served as director of Contemporary Istanbul Fair. With over fifteen years as a collector, curator and patron of contemporary art, he has fostered numerous young artists' careers. He is also the co-founder of the Aga Khan Museum's UK Patrons' Chapter and the founder of ICA Young Patrons for the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

When I started working in the gallery world back in 2005, I was a front-desk assistant. And one of the first official things that my boss told me was that my job was to, and I quote, "Intake maximum information and give out minimum information." And obviously, this is a textbook example of the way that the gallery world is supposed to run on exclusivity and elitism. That's how you create value in artworks and make people want to buy things. How does this go over with a millennial audience? Joe, I'm going to start with you because I think you feel particularly strongly about this.

"THE GALLERY WORLD IS SUPPOSED TO RUN ON EXCLUSIVITY AND ELITISM. HOW DOES THIS GO OVER WITH A MILLENNIAL AUDIENCE?"

Joe Kennedy (J.K.): Thanks, that's an amazing introduction. I think how we approach that scenario is basically doing the opposite. We started our gallery six years ago, probably unwittingly knowing that transparency was going to be a really important thing. We started our gallery when we were 22. I come from this new generation, We know that if somebody comes into our gallery and is taking time out of their day to walk in, we have to offer them value back. And so, to assume that people walking in should just be left alone, shouldn't be engaged with, shouldn't be treated with kind of a level of courtesy and engagement, we think that's just not the way to engage new people.

This is a generation, obviously, which is now the largest consumer generation that's ever existed on the planet. It's also the most racially diverse, ethnically diverse, the most engaged generation. They have more access to information and art than ever before. And obviously, the power of this generation is huge. It can have a huge transformative effect on the perception of the art world and

the perception of the culture around contemporary art in the future. But I think they also have grown up being told that they can have whatever they want, whenever they want, which is interesting.

The "OK, boomer" meme is a great example of that. There are all these comments about this generation being entitled and lazy and self-obsessed, and it all being fuelled by social media, the selfie culture and the meme culture. But actually, if you look at how society has structured itself around this generation, they're being told that whatever they want, they can have. They can watch movies on demand. They can order food and it's there within five minutes. Brands and companies are constantly optimising their products based on the behaviours and preferences of that generation specifically. So, it's almost like we've created a monster, in a way, with this generation. They are entitled for good reason. But as a gallerist and as professionals and custodians of culture, I think we need to understand how we get these people involved in our industry. And the way of doing that is by engaging them, by offering them value.

"AS A GALLERIST AND AS CUSTODIANS OF CULTURE, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE GET THESE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN OUR INDUSTRY: THAT IS BY ENGAGING THEM, BY OFFERING THEM VALUE."

That value can be as simple as when they walk into the space, giving them a smile, being out of the way with how much you go and engage them and educate them. If you walk into any big retail store or if you walk into pretty much anywhere on the high street, you'll never encounter a situation where there's two people sitting behind a desk in armchairs who don't get up when you walk in. I think it's almost as simple as that. We've always practiced this: if somebody walks in, we get up off our seat and say hello and walk round the space with them, if they want to. We give them an education and understanding. These people are distrusting of big corporations. They've gone through the global financial crash. They've gone through data scandals with Facebook. Trump's impeachment inquiry is happening at the moment. All these things they have lived through have generated this real corporate distrust. As a result, people are buying more independent brands. People are looking for alternatives to corporations. And if they do buy from organisations, and if they do engage with organisations, they want to do so with organisations that look after their staff, that support unrepresented artists, that behave ethically and that are

transparent and open with their pricing, the way they go about marketing their products and their services. When they come in, to offer them value means that they will engage with you.

Engagement is the most important thing for this audience. If I walk into a gallery, in most cases I will just be ignored because I don't fit the profile of a typical collector: I'm young, maybe I don't dress like a collector. However, I might have a million followers on my social networks and one hundred thousand of those people might be very engaged in art. One hundred of those people might be collectors. If I leave with a bad experience, it's not only that I haven't purchased something there and then, but the gallery has missed the opportunity to build credibility amongst my network, which can also have a huge future impact on sales and revenue for the gallery, which is almost unquantifiable these days. I know you can probably quantify it, but that exchange of value, I think is really important. It would be great to discuss today what that value is that galleries, auction houses, fairs can give to this generation so that they feel part of the conversation.

**“WHAT VALUE CAN GALLERIES,
AUCTION HOUSES, FAIRS GIVE TO THIS
GENERATION SO THAT THEY FEEL PART
OF THE CONVERSATION?”**

T.S. That creates a natural cycle. Alex, do you want to talk about some of the things that you found out through studying the collecting population? Do these articles of faith we've lived with about building value through exclusivity actually show up when you survey people at Artsy?

Alexander Forbes (A.F.): They do. We surveyed our collectors over the summer, and I think one of the important things to acknowledge is that also the exclusivity that has been built up does work on some level for the Gen X and boomer collectors. It is something that is motivating. But when you switch and look towards millennials and Gen Z folks, it falls apart really quickly. We find that people really expect to have all the information that they would need to make a purchasing decision available before they ask any questions. So that could be information about the artist but also particularly prices. It's a common practice in the art world today not to list prices publicly online, but we find that artworks that are uploaded with their prices public are between two and six times more likely to sell. That's particularly the case for artists who have less inherent demand. Information asymmetries like that tend to

hit artists that aren't your Kusamas and Warhols, where somebody already knows the name brand and is looking for them, particularly if you have a kind of newer programme that can be a way to reach younger collectors that you wouldn't otherwise.

I also think that the Internet offers a really interesting opportunity. It's amazing if you can walk into a gallery and have that interaction with the dealer and get the story about the artist. It's amazing if you're a really established collector in the art world and you have that key that unlocks all of the great information about artists and their stories. For most people, that isn't the case. But the Internet allows you to scale up that storytelling. You can have the same level of introduction to an artist's career as you would if you were a MoMA trustee and had \$100 million in a duffel bag walking into a gallery. We still do hear from people that they want to hold back that information to initiate a conversation, but when we talk to the collectors who we surveyed in greater depth, they said, more frequently than not, they just won't inquire if the information isn't there already. They move on to something else: there's so much great art out there.

T.S. Yeah. And I would imagine that the people who are seeing that there's not a price listed and going away are not just doing so because they don't know the price. The fact that they're not showing the price also tells them something deeper about the way they are going to be treated if they go to that organisation.

**“ARTWORKS THAT ARE UPLOADED WITH
THEIR PRICES PUBLIC ARE BETWEEN TWO
AND SIX TIMES MORE LIKELY TO SELL.”**

A.F. Absolutely. We hear that. It makes them wonder whether there is something shady going on, or whether they are going to get a different price than somebody else that asks. They also fear there might be some value judgment against them if they ask for a price and cannot afford it or that the gallery will stop caring about them. So, it just sets the wrong tone. And it's such an easy thing to fix. I think there's this notion that it devalues the art. Ultimately, if the gallerist wants to make sales, grow the artist's career, offer more opportunities for them to keep the lights on and keep building more ambitious projects, it's a really easy thing to do.

T.S. Claudia, can you talk a little bit about what it was like to start the NEXT programme at Basel? Since you were spearheading this, I imagine the

organisation just wasn't thinking about it as deeply as you were, and you were really somebody who was passionate and insisted on paying attention to this generation, as they may want to do things very differently than what is expected.

Claudia Schachenmann (C.S.): First of all, I'm not a spokesperson for Art Basel. But of course, I had this experience and it's about approximately seven years ago, which is quite a long time. Art Basel at that time was already thinking about how to approach new collectors as well as existing collectors. We had these two basic initiatives. "Global Patrons Council", for the mega-collectors of this world. At the same time, we had the NEXT, which were the emerging collectors. We were basically this department, which was kind of an appendix to Art Basel, a task force to provide the galleries with new collectors, which I think is the responsibility of an art fair to bring good collectors to the fair eventually.

**“IT’S REALLY ABOUT NOT ONLY BUYING
ART OR IT’S MORE ABOUT EXPERIENCING
ART AND THE WHOLE SOCIAL SCENE
AROUND IT.”**

We did a lot of research. We also started to create these focus groups where I met Kamiar, who at that time was an emerging collector. Then we started these Art Basel tours in Hong Kong, in Miami and Basel. It was quite interesting to actually see how unmotivated the galleries were to participate. The response was really slow. It felt like we had to explain to them that this is a new, interested generation of young corporate people who are affluent and want to come into the art market. You can't focus on the one or two per cent on the top. There is a bottom 99 per cent who are actually very interested. What I also observed is that, in my environment, these people are mostly entrepreneurs themselves.

Attention is a currency for them. They spend their time, they want to come into the gallery and find some works, for example. But they also want to have a very social moment. They want to engage with other people. They want to be entertained, if I may say that like that. But it's really about not only buying art or it's more about experiencing art and the whole social scene around it, to get to know new people, to make it happen. I think art is a really event-driven business, so we can make much more of that part. I think that was the key finding. And also, as I said, the not being ready for that audience from the gallery side.

T.S. And speaking of the event side of the business, Kamiar, can you talk about it a little bit from the art fair director's perspective, because obviously you're dealing with dozens of galleries and I'm sure that there are very few of them who are as willing to embrace new people and do things differently. Not everybody is going to be Joe about this kind of thing. So, can you talk about that process?

Kamiar Maleki (K.M.): For me, it's also a unique position that I'm in because I come from the collector's side. I've previously been a young collector myself, when this whole thing started, so we look at it from a very different standpoint, and I actually use Claudia's young initiative for Basel patrons as an example of this whole boomer generation.

**“IT’S ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY, ABOUT
INCLUSIVENESS. IT’S ABOUT BEING
PART OF IT.”**

I feel it's about accessibility, about inclusiveness. It's about being part of it. Some of the biggest fears that young collectors have these days of going into a fair is not being taken seriously. Someone—a famous singer, a rapper, an AI guy or an app guy—will walk in, maybe just like you said, in jogging pants and shirt, and serious galleries won't take them seriously even though they have the money and the knowledge. Knowledge is a key part of something that I try to put out there, educate without patronising, trying to include in community spirit.

This is what we tried to do also in Miami this year for Pulse. We were very engaging on a local basis. We were looking at young corporations. We did launches for Twitter. They had 35 people attend launches at our fairs and the CEO of Twitter ended up buying something. We did things for the Burger King Foundation, just engaging people and making them feel welcome. One of the reasons why I joined Claudia's initiative was that they don't take you that seriously if you're a young collector. Your parents might be big collectors, but you also want to be a collector, and you want to have the same kind of respect that galleries give your elders, and you don't get that. But also, in this day and age, you have so much choice. There are so many galleries out there. There are so many art fairs out there. You have to be different. You have to create personalised programmes. You have to make everybody feel special and welcome.

T.S. Out of curiosity, when you were laying out the plan for what you wanted to do, did you get any pushback from the galleries, when you said you were going to have this launch for the Burger King Foundation?

K.M. Yeah, because, first of all, they might not take it seriously and Burger King Foundation is actually huge. When I first started, I was also a bit sceptical myself. But as a fair, you try to associate yourself with brands, with people. There are different brands that constantly approach me now saying they want to get into the art world because they realise that there's a huge network that can be made in the art world. But it's the same for us. We have to look outside now. We have to look at the fashion world. Look at what Alex Israel is doing with Rimowa. Look at what everybody is working on these days. You see how all of these different worlds are interlinking. Why have Untitled and FOG started in San Francisco? It's not by coincidence that they're all there now. It's because they see that the young money is in those kinds of places. So, you have to adapt; you have to change. The problem with the art market is that it's more of an older beast that is used to the top 5 per cent of collectors; they're used to the ways we've been dealing in the past. Embracing change is challenging, but also necessary to adapt and to win. Otherwise, there are many fairs that don't make it.

“THE PROBLEM WITH THE ART MARKET IS THAT IT’S MORE OF AN OLDER BEAST THAT IS USED TO THE TOP 5 PER CENT OF COLLECTORS.”

T.S. Yeah. This is getting a little bit into the talk about this later today. But one of my all-time favourite quotes from the world of professional sports is from a coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers in the NFL. And he said that if you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less. This idea of education is obviously something that has come up now already in the conversation so far. The old school way of looking at this is that, when dealing with new collectors, the dealer decides it's their job to educate them about what's good, what taste is, what they should be paying attention to and all those kinds of things. When that started, the information environment was drastically different than what it is now. Now we're just saturated with info and choices and all these kinds of things. How do you think that changes the relationship between a new collector who's coming in and a dealer who's trying to figure out a way to engage them?

J.K. I think one of the big misconceptions of this generation is that they don't know what they're talking about and that they're not informed. These people know their stuff more than you would believe. They have access to limitless information. Most of these young collectors coming into galleries and fairs have done their research before they get in. So, as a dealer, gallerist, whatever, you have to be sensitive to that. You no longer have the privilege of being able to say whatever you like and this idea of transparency, again, comes back into it. You are dealing with people who have done their research and who understand what's out there. They've been following the artist or show online on Instagram. They might know what's in the studio from a studio photo the artist posted. No longer can you say the works aren't ready yet, they haven't been finished, because they've already seen them on Instagram.

“ONE OF THE BIG MISCONCEPTIONS OF THIS GENERATION IS THAT THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT AND THAT THEY'RE NOT INFORMED.”

So, it's changing the landscape a lot. And you're dealing with informed collectors who are empowered, who have information and knowledge. That has to be met, I think, with a propensity and a resolve to educate these people further and give them the experiences that they want.

I know everyone talks about the experience economy. It's becoming a bit stale. But collectors now and the younger generations want to have an experience because it's kind of a reflection of their identity and personality. They can do their research, they understand their stuff, but then they want to be able to activate that in an experience, whether it's in the gallery or fair, so they can share it with their audience. The work that they want to buy now actually needs to reflect their belief systems and values. The fact that they can do their own research means that they can delve into a company's history. They can delve into the backgrounds of artists. They understand them implicitly. I think none of them want to participate in the previous world of a small group of collectors, a small group of galleries; they want to use their information and knowledge to diversify the things that they're looking at, the things that they're buying. So, as dealers, as gallerists, I think we just have to be sensitive to that and understand who we're dealing with. We should just basically throw away that misconception about this generation not knowing what they're talking about and us knowing more than they do, because it's just not true anymore.

K.M. The education is also part of a relationship. You're trying to get on with millennials. They want to have that relationship with the gallery and they want to be friends. They want to be associated. They want to go to the events. In this day and age, with technology, they can just go to the artists directly. The loyalties are sometimes not there anymore with artists. So, if the gallery snubs you, then they'll approach the artist directly. It's about trust. It's about building relationships. It's about transparency in a way. Even though there's many applications like *Artsy*, *AbsoluteMag* and things like that that have tried to open up the art world to information, it's still frowned upon. They're still getting pushed back. Maybe now is the time where galleries should embrace that. But again, because it's still an unregulated market, there will be a fight for it. But it's about giving trust back to the clients and the collectors and the people. That's what's important.

“I THINK NONE OF THEM WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PREVIOUS WORLD OF A SMALL GROUP OF COLLECTORS, A SMALL GROUP OF GALLERIES.”

A.F. Galleries still serve such an important role in creating signal through the vast amount of art that we have exposure to. We have over a million artworks on the platform. It can be really overwhelming even if you go to an art fair and you have 200 or 300 galleries in that space. You need to find ways to get into a group of artists that you really love and foster those careers. Creating that signal is a huge part of why it's been so important for us to partner with the industry.

On the other hand, I think millennial collectors have a little bit less tolerance, as you said, for some of those other business practices that go along with that. Because they're not just interacting with a few galleries in their local community, they might be more sceptical of the idea that you have to buy a few artists that you are less excited about to get access to the artists that you're really excited about. They're probably going to then just go to the secondary market and find it on there. And so, I don't exactly have the answer of how we solve that, because I think that that practice has a real application in the primary market of helping galleries keep the lights on, helping support their artists. And that's something that we believe strongly in. Finding ways to open up some of those practices I think will be important to keep the industry moving.

C.S. I think it's also important to look at other industries, for example, sports shoes like Nike. As a Nike customer, I can create my own shoes. That's basically what we want. And we want also galleries basically to listen; actually to look at our needs and figure out a way to sell to us and not patronise us and tell us how to buy, but listen to how we want to buy and what we want to buy. Also, I think the portfolio of galleries sometimes is so pricey; millennials are, let's say, emerging collectors. They cannot possibly afford an art piece that is \$20,000. They might want to buy something for \$5,000. If I go to a gallery and only find works for \$20,000 upwards that I can't afford, why am I going there? What's the programme that I get to see at the gallery? It's also important to have some segments in a gallery, so everybody has a point of entry and not just focus on the most expensive artworks: if you want to buy it, you can buy it; if not, sorry, you're out. It's a whole conversation between the customer and the galleries, what is key at the moment to open the doors for new collectors.

“GALLERIES STILL SERVE SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CREATING SIGNAL THROUGH THE VAST AMOUNT OF ART THAT WE HAVE EXPOSURE TO.”

J.K. I think this is a really good point. Other industries that we're all exposed to now operate in such a starkly different way to the way that this industry still does. There's a level of expectancy that's created when you do have access to so much information. That's your base. That's your modus operandi and that's what you expect. Then you walk into a gallery, ask how much an artwork is and, rather than get an answer, you're asked for your email. You don't get the answers that you're used to getting. And so, there's a really stark difference there, which really turns this generation off.

A.F. It's kind of table stakes, too, as you said in the intro. I can't think of an industry that isn't customer-centric that's growing right now. And most of them that aren't are declining rapidly. I don't think that we want to be in the latter group. That wouldn't be good for culture, wouldn't be good for art. It is hugely important.

J.K. If you're running a gallery and you do want to connect with this audience that can't spend £50,000 on a painting, you should offer them, a book, a catalogue, a print; there's lots of different things that you can offer collectors. They have a great experience and they get on the ladder with you. You're missing a huge trick if the fifty people who walk into your gallery on a day-to-

day basis just leave without being spoken to. Maybe it's because we started our business completely from outside the industry, and we knew how important every single person was. We need to go back to that place where you place value in everybody, not just whether they can afford to spend £100,000 with you, but whether they can spend £50 with you, because in ten years' time, they might be that person that spends £100,000 with you. I think it's a really good point, an important consideration. Build products and services that can cater to different levels.

**“BUILD PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT
CAN CATER TO DIFFERENT LEVELS.”**

T.S. I think that it's important too, in the broader economic picture that we're talking about for these generations, to go back to the whole blow-up of the economy in 2008. If we look at all the data about who's making money, we see that the whole middle class is kind of being hollowed out right now. All the money is going to the poles. You have the top 1 per cent and 0.1 per cent sucking in all this money that used to go to family doctors, dentists, people who were young professionals, upwardly mobile, but not able to walk into the gallery and spend \$250,000 on an artwork. So, the entry point that collectors used to have just isn't there so much anymore, at least in a specific price range that there used to be. Having these lower-priced things that allows you to start a relationship ends up being an important aspect, and that's really what it's about. It's not about cheapening ourselves by just offering books for \$20. It's about how to start a relationship with people, how to start to engage them in order to build from there whilst building trust.

C.S. I would like to give another example. I lived in Hong Kong and there I was pretty much facing a very popular approach of dealing with arts. I'm sure you all know K11. It's basically a mall that offers a lot of art experiences. It starts with design, with fashion. It's all mixed. I find this a very interesting approach. A lot of millennials and even Gen Z people are totally engaged with that way of experiencing art, as well as teamLab. People might not want to buy art because we are also a little bit in the age of less. They want to experience art. They're happy to have their instant gratification by going to a teamLab experience for \$20. That's how they experience art.

We should more think about the future than the glorious past and how things were, and reinvent them instead. What I see is that there is a very linear innovation in the art world. It's never radical like we had with Uber. It's super

slow. People are taking galleries online. Great. So that's nothing new. That's just digitalisation and very normal. We are actually facing another Industrial Revolution, which is more about bringing the body together with tech. So where is the gallery world within that? I'm going beyond that a little bit, but that's actually the future we face.

**“PEOPLE MIGHT NOT WANT TO BUY ART
BECAUSE WE ARE ALSO A LITTLE BIT
IN THE AGE OF LESS. THEY WANT TO
EXPERIENCE ART.”**

K.M. Our fair business has almost become a cultural tourism business. So, it's not just about the fair; the fair is the access point of what we want to achieve. But in order to get the people around, we try to engage with the city, try to offer new experiences to the collector, like our colleagues from Brussels. They do a good job there as well. In Istanbul, we hosted parties at collectors' homes and just tried to give people experiences that they don't have. Then they can actually see what a collector lives with. They're doing a mystery night where ten collectors are hosting a dinner and you buy a ticket for it. On the night you don't know what home you're going to end up in. It's just about engaging with different collectors, trying to network without making pure business network connections. It's about cultural tourism, engaging and making people feel special, as Joe said at the beginning. I've seen many galleries where, if people are in hoodies and tracksuits and they walk in, nobody talks to them. Come on, guys! I've seen many fairs where there are collectors looking at a painting for more than two minutes and not one gallerist has gone and talked to them. It's about really making people feel special and engaged. Art is out there, but you want to engage more people and bring them in.

A.F. It's about the gallery stepping in and also changing some of the myths that artists have been told over time. You know, if you make an affordable print, it'll devalue your market and destabilise to where you're at, instead of saying, actually, it'll bring in all these new people. I think artists fundamentally want to have their work seen. Looking at some of the major galleries that have started edition programmes and had artists become really excited about the number of young people who now get to live with their work, I think it's an important model that more galleries can come to educate their artists on and break down some of the things that we've been told.

T.S. That takes us back to something that just came up a few minutes ago through the lens of K11, which is this whole idea we've been taught about the art market for all these years that art is special. It has to stay separate from all these other channels of the way that we live our lives. It shouldn't intersect with fashion, shouldn't intersect with brand. It shouldn't do any of those things because if it does, it suddenly become toxic and it devalues the artwork. There are examples of very prominent artists; Ryan McGinley, for instance, is one of the most in-demand commercial photographers in the world. But his gallery doesn't talk about it because they don't want that out there, because they're afraid it will make people look at the artwork differently. So, let's talk about this idea. Does this still hold? Or are we just miles away from that, and it's just a matter of people who have been in it for longer and have that prejudice not recognising that there is all this value that's out there specifically by mixing in all these different elements of culture? Joe, when we talked before the panel, you were talking about the remix culture aspect of the way that this generation works.

**“IF YOU KEEP ARTISTS BOXED INTO THE
CONTEMPORARY ART INDUSTRY, YOU’RE
ONLY SPEAKING TO A VERY SMALL
NUMBER OF PEOPLE.”**

J.K. Yeah, definitely. It's a remix culture. If you hold a mirror up to our society right now, it's no longer siloed industries and distinct lines between different disciplines. Everything is now melded together. Everything is integrated in the way that we live our lives. If you scroll—I don't want to keep talking about Instagram—but if you scroll through Instagram on a daily basis, you might see a family photo. Then you'll see a meal from your favourite restaurant, then a piece of art, then something in a museum or about sports or entertainment. It all comes together as part of one holistic cultural experience now. I think the value of this for us is that it offers a very clear way of us engaging a new audience, an audience who are probably feeling initially unwelcome into the industry because they're not being spoken to in the right language. Initiatives like K11—which is an amazing model for the future of bringing together design, commerce, luxury, workshops, talks, cultural programming alongside basically museum-quality exhibition space—are super interesting. It's how you've got these incredible artists permeating culture like they never did before. If you keep artists boxed into the contemporary art industry, you're only speaking to a very small number of people, really. And it's traditionally been people who can afford to collect those works over time. If you collaborate with something

which is more, let's say, mainstream, you get access to an entirely different audience. And that can be hugely powerful for us.

On whether it devalues the art, the cultural product of the art: I think for too long—the last decade at least—the narrative around our industry has been money. It's just been dominated by this idea of cash, soaring auction prices, 450 million here, 100 million there. And that's had an effect on this generation. They walk into a gallery and often expect to have a conversation about money. I think what I would love to see is in the future, in the next ten years, having this generation come through, if we welcome them into our industry properly, we can start seeing artists. The narrative around art has become more about social change, more about culture and how it's moving forward.

The likes of Daniel Arsham collaborating with Dior recently for the fashion show was a great example of an artist actually hitting a cultural zeitgeist right now. Virgil Abloh is an incredible designer who's collaborated with different artists, Gagolian and Takashi Murakami. But interestingly, he's also just done a collaboration with IKEA at the other end of the spectrum. But these artists and creatives, they're actually getting the opportunity to have their voice in the broad market. I think the more we can get artists out there into a broad culture, the better things are going to be for society at large. And so, I think it's a good thing personally. I think it's going to accelerate as things like K11 have physical proximity between art, branding and design, that physical proximity is only going to breed more integration and it will accelerate in the future, which is a good thing.

T.S. Yeah, also when people give me that trope of not wanting to devalue the work by doing these other branded collaboration products or whatever else, it really shines a light on the fact they're just not paying attention because I could log onto the Gagolian shop right now, and last time I checked, I could buy a Jean-Michel Basquiat skateboard or Jean Nouvel sneakers. If this is one of the paragons of how we are supposed to think about contemporary art, how to sell contemporary art, and it goes into doing that kind of stuff, then it seems patently ridiculous for somebody who's at a lower level to insist on the need to be taken seriously and rejecting the branding stuff.

A.F. It comes back to a kind of mythmaking around the art collector again, right? I think that it is the traditional brand of an art collector, somebody who would go to the opera and listen to classical music and all these things that are still wonderful parts of culture. But now, instead of a Mozart mass, we

have a Kanye West gospel album. I think that things have just broken down in a way where it's interesting as a millennial to have eclectic tastes that mix from different parts of the hierarchy of traditional culture, and we see that now coming into the art market and it opens up a lot more opportunity than it does close down.

C.S. But also, in addition to the brand collaboration, I think it could also be very interesting to do collaborations with corporates like the CERN and so on. So, artists really have an impact on science also because their creative process is very interesting for research, for instance. Every artist has their own way of researching, of getting to their end product. But I think it's not only interesting to look at the artwork that comes out of the process, but the whole process could be included into corporates. Creativity, I think, is key for the future, especially with automation. We can make use of that and also, as a gallery, help artists to start such collaborations.

**“IT’S INTERESTING AS A MILLENNIAL
TO HAVE ECLECTIC TASTES THAT
MIX FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE
HIERARCHY OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE,
AND WE SEE THAT NOW COMING INTO
THE ART MARKET.”**

T.S. Right. And automation is interesting because of the fact that it obviously involves technology and saying we're never going to do this stuff by hand anymore. There are machines that can help us do things more efficiently. I think that that tends to get portrayed as a danger, making the gallery soulless. Isn't that exactly the wrong way to think about it? Isn't it that if I don't have to spend as much time sending individual emails to collectors or running through my database and making sure everything is okay, I can spend more time thinking about programming, more time thinking about the artists, more time thinking about the things that we actually got into this business to do?

A.F. A thousand per cent. I think that everybody's heard the story of the grandfather that tells them that he had to walk uphill both ways to school in the freezing rain and that's what made them have discipline and learn. But it was probably more about the quality of the teachers when they got to school. I think that there's a lot of thinking that if technology enters the industry, it's going to tear apart everything that we hold dear. We tend to have a little bit of an all-or-nothing culture when it comes to these things. Technology should

ultimately empower the gallerist, the artist, everyone in the art market to spend more time doing what most of us got into this industry to do in the first place: engage with art, work with artists, work on shows; all the really important juicy stuff, the reasons why you do this and don't go into finance.

C.S. Engage with customers?

A.F. Engaging with customers, developing new relationships. Who wants to sit and put data into a spreadsheet or send out a bunch of e-mails? It can be a lot easier.

J.K. For sure. And I think there's the certain things that you can automate and optimise; it's just picking the right things, because the relationships are still so important. We send out hundreds of e-mails a day and not one of them is automated. That's really important for us. If you sign up to our mailing list, you might get an automated response welcoming you to the community. But I make sure all of our staff are always hand typing e-mails, just because that aspect of the business is so important and needs to be if you try to build a personal relationship. I feel like that part, that aspect has to be personalised. But then there's other parts of data, which is so important. We all have access to so much data now, whether it's through social media platforms, whether it's through the website and analytics. I think you'd be foolish not to use that to your advantage to understand the behaviours of your audience, understand what people are doing, how they're behaving, and then market based on those preferences and those insights. I think it's super important not to alter the cultural products; that always has to be ringfenced and protected. But the way you deliver the message can be optimised based on your learnings from your audiences.

K.M. As a fair, we do that as well. Very stringent. We have a lot of questionnaires, a lot of audience engagement within the community of people who have visited the fairs, the galleries, the collectors, also surrounding businesses. And then we collect the data, have meetings and see what we can do better for the next fair, how we can engage more, how we can attract more people to the fair, which areas we need to target. While technology gives it that aspect, it is the personal relationship and the personal touch that makes you stand out. So, it's important to go to the galleries. It's important still to get rejected, get engaged; it's part of the game.

A.F. As a kind of case study, we introduced an e-commerce functionality on Artsy at the beginning of last year, going back to what we were talking

about having all the information there for the buyer when they're ready to make the decision. It's cut down transaction times for those works from about three weeks of going back and forth, tons of emails just exchanging the basic information, to a transaction taking around three hours through e-commerce. That saves the gallery a ton of time and allows them to get back to working with their artists and the collectors that are walking to their gallery.

J.K. Am I right in saying that obviously the access to art is bigger than it ever was before? More people are engaging and looking at art, considering purchases. But the conversions are less now.

T.S. The one thing that I can say definitively is that based on the auction data that we have in artnet, if you look at what's been happening for sales worldwide, the market has been stagnant for about four or five years and peaked in 2014. That's not a good sign for business. I mean, obviously, the auction market is not the gallery market. There are all kinds of information we're capturing there. But again, for what should be a growth industry, we're not seeing that growth in some of the traditional places we would expect. That seems like a negative indicator.

**“MORE PEOPLE ARE ENGAGING AND
LOOKING AT ART, CONSIDERING
PURCHASES. BUT THE CONVERSIONS
ARE LESS NOW.”**

A.F. We're at a time of incredible economic expansion that has accrued to people that should be collecting art. But people should be buying more. They are much wealthier than they were five years ago. And they aren't. Transaction volumes are not going up and are, in fact, declining. There's something really bad going on there.

J.K. I think that's where the public pricing that you guys are introducing is basically building transparency. That drop-off of transactions will hopefully go up because conversion in our industry is awful; the amount people are engaging with work but leaving empty handed is insane. That shows us something is wrong, and we need to change something to bring those conversions up. I think that's a great way of doing it, by making the prices public straightaway, so you're not leading people on a merry dance.

A.F. And making them feel embarrassed. How many people have walked into a gallery and just had an actively bad experience and then don't want to come back again or enquired online?

T.S. Yeah, we go back to that idea that you mentioned earlier, Joe, about the network effect of your being rude, intentionally or unintentionally, to one person. All of a sudden, that person has now told everybody who follows them on Instagram or everybody who follows them on Twitter. Without realising, you've basically just created a huge roadblock for yourself stopping you from reaching all kinds of people.

**“WE HAVE A HUGE AUDIENCE
CONSTANTLY ENGAGING WITH US
ONLINE. THAT PROVIDES A LOT OF REALLY
INTERESTING, EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES
TO GET DATA CAPTURE.”**

I want to go back to something that we were talking about before, in terms of this idea of listening to your audience or working off data or whatever else. Because, Joe, when you talked here last year and, Lluçia kind of referenced that during the introduction, you got a lot of pushback from the audience about that idea specifically. And I feel like there was a miscommunication there, because you weren't saying 'what we do is we just listen to exactly what the audience is telling us and we just do exactly that'. It's more a matter of—and correct me if I'm wrong, but I feel like we're all on the same page about this—wanting to hear how people are thinking about these issues and trying to figure out what's relevant to them. And then, taking that in and making that a part of the process of how decisions are made, how to decide to engage them. It goes back to the old Henry Ford quote: “if I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses”. That's not the point. It's about saying we're taking information and then giving them back something different using all these other data points we have.

J.K. Definitely, that's exactly right. It's about understanding what your audience is doing and not just ignore what's happening. We're fortunate in that we got onto social media at the right time. We have now up to 7 million impressions a week globally on content. We have a huge audience constantly engaging with us online. That provides a lot of really interesting, exciting opportunities to get data capture, to understand what the kind of social, cultural narrative is around the content we're posting.

We have an amazing artist we showed at Frieze last year, Helen Beard, whose work is very graphic; it's sexual. It's about her as a woman taking ownership of sexual imagery and celebrating sex, celebrating her body, celebrating different body types. This goes on social media and the debate that it brings up is incredible. Some claim it isn't art, that it is porn, that it shouldn't be seen. Other people obviously back it, and you get really deep into the integrity of what art is really all about.

For us, that's what is so interesting right now: it's being able to create this community where you have an exchange of ideas on different topics, different opinions. That's what should be happening, both inside the galleries and online. We should be encouraging that debate and stimulating it, because that's where our new ideas come from. That's our job. I guess that what was miscommunicated last year is that we're not using that data to then affect the things that we're showing. If people respond better to a red painting, we're not going to ask an artist to paint more red paintings. We're actually saying that if we understand these cultural values, these opinions and these beliefs, we can use that information to then flip the narrative again and challenge people's ideas. It becomes our responsibility to constantly recalibrate what our audience is thinking and what communities are saying in the greater goal of stimulating discussion, which I think is really important.

**“PEOPLE HAVE BEEN COLLECTING DATA
SINCE DAY ONE. IT'S JUST NOW IT'S
ONLINE AND IT'S MORE QUANTIFIABLE.”**

T.S. That's the kind of thing that art dealers or good art dealers have been trying to do forever, right? To go back to my gallery career briefly, I still remember my boss telling me his job was to figure out what people want before they realised they wanted it. And now we just have a different element of information out there to help you do that process. That's not cheating. That's supposed to be the point. You're supposed to give people something that will engage them, excite them, get them interested, and eventually maybe get them to actually buy something.

J.K. I think people have been collecting data since day one. It's just now it's online and it's more quantifiable. If people are out and about on a Wednesday evening, then you keep a gallery open a bit longer on Wednesday evening; you might get some more sales. It's the same collecting, the same insights. But now we just have a much richer dataset to work with, and that brings us a lot more opportunities.

A.F. It's so much easier to work with the data too. It used to be very arduous to collect all of that and then analyse it in a way. We send out monthly analytics to art galleries that can help them act on Artsy; you look at many of the leading inventory management and CRM platforms, it is really rich kinds of analytics that they're providing. About 10 per cent of their installed base uses our online analysis tool that allows them to see, based on what they invested, whether a show, fair or whatever was a positive move for their business.

C.S. There is a lot of big data out there and we actually don't know what to do with it. I think data is only valuable if you have a strategy to follow afterwards, because I think that's key. We know we need to know how to use the data and then actually take action afterwards and not just read it and be like, “oh, great!”

K.M. Sometimes we have limitations as well. But I'm talking again from a fair perspective: you don't have extraordinary budgets to engage with what everybody wants from the fair experience, so you just pick and choose sometimes, little things, little changes to enhance experiences. This whole generation is about identity. It's about really focusing on that person and that identity.

**“THIS WHOLE GENERATION
IS ABOUT IDENTITY.”**

T.S. Claudia, on that point about it not being just about having the data, but rather about knowing what to do with it: is that something that you work with your clients on, as an art strategy consultant? Is that something that you kind of teach them?

C.S. Yeah. When I work with a client, what I always start with is an analysis. I have to look at the location, the people there; basically dig deep to figure out what the needs are, first of all. That's where it starts, because I could do the same model everywhere, which is not what I want. I want different scenarios for different locations and different types of people and consumers. That's why I think quantitative and qualitative data is very important to start projects at least, and then also add inspiration to it. But I also look at what's happening in the world, and try to find answers to that; positive solutions that have actually a positive impact. It's not simply copying what's come before.

I think that is also why it is very important to change from a micro view to a macro view to compare with other industries. In the art world, it's also a little

bit too much of an insider view. We always like look at each other, but we don't compare. We are not comparing with other industries, which is super inspiring eventually and can also create something new, which, I believe, is what can happen if you bring contradicting things together.

Going back to the brands, you can see that there is brand collaboration or cross-industry collaborations that are very important because the art world is part of the passion market or the luxury market. If we reach out to other brands like watches, champagne or cars, then we can still approach new audiences. However, it starts with analysis, and data eventually.

T.S. One last question to finish with: if each one of you could just magically and permanently correct one misconception about millennial buyers, what do you think would be the most helpful for the art market?

**“THE ART WORLD IS PART OF
THE PASSION MARKET OR THE
LUXURY MARKET.”**

K.M. It's about trying to take them seriously. They are seriously interested collectors if they're willing to take the time to visit these galleries, to come to art fairs, to come to museums, to come to shows. It shows that they're willing to take time off of their busy schedules to do it. Millennials in general have a lot of options to do a lot of different things. So, time is essential and you just make their time valuable and give them back the experiences that they want.

C.S. I think we should simply learn from them.

J.K. Short and sweet! As I said earlier, they know their stuff. Basically, they are empowered. They have information, they have knowledge. It's just being mindful of that and understanding that they're not just these teenagers on their phones taking selfies, that actually they're very, very smart and savvy collectors. They're also the biggest consumer generation on the planet. If we all want to make our industry successful in the coming twenty, thirty years, we need to engage with them.

A.F. I guess that you could continue to operate without them. I think that these generations are going to ask questions that are different than what you've heard before. That doesn't mean that they're unserious. I think they're going to ask about art as investment. They might be asking about an artwork's potential resale value because they really want to buy something that they probably

shouldn't or couldn't afford because of the economic realities that they're experiencing. That's okay, especially if it's expressing a passion in the artist's work or, yet the ability to buy something that they really love.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND QUESTIONS (C/Q) FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: I'm Aylin Seçkin from Istanbul Bilgi University. My question and my observation are the following: millennials and young collectors are more and more interested not to collect, but to share. What do you think about that? What is the role of the sharing economy in the art market?

C.S. I think they mostly want to share experiences and be part of their community. We experience art together and we talk about art. It's happening. That's the sharing economy.

Q1: Let me add what I want wanted to say. Actually, they are more interested in renting art. They don't want to pay their own money. They want to rent Mercedes. They want to rent beautiful apartments in Monaco. They don't want to buy art, but they want to live art for a while because they very quickly get bored with everything, as you know.

**“YOU HAVE TO TEACH NEW
COLLECTORS WITHOUT PATRONISING
THEM ABOUT THE INDUSTRY, AND
THAT'S WHEN THEY WILL START
COLLECTING ART.”**

K.M. Having run the Istanbul Art Fair, I can actually say this is what we were trying to do. We were trying to engage these collectors, bringing them the right access to art and the quality of art. Art can sometimes be viewed as a luxury or as an asset, and this is really an educational aspect. You have to teach new collectors without patronising them about the industry, and that's when they will start collecting art. We try to do that and did it successfully the two years that I was in Istanbul. We engaged those collectors who buy and rent boats, houses and all that to start buying art on a smaller level in the fair. You engage them to buy \$10,000-\$15,000 worth of art and that sets them on the path to become established collectors further down the line.

J.K. I think that they're also very money conscious. And there is a sharing economy that's coming into play. People don't necessarily own a car these

days, they share it. But this is a generation that also struggles to get their first house. They struggle to own things. I think there's plenty of this generation that buy watches and they buy other investable assets, but they simply don't know enough about the value of buying a painting. Especially if it's with an emerging artist, you can get to a certain sort of tipping point, let's say, £25,000, where a young person who's uninitiated, not necessarily knowing what it's doing for them to purchase that work, needs to know that there's going to be a resale value because of other things that they can invest in for that money and know that they can get a return. That's where the auction houses come into play, because they are a real bastion of transparency right now, which is crazy because, as we all know, it's very easily manipulable. But they need to know what that resale value will be. If they're going to buy something, they need to have some indication of where the pricing is historically in the market and what the future potential is. They don't have that right now. That's why they're leaning towards other things. They're leaning towards experiences. Until we can really bring that transparency into play in a meaningful way for this generation, I think they're going to continue to lean towards experiences and buy other things and invest in other things.

**“THEY’RE LEANING TOWARDS OTHER THINGS.
THEY’RE LEANING TOWARDS EXPERIENCES.”**

A.F. Greater liquidity is important too. That goes hand-in-hand with being able to more easily sell. If you look at the real world, for example, and people walk into their closet and all of a sudden see the opportunity to buy new things because there are things that they could sell in there. We need greater liquidity in the market, not to encourage flippers, but to allow people to transition out of things that their taste has evolved beyond. I don't think it has to be renting, which would be a pretty complicated business to do in the art market, I would imagine.

J.K. This sounds like recycling. Young collectors want to recycle. They don't want to buy something and necessarily own it forever. They are probably buying it with the intention of maybe selling it in a few years' time. They need to know that there's that out. And lots of young collectors that we work with who are, say, thirty to forty years old, they're buying and then in five, six, seven years' time, they might want to sell it. And their tastes might change. They might want to invest in something else. And equally, some of the collectors that we deal with come to us with things they bought ten, fifteen years ago. They want to sell it to us so they can buy a new artist. Collectors aren't just collecting for the long term anymore. They're also selling.

C.S. There are also fintech start-ups doing art fractioning. Maybe that's a solution.

T.S. I would also just add that it's also dangerous for us to think too rigidly about the idea of renting art as paying a fee to have a painting in my house for a set period of time. Going to an exhibition in a way is renting art. It's a temporary experience with something. Taking a photo is renting art in a sense, and that is how you start that engagement that can then lead down the road to actually purchasing something.

**“YOUNG COLLECTORS WANT TO RECYCLE.
THEY DON’T WANT TO BUY SOMETHING
AND NECESSARILY OWN IT FOREVER.”**

K.M. That's why the educational aspect is so important. This is what we were doing in Turkey. This is why these kinds of talks are important, where you're constantly educating the market about how things are perceived. Buying to sell at a more expensive price is very attractive, but it's not about that. Maybe that's the way you can lure them in but trying to motivate to keep a collection to grow a collection, to think about the artists, because you're actually the artist's patron as much as the galleries.

Q2: Good morning. Thank you so much for being here with us today and for debating for greater transparency, which is always needed. I actually have two questions. My first is for all of you, I would like to know from the gallery, the fair and the online perspective, whether you think there's a middle ground where you can actually have clients that are boomers and millennials equal parts. Or do you think you need more to have a curated programme for each of them? Because I understand that some wealthier individuals and who are more classical in their way of buying might not have the same response. So, I was wondering, do you think it's something that needs to be curated differently or if it can be all served in one model? My second question would be for Claudia. I see that you founded your business regarding real estate related spaces, and I would like to know if you could elaborate a bit on what would you do. Thank you.

K.M. From an art fair perspective, it's important to be relevant. While you're trying to create a showcase for galleries to sell, it really involves around everything from event production to operations. So, yes, you can have certain areas that are more curated by younger curators, by more relevant curators.

Talking about sustainability, talking about things like that to make it more relevant to attract younger people. But, from a fair perspective, you don't just want to focus on one group. We have to focus on the broader spectrum. Then, we can have little subgroups where we could get the attention from, such as millennials, generation Z or baby boomers.

A.F. I think one of the amazing things about art is that it brings people together across generations and cultural divides. And so, I don't think you have to have a different artistic programme to hit different audiences. What you might need to do is segment your audience and talk to those different groups of people differently. I think you even see some of the major galleries doing that already, having much older partners who are dealing with their very established clients, and much younger people from our generation leading their online initiatives. We certainly do that with different aspects of our audience. We talk to one group in one way and another in another way that will appeal to them more. A millennial might want a much more accessible presentation of information. A boomer might need a little bit more intellectual approach.

“A MILLENNIAL MIGHT WANT A MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION. A BOOMER MIGHT NEED A LITTLE BIT MORE INTELLECTUAL APPROACH.”

J.K. Yeah, I agree with that. I think it's basically tailoring your messaging to different audiences. Every month or for every show, we'll have a series of emerging musicians who will come in and respond to the themes of the exhibition. And that tends to pull in a much younger crowd. The boomer generation might not be interested in that type of experience, but then we have other, more intellectual, more in-depth events, whether they're panel discussions or something of that nature where you get a deeper connection with an older generation. There's definitely ways of tailoring your experiences and your offerings based on who you're speaking to. You can use data to help you do that in a digital way, too. But in terms of the cultural product, in terms of the works you're selling and your programming, generally, new, exciting, emerging artists—and any artist really—are appreciated by an older generation and the younger generation. So, the actual programming I think remains the same. It's just how you activate different experiences around that that you can tailor and change.

C.S. I may just answer my question. So, my part on real estate is actually very similar to K11. I work with real estate developers that mostly do mixed use developments. That means there are different modules inside. It can be health, education, hotel, convention, whatever. Art brings in a big add-on actually because artists also become part of the lifestyle, and people just get this within a whole platform. I think especially with retail, that's what a lot of real estate developers also do. The whole digitalisation has actually shifted the retail consumer where he starts to gather information online and he wants to explore and experience it offline and then buy the products online again. I think with that, it means that the retail turns more into showrooms, actually, than sales places. Whereas art is also a lot about the experience in the showroom and bringing people in. As I mentioned before, this passion and luxury market works along the same lines. I call it an art hub within a large-scale development; for me, it's just an extension of the line and attracts a lot of footfall. It creates a narrative. It's used for PR and communication. And, of course, it approaches the 99 per cent and not only the 1 per cent.

“THE SECONDARY MARKET IS MUCH MORE INVESTMENT MOTIVATED. THOSE CONVERSATIONS TEND TO BE MUCH LESS ABOUT THEIR PASSION, AND MUCH MORE ABOUT MONEY.”

Q3: I was wondering if you could speak about some patterns you might have noticed of millennial collectors in the primary versus secondary market. Joe, you talk a lot of obviously emerging artists, maybe for those younger collectors who had the opportunity to visit the living artist's studio. But can you also talk a bit about how they respond to dead artists, basically?

J.K. The secondary market is much more investment motivated. So those conversations tend to be much less about their passion, actually, and much more about money: they see it as an investment and it's usually a much longer-term investment unless you're dealing with flippers who you can usually spot straightaway. But they are very money conscious. If they're going to spend a million pounds upwards on a painting on the secondary market, they want to know. They, first of all, will have done their research. They will have gone around the galleries. They will have gone onto Artsy. They will have looked at Artnet and seen all the results. So, they're empowered with information.

Their mentality is very investment focused; it is very much focused on numbers. We have that aspect to our business. We prefer to focus on the development of younger artists and bringing them through into mid-career, but it is an important thing and a very different mentality that you're dealing with. I don't think there's much of a difference when it comes to the older clients that buy on the secondary market versus younger clients. I think it's a similar mentality, but it's very much one of investment.

A.F. I think that the secondary market, just from both a budget perspective and from scale, can adapt to a new generation in a much quicker way. As we were touching on before, millennial collectors are less compromising and more reluctant to settle for something other than the artist they were originally looking for. But on the other hand, the primary market is so important to foster the artists that are coming up. So, I think that's where we really see ourselves coming in and trying to bridge that. At least the digital divide that a secondary market outfit or a major gallery might put out there, that might be helping them develop millennial collectors. And for a smaller gallery, that might not be something that they had the ability to invest in.

J.K. I think there is definitely a split. A lot of the times that clients will come to us for our primary programme and then the conversation will develop and it'll turn into a secondary interest. So, there's also not necessarily a distinction. A lot of them are very passionate about collecting emerging artists, but then also have the funds, let's say, to invest at a high level. Often they will come from families who have a tradition of collecting too.

Q4: My name is Julie. I'm a curator and art historian based in Berlin. You spoke a lot about educating millennials and building a new community of collectors. What we are experiencing in Berlin right now is that we have, on the one hand, a lot of start-up entrepreneurs and they are looking for a new thing. They are looking to invest in art. They are interested in it. But how can we educate them about the art, about this painting, if they are used to paying one second's attention on Instagram? They want to have experiences. They want to have digital art without giving them Burning Man experience. How can we teach them that? That this culture installation performance is worth engaging with? Right now, we have an artistic community that is somehow existing in its own art bubble, but we need to engage with the start-up community. Otherwise, it's not going anywhere. So how do you educate these kinds of people, these millennials

with huge assets? Somehow, they want to participate, but they want to pay €2,000 now and sell a work of art in two years for €20,000, as they did with their start-ups. What can we do?

A.F. I really think it's about us reaching across the aisle and not kind of expecting them to come in. Even if you look at artists like Hank Willis Thomas and Studio Drift that have done amazing artworks out at Burning Man, that's brought in a whole new group of collectors that might not have otherwise ever heard of Pace or Jack Shainman. If we find ways to get people across the threshold, I think there's a lot of art out there that can appeal to that community.

**“IT’S ABOUT US REACHING ACROSS THE
AISLE AND NOT KIND OF EXPECTING
THEM TO COME IN.”**

One thing that I hear a lot is that they're less excited about some of the vibe and traditional structures of the art world which is in San Francisco for the fairs out there. A lot of the major collectors out there might be buying, they might have bought from the fair and the galleries that are showing at the fairs but they don't really want to go into what they see as a pretentious art fair experience and have to kind of deal with that.

J.K. Yeah, you are dealing with a generation who have much shorter attention spans. That's just the way it is. But I think you should use those platforms where they're spending their time not to kind of give them everything, use it as a hook to get them into engaging with you and your experiences that you put on in the gallery. You have to kind of arc your what you're providing so you can provide, you know, a quick instant gratification on Instagram or your social media, which will then allow them to click through to a website, which will allow them to book a ticket to a much deeper, more intellectual experience in the gallery, which they can then share with their audience again. And the kind of cycle continues and repeats like that.

K.M. So, to contradict a little bit what Alex said, because I come from a fair background. Actually, a fair is the true showcase, the perfect showcase for a millennial, because you have booths and you have up to fifty or a hundred of them. So, it gives them a quick insight into the artists that they like. They can engage with the gallery. Then they get feedback from the gallery. They can keep in touch with the gallery afterwards if they happen to be in the city for a conference and keep the relationship going. This is what we provide from a fair

perspective. We want to engage them; we want to hook them and then keep the relationships with the galleries going. We're a platform to do that for them.

Q5: I just wanted to ask about, or introduce rather, the geographical aspect of this. Because when you talk about young money, you say some of them come from collector parents. There is a division between, let's say, the Western world where arts institutions have been very present in the everyday aspect of the millennials' life. But then you also have other, rising geographies. Since we talked about Turkey in the last biennial in September, half of the millennials were going to the new art space opening and the other half was flying to Eski ehir to visit a new amazing museum that opened. So, I just wanted to know if you make some distinctions between what's happening in Eastern Europe, Turkey, South America, because I kind of just feel a bit that this was centred around the West. How would you differentiate the young money and the millennials in different parts of the world? I don't think they are all the same.

T.S. I think that that brings a really important point. Obviously, by its nature, if we're trying to talk about a whole group of people like millennials, Asian collectors or whatever, we are generalising. These are huge, huge groups of people to have all kinds of different nuances involved in them. I think it's important to try to find those distinctions. Claudia, obviously you were talking about Hong Kong and K11 and all those kinds of things. And Kamiar, you've been talking about Turkey. So, Alex, do you see any kind of difference when you're parsing data for younger collectors? I mean, do the geographies try to show you anything different?

A.F. By and large, they remain fairly true generation by generation. I work on our China business as well. One thing that we do see there is that the collectors are about ten years younger in their journey at any point in time, so that's something that's maybe slightly different. But I do really think that a lot of the core access to information component is really a key driver there. We see that particularly for those collectors who are in geographies that might not have as robust contemporary art infrastructures as New York, London or Barcelona, anywhere, having that immediate access to information is that much more important. What's really cool about that and what we see with our collectors is that they are sometimes travelling to those places and meeting the gallerists, meeting with the artists. But by and large, a lot of the trends remain true.

Q6: This is kind of a boring question in a way, but I would like to know what the impact is on the tax side of young money. For example, a physical gallery being in a certain country or gallery that's online and doesn't have an actual physical store or front. What's the tax side for a collector and what's your opinion about this particular point?

J.K. From a tax point of view, there's certain things you can do as a collector to protect your assets if you have a great collection. There's structure you can set up to protect it and make it more tax-efficient for you, in terms of how galleries operate and how that affects you. To your point, I mean, we have a central gallery in Mayfair in London, and we've had lots of opportunities to open up overseas in different locations. But actually, if you can make your online community really strong, you have 7 million people engaging with you a week. A lot of those people are curators and collectors from all over the world, from lots of different cultures, which is a really important thing. Everyone that you deal with from different cultures has a different kind of way of approaching you and has different values and belief systems. So, you have to obviously be sensitive to that. But if you can build a really strong online global community, which is what we've done over the last couple of years, the idea of taking on big new fixed costs by opening up another space elsewhere becomes quite a tricky prospect.

**“YOU CAN CREATE EXPERIENCES
WITHOUT HAVING THE HUGE, FIXED
COSTS OF OTHER GALLERIES.”**

It would be nice to have ten galleries around the world for us, but, actually, if we can spend a tenth of that money and create amazing experiences and keep building our audience globally, that almost has more value for us at the moment than taking on huge, fixed costs and opening art galleries overseas. I think it's going back to the experience point. You can create experiences without having the huge, fixed costs of other galleries. You can have pop-up spaces. Last year, we did a pop-up at Frieze L.A. Lots of big galleries are also doing pop-ups in conjunction with big fairs where the audiences are going to be. And then, obviously, the artist and galleries are collaborating with other brands, activating art and exhibitions in different ways. There's much more cost-effective ways of reaching new audiences and having a physical presence other than building other galleries.

T.S. I think that wraps it up. Thank you very much for listening to us.

Olivia Mull

is the Director of Digital Marketing at Gagosian. She oversees strategy for the gallery's digital channels and plays a key role in online sales initiatives, including the Gagosian Online Viewing Room. Prior to joining Gagosian in early 2018, Olivia was the Digital Director of online architecture and design magazine Dezeen. She managed the digital team and led all special editorial projects. She won two industry awards: Best Content Idea—Digital at the BSME Talent Awards 2017, and Best Innovation at the BSME Talent Awards 2018.

Elena Soboleva

is the Director of Online Sales at David Zwirner. In this newly-created position, Elena leads the programming, curation, and strategy for the gallery's digital sales channels, which include over 20 online exhibitions a year in addition to 25 art-fair previews. The gallery's Online Viewing Rooms offer collectors around the world access to works by David Zwirner artists and from complementary online-only exhibitions and are part of the gallery's increased focus on digital initiatives. Prior to joining David Zwirner, she was an early employee and Lead Curator at Artsy, where she oversaw the growth and scaling of collector initiatives and programming through online and offline channels. Elena has been included in Artnet's "10 Art Influencers You Need to Follow," Artinfo's "30 under 30," and W Magazine's "Who's Who of Internet Art."

Jane Morris

is an editor-at-large of The Art Newspaper and a multimedia editorial consultant at Cultureshock (an arts publishing and creative agency). She writes for many titles including Monocle, the Economist, Artnet and AAP's In Other Words on arts and culture. She was the editor of The Art Newspaper (London and New York) for almost a decade. She was part of a small team that launched Art World magazine in 2007, is a former head of publications at the Museums Association, and was a judge of the European Museum of the Year Award. She has written extensively for national newspapers including The Guardian and The Independent.

Selling Art Online: Are Galleries Prepared?

SPEAKERS

Olivia Mull & Elena Soboleva

MODERATOR

Jane Morris



Selling Art Online: Are Galleries Prepared?

Jane Morris (J.M.): As has been touched on, change comes slowly sometimes in the art world. You can see that I am not a millennial, which means that I do have a long enough memory to remember the dotcom bubble of the late 1990s. And when I was researching these topics, I kept thinking about how many businesses there's been that existed and disappeared. *The Wall Street Journal* thinks about forty businesses started up to sell art and antiques online in that period, of which there are incredibly few survivors. One of them, of course, was Artnet, which in fact started a little bit before that, before that boom. But what has become apparent in, let's say, the last five to six years is where those businesses failed for various reasons. And then, of course, we had the VIP art fair, which I'm sure some of you will remember. A number of businesses that have emerged are building—it seems, we don't know, because we tend not to know the profitability—apparently stable, growing and sustainable online businesses. I mentioned Artnet, obviously there's Artsy, where Elena used to work, and the big auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's. Again, you may remember Sotheby's had its hands burnt first time round. It invested \$40 million in a partnership with eBay the first time. And that, I'm afraid, failed. But they reported figures, I think, in 2018 of \$72 million in online sales, which represents about 7 per cent of their turnover. So, a small part of their business, but a rapidly growing one. And obviously, reading the reports coming out of Sotheby's online, it looks like it's going to be a key part of their business strategy.

Having said that, most sales have tended to be at the lower end of the market. We know that art world data tends not to be comprehensive for a lot of reasons, but Artsy, Clare McAndrew and *The Art Basel UBS and Global Art Market Report*, say that most online art sales are around the \$5,000 mark. And I think what's so interesting about having Olivia Mull and Elena Soboleva here with us today is that two of the leading art galleries in the world, Zwirner and Gagosian, have done what most people have failed so far to do, which is to sell at a high level online. And that's one of the reasons that you've been invited here today.

Zwirner launched its first online viewing room in 2017. Gagosian followed a year later in 2018. Just last year, Gagosian—we don't know the final sales prices—sold an Albert Oehlen priced at \$6 million during Art Basel, Hong Kong online. And Zwirner, I think its record-breaking sale was a Yayoi Kusama *Pumpkin* sold at \$1.8 million, again on an online viewing room during Art Basel. As introduced, we have Elena. She's director of online sales at Zwirner. She is driving forwards online viewing rooms. And also, these kind of parallel art fair presentations.

Elena Soboleva (E.S.): Exactly. Virtual art fair booths is how we refer to them.

**“ZWIRNER AND GAGOSIAN HAVE DONE
WHAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE FAILED SO
FAR TO DO, WHICH IS TO SELL AT A HIGH
LEVEL ONLINE.”**

J.M. And Olivia is director of digital marketing and she's at Gagosian. You're more on the content and marketing side, aren't you, Olivia? But you worked in publications very closely with Alison Macdonald, who was here last year, and with Sam Orlofsky, who I think is the director at Gagosian who is driving forward the online viewing room programme. Well, just to kick us off, I'd quite like to ask you, what do we mean by an online sale? Now, I say this as somebody, obviously, I'm not a gallerist. I buy things online. I'm not buying top level art—I'm a journalist, that would be most unusual. But when I think of an online sale, generally, I think of something that I saw online. I saw the price online. I paid for it online. I paid for my shipping, whatever, online. And I don't see the item until it lands with me. If I like it, I keep it; if I don't like it, I put a returns label on it and back it goes. What do we mean in the art world when we say an online sale?

E.S. Happy to answer that, since I think it's a great definition to start off with. Thank you for having us here. We all know that a majority of sales at a gallery now go through pdfs and jpegs. I think that in the way that our gallery thinks about online sales, it's really sales that are driven through the inbound channels of our digital efforts. And for us, that is primarily our website and the online viewing rooms, exhibitions and art fair engagements that we do, but of course it also includes third party platforms like Artsy and Artnet, as well as various other channels such as social media.

J.M. So, you don't necessarily mean a sale that is digital all the way through?

E.S. No. And I think that's a key difference because as you said, we are reaching a much higher price point. So, when you come to buy in the online portal, with Zwirner, it is still an inquiry. I think that's important because there is still, for high value objects, a lot of discussion sometimes that should be had. It also allows the collector who is engaging to still get the benefit of the really sort of expertise of the sales team that they're working with. However, of course, the engagement starts off online and then can be continued online and the collector never come in, or sometimes, there is a continuation where the collector does come into the gallery to see the piece.

J.M. And is that the same for Gagosian, Olivia?

**“THE WAY THAT OUR GALLERY THINKS
ABOUT ONLINE SALES, IT'S REALLY SALES
THAT ARE DRIVEN THROUGH THE INBOUND
CHANNELS OF OUR DIGITAL EFFORTS.”**

Olivia Mull (O.M.): Yeah. It's very much the same. There are third-party platforms, our main kind of high price point sales go through the online viewing room and then there are other channels, primarily newsletters, social media, the website. But I also think it's worth pointing out that it's not a very neat conversation and that, increasingly, what we're seeing is clients who possibly send a direct message on Instagram, but also then simultaneously contact someone that they already know at the gallery. More and more, you're seeing that when conversations happen internally, there are inquiries happening through multiple different channels, which is a very interesting thing as well. So, defining them particularly as straightforward online sales is still a difficult thing to do.

J.M. Because I think even looking at your profiles on Artsy, for example, there are a few occasions where you can buy directly, mostly at the very, very much lower level. But in general, would you say it's gallery policy to put a collector in front of a member of the gallery team as soon as possible?

E.S. Well, we see that as a benefit to the collector because, frankly, we're not a marketplace model like Artsy or Artnet, where the volume is the main driver. In what we do, there's really an exhibition-based model, which means there's two exhibitions a month or so. So really getting the collector to be speaking with one of our gallery directors immediately is a benefit. And then they can choose the kind of interaction they have.

J.M. So, would you say it is close to, say, buying couture fashion or buying a high-end car, where I don't think many people would buy a £200,000 car without test driving it?

O.M. That's a little bit more complicated. I mean, at Gagolian, we also have an online shop, which Tim Schneider mentioned, and that's very much more on the e-commerce side, although we do sell artists' editions and have a very big rare books department. That's a huge part of what we put out in newsletters, for example. Then there's the higher price point. Actually, I think in almost all of our online viewing room sales, the works were never seen in person before they were bought. So, it depends.

“IN ALMOST ALL OF OUR ONLINE VIEWING ROOM SALES, THE WORKS WERE NEVER SEEN IN PERSON BEFORE THEY WERE BOUGHT.”

E.S. It's definitely this hybrid model. It's something that everyone was trying to make very distinct before: either it was going to be e-commerce or in person. I think collectors just expect a very fluid experience.

J.M. The question obviously on the board is are galleries prepared? How much do you think you are playing catch-up with the big auction houses like Sotheby's? Do you think that you're behind the curve or do you feel like you are ahead of the curve because of what you've achieved so far?

E.S. So, I think as an industry, the art world is certainly behind many other industries. We're looking at real estate, finance, luxury. So, I think we have a lot to learn. However, you know, part of the reason I joined the programme was because David Zwirner was the first one to establish an online viewing room and really sort of does see it as a space of investing for our artists and our programme. So, I do feel that that's been significant. What I'm seeing in the last year is actually the industry adoption is really happening. What we're seeing is a lot of galleries of all various sizes experimenting with their own online sales models.

O.M. I think very much at Gagolian, one of the driving forces behind setting up an online viewing room was Larry Gagolian. He was an early investor in Artsy; the gallery had been watching that develop and also watching what was happening in the auction houses. We decided during the first online viewing room to see really what kind of innovation and progress could be made at a

much higher price point. So, the first online viewing room that we did was experimenting with works between \$100,000 and a \$1 million, then increasing up to the Albert Oehlen that we saw during Art Basel Hong Kong, which is a much, much higher price point. So, I really think that although generally the art world possibly is behind lots of other industries, I think what Gagolian is really trying to do is innovate and really experiment at that level. Each time we've done an online viewing room, we've had slightly different models, slightly different format, different works, primary and secondary. We've really been working towards that.

“EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO MAKE SOMETHING VERY DISTINCT BEFORE: EITHER IT WAS GOING TO BE E-COMMERCE OR IN PERSON, AND I THINK COLLECTORS JUST EXPECT A VERY FLUID EXPERIENCE.”

J.M. I think we might go through that little bit more later. Can I ask you in its simplest terms, why are you doing it? Are you doing it basically to make money? Is it experimentation? Are you concerned that the gallery as a business will fall behind if it doesn't embrace new technology? What's the kind of overriding reason, do you think, that the people at the top want to invest in this?

E.S. For us, it's the same reason that we do everything else at the gallery: it's ultimately for our artists. They are the sort of North Star of everything that we think about. And that is why I think the approach that we take, looking at online through the perspective of exhibition-making, is distinct and really sort of unique in the space for us. We try to do around twenty shows a year that are led through this process of working with our artists to see what facet of their practice is not represented through the physical exhibitions that we do, and it is their opportunity to create something that excites them. I think that that's sort of been a key driving goal.

On the other hand, we are also serving collectors and we know the talk beforehand summarised great, great points about millennial collectors. What we're finding is certainly that it's a great channel for us to engage with new collectors. We see about 40 to 45 per cent of inquiries that are coming through online for us are those who've never contacted the gallery before. So, it's really a key source of connecting with new collectors for us as well, of course, as reaching very global audiences.

J.M. Olivia, what's Gagosian's driving motivation here?

O.M. Working with artists is obviously the fundamentals of what the gallery does. But I think artists are very interested in the online space because of the potential international reach and also the ability to tell stories about their work and their practices online. Traditionally, artists wanted to have a print ad in *The New York Times*, whereas now they really want to be able to put their work on a platform, in front of Gagosian's 1.8 million social media followers. It is a huge audience organically. So that's very, very important. On the other hand, one of the main reasons why we started doing the online viewing room was that we wanted to do them around art fairs. So, the online viewing rooms tend to open a few days before a major fair and then close a few days after the fair. I think the thing that people started noticing was art fair fatigue and that people weren't attending the fairs. Therefore, by offering works that were exclusively online, we were able to reach people that potentially had decided not to attend the fair. That was another driving force behind it.

“ALTHOUGH THE ART WORLD POSSIBLY IS BEHIND LOTS OF OTHER INDUSTRIES, I THINK WHAT GAGOSIAN IS REALLY TRYING TO DO IS INNOVATE AND REALLY EXPERIMENT AT THAT LEVEL.”

J.M. So perhaps it's a good point just to run over the kind of the overall spread of online that you do for people who don't know about the two strategies of the different companies. Starting with you, Olivia, you have third-party platforms. I think you said that you're on Artsy, Artnet, Ocula...

O.M. Yeah. Those are the main ones.

J.M. Okay. I had a look at that. And again, mostly there's a lot of inventory on there, really only at the cheaper end of prices. Do you actually sell directly or do you always encourage interaction?

O.M. It's always encouraged. The inventory is not actually at a particularly low level. There's still some at a much higher price range.

J.M. Sorry, what I meant is the prices were only disclosed for low level. I could see there was inventories at a very high level, but you only put the low-level prices on. So, you've got a wide range of inventory with those players but only priced at the lower end, only visible at the lower end. The Gagosian shop, which Tim Schneider mentioned earlier, is interesting, though, because again,

you have a wide range of goods on there from postcards as the least expensive, but I also noticed a really nice Richard Artschwager poster on there, but that was an inquiry. So, what's the kind of range that you're selling on the Gagosian shop? And what's the point of that?

O.M. I think the Gagosian shop was opened in 2009, and then the online shop followed fairly quickly. So, it's something that the gallery has been involved in for a really long time. Regarding the price point, we do actually list prices on newsletters up to \$30,000. That's something that does happen. Concerning the motivation for the online shop, for example, if you found a rare book on the online shop, you would then be put in contact with our rare book specialists within the gallery. That's again, about expertise, about having a discussion about the work and someone who really knows about it. So, there's varying strategies, but obviously Gagosian has a huge publications department. With over 500 books having been published by the department, the online shop is a very good way to be selling those as well as artist editions. Also, as artists are collaborating more and more, it also offers a platform for us to sell Sterling Ruby's fashion line, for example. There's a huge variation of what's on.

“ABOUT 40 TO 45 PER CENT OF INQUIRIES THAT ARE COMING THROUGH ONLINE FOR US ARE THOSE WHO'VE NEVER CONTACTED THE GALLERY BEFORE.”

J.M. So, you bought in quite early, didn't you, to the idea that you would really like people to be able to walk out with something?

O.M. Yeah.

J.M. I guess what people probably here are most interested in is the strategy for the online viewing rooms. You've done four of them. I wonder if you could just talk us through the different thinking, because they've all been different, haven't they?

O.M. They have all been different. So, the first one that we did was during Art Basel 2018 and it was a group online viewing room. So, we presented ten different works by ten different artists and it was open for ten days. A lot of the philosophy behind the online viewing room is that the work is presented in a physical viewing space and you can zoom in on the work, see videos about the work and read extensive essays. So that was the first one.

J.M. And then did you have much content on the first one?

O.M. There wasn't as much content. For the second iteration, we produced a lot more content. It was a lot more focused on video. We did a much wider social strategy. There's also a 24/7 assistant, so you can contact a member of staff via the portal. The conversation then continues via email or in person. Then the third online viewing room that we did was the Albert Oehlen one. This was a solo booth. So, we presented one work. It was a 1988 abstract work by Albert Oehlen. That one we really produced even more content for. There was historical analysis on the site, market analysis on the site. We produced videos in which members of Gagosian and Gagosian directors were having conversations about the market, on the one hand; and also, the history behind the work on the other. I think that really allowed people who were online to see the kind of conversations that you'd be having with Gagosian staff in a gallery space, and that was very successful.

**“ARTISTS ARE VERY INTERESTED
IN THE ONLINE SPACE
BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL
INTERNATIONAL REACH AND
ALSO THE ABILITY TO TELL
STORIES ABOUT THEIR WORK.”**

The most recent one that we did was for Frieze London, and that was with Sterling Ruby. That was a collaborative project. And the whole online viewing room was curated by Sam Orlofsky from Gagosian and then Sterling Ruby. There were fourteen works in total. Seven of them were primary market works that had come straight from Sterling Ruby's studio. Seven he had selected as important historical works to present alongside, which had been a big influence on his practice. Through that online viewing room, we interviewed him and he told an audience a huge amount about his work. Obviously, he works across a variety of mediums and it offered him the platform to speak about all kinds of work that he's producing online. So, we've kind of been innovating and changing the ways that we're doing it.

J.M. So, would you consider it quite an experimental strategy or are you finding that there's a model that's already working much better than the others?

O.M. Yes, we're finding patterns.

J.M. But perhaps we could explore that a little bit later. Maybe, Elena, again, very similar: you have the third-party sellers like Artsy; online, you really only sell publications, am I right? A bookstore? But you've been adopting a

somewhat different strategy for these online viewing rooms. Could you talk about the two strands?

E.S. Yeah, absolutely. So, we started in 2017 and there have been over fifty viewing rooms so far, about half of them under my tenure. So, it's certainly been a different approach. We call it our seventh gallery space. It's something I've talked about in past interviews. But I really think this is sort of the best way to think about and describe our efforts, in the sense that what we do is we really work with artists. It starts from a phase of us researching and understanding that it is an opportunity to bring together a group of works or obviously highlight a facet of an artist's practice.

J.M. So, are these exhibitions all primary markets, all with living artists or not?

E.S. No, actually, it's the amazing thing: it's both with artists and estates. Some of them have been curated externally in group exhibitions. Some of them are even with artists we don't represent but have had, for example, shows with the likes of Bruce Nauman or Charles White. And so, what's been really interesting is really working with each individual artist or estate to try to find what it is that they're really passionate about and really want to bring online. And then, of course, trying to work with them and resourcing it accordingly.

**“WE LOOK AT THE ONLINE
VIEWING ROOM AS OUR SEVENTH
GALLERY SPACE.”**

J.M. And so how long is a run of an exhibition? Because Gagosian's are like ten days. That's got that real sort of time pressure. Do you run them for six weeks like a normal show?

E.S. For the exhibitions that are online, in the online viewing room, we do five to six weeks. For our parallel art fair booths, which as you mentioned, are around these critical art fair moments, we also do about a week, so then they run parallel to the fair. It makes sense for them to have that finite time.

J.M. And are the works on sale there only available online? Or are they a copy of what you're bringing to the art fair?

E.S. So, for every fair we do, we only present an online preview, which also sites like Artsy or even Art Basel do. Basel Online was our really big feature where we sold, you know, \$3.5 million of art, including the pumpkin, but also other many amazing works. What's unique about what we started there is really that those works were exclusively for our online audience, but the

quality of the work is similar to what you'd find at Basel. It's dedicating that inventory and setting it aside, saying that this is for a global audience because there's so many collectors who don't necessarily travel to all the art fairs.

**“THERE'S SO MANY COLLECTORS WHO
DON'T NECESSARILY TRAVEL TO ALL THE
ART FAIRS.”**

J.M. And that's the art fair fatigue that you were talking about.

E.S. And to come back to this sort of idea of the seventh gallery space, in terms of just even how we think about it, it's important to know that we really resource it accordingly. And so, to have all these exhibitions, we need to look at it as a gallery space, much like we do with, you know, David Zwirner Hong Kong, David Zwirner Uptown, New York, David Zwirner London. This is David Zwirner Online. And so that really encompasses having dedicated sales assistants, dedicated registrars, a dedicated editorial team working on this specifically. Of course, with the amount of shows we do, this doesn't surprise people. But I think it is important to know that we have that team in place and just to talk about the process of working with artists in the States and how we've really been able to develop this model; it really does come from conversations and really offering artists the opportunity of treating this as a space.

Another important thing is it's not an alternative to having a physical show. David Zwirner is still a bricks-and-mortar gallery, but it is this new space and artists are very excited, much like Olivia said, to really explore that. And so, we have artists like Rose Wylie or Oscar Murillo, who are really sort of conceptualising and making work specifically for the space, making work in a way that is potentially better adept at being shown online than it is offline because of the rich context and narrative it offers. Oscar Murillo, to go further, did a series of drawings that seem very obsessive and abstract, and you don't realise they're actually drawings that he made on an airplane until you see the full context of the viewing room. So just really taking the viewer inside that whole experience with the artist is really part of what appeals to both artists and collectors about it.

J.M. So, I guess you wouldn't want to do this with an artist that wasn't enthusiastic about this. Can I ask, Olivia, the Albert Oehlen was consigned, wasn't it? Did you have to get permission from Oehlen? I mean, what was the process?

O.M. I think that generally what we're finding is that artists are slightly less apprehensive or they're enthusiastic about working with us on online projects; with consigners, it's slightly more different territory. I think there are maybe some obvious points about the fact that a lot of the primary market works have come straight from the studio, and artists seem very happy with the price transparency, which is one of the things that Gagosian was doing. Consigners are initially less behind the initiative, but we've had great success. But I think that's just often because they possibly only have one work, whereas the artist has a body of work. There are some obvious points about possibly why that is. But we are obviously speaking with artists all the time about these projects.

J.M. And you don't have any resistance from artists saying, 'I'd much rather people saw the physical quality of my work'?

**“WE HAVE ARTISTS LIKE ROSE WYLIE
OR OSCAR MURILLO, WHO ARE REALLY
SORT OF CONCEPTUALISING AND
MAKING WORK SPECIFICALLY FOR THE
ONLINE SPACE.”**

O.M. So, I think actually what we're finding is that the way that Gagosian is presenting these works online, there are very, very high-quality videos and you really get a sense of the texture of work. I do think that shows in the fact that buyers haven't seen these works in person; we're putting a lot of effort into video and also presenting the works at scale becomes very important.

Someone who inquires via Artsy has less of a sense of the scale of a work and is more far more likely to want to see it in person than someone who's come in from the online viewing room, where the experience is far superior. We even translate a lot of those things from the website and then use them on social, which is more where my role sits. So, we're using a lot of very high-quality video assets on Instagram stories, paid social ads etc, so people really get a sense for the work itself.

J.M. I mean, that's obviously is a big investment, though, isn't it? I make videos as well, and it's expensive.

O.M. It is. But I do think there's a lot that you can do. I think people do sell stuff, do take photos of works on their phone with someone to show scale. It's something that's very well established in the art world. But you can do it at a different level. I do think we've had great success doing it.

E.S. Well, to add to that, I think that video is so uniquely well adjusted for online content, obviously. And artists are really excited to take the viewers inside their process, because often what you see within a gallery setting is just the end result. They're actually just thrilled to show you how it's made and the whole story and narrative behind it. I think a lot of artists actually really enjoy that aspect. I really agree with what you said there, because we're not taking shows away from them having physical work, we're just saying this is an additional space. And so, they want to create work that potentially has extra concept or extra narrative quality that they see is actually uniquely better positioned to be online.

**“WE’RE NOT TAKING SHOWS AWAY
FROM ARTISTS HAVING PHYSICAL
WORK, WE’RE JUST SAYING THIS IS AN
ADDITIONAL SPACE.”**

J.M. You mentioned the fact the artist is very comfortable about the price transparency. I think anyone who's ever gone to an art fair as a reporter will tell you that the reason we're often told that we can't find the prices is because the artists are very resistant to this. Do you think this is more an issue of just art world practices?

E.S. I think that that's something that has been an evolving issue. I think young collectors are just changing that game. With all the information we have available now, transparency is something that we expect and galleries have to adjust. So, with every online viewing that we've done, we've posted the prices and whether the works are under \$10,000 or just below \$2 million, you can see it. I think it's actually very educational for collectors who are new to the market to come in and start to understand this, because it just takes some of the intimidation factor out. It also shows you that even large galleries like ours have a lot of works which are in a few thousand-dollar range, at least for us; I'm sure in the gift shop you could also find that. It really gives them confidence.

J.M. Let's talk a little bit about the collectors. Who are they? I think most people would probably expect that they are indeed younger millennials, perhaps; that they might be new to buying art. They may be coming from countries in Asia, where it's harder for people to get to the galleries and people are very comfortable with online. But is that true?

E.S. So, from what we've seen, there is no single collector demographic. I think it's very important to point out, because obviously we have started trying to

find what the patterns are. A lot of people have discussed, like in the earlier conversation, that there is a very young audience. I would say for us, we have collectors who are coming in through Instagram and buying their first Josh Smith monotype for \$2,000, and there are those top two hundred collectors coming in at a very different level. And what we're seeing is that online serves different collectors in different ways.

For the younger collectors, it's definitely this kind of price transparency, accessibility of information and getting their first work. It also is really a huge global reach in the sense that the fifteen most valuable works that we've sold online have all gone to collectors in cities where we don't have a gallery. And that clearly shows that the collectors we're serving are not choosing not to come into the physical space; they don't have the option to do so.

**“TRANSPARENCY, NOW, IS SOMETHING
THAT WE EXPECT AND GALLERIES HAVE
TO ADJUST.”**

J.M. Do you think that they're just time-poor?

E.S. And also, just don't have the ability to not necessarily be travelling to New York or Basel all the time. It's amazing the kinds of cities the collectors are coming from: San Francisco, Toronto, Houston, Antwerp, Singapore, Tokyo. But it's really also a little bit of what the prior panellists were talking about: online really extends your geographic footprint and really serves that higher-end collecting community that's very broad.

J.M. Olivia, you're obviously specialising in marketing, so I'm guessing you know quite a lot about audience motivations. Why do you think people would prefer to buy online? I mean, not everyone does and we'll come to that. But why do you think this is suiting customers?

O.M. It depends on what kind of work we're talking about and also where it's being marketed. When I arrived at the gallery, one of the first projects I was involved with was the Takashi Murakami/Virgil Abloh show in London. There were prints and T-shirts we did for flash sales. It was a different kind of marketing for a different kind of audience: new, younger collectors. We mainly promoted on Instagram, as we were working with two people who have enormous Instagram followings. So, it's slightly different.

And then there's the online viewing room collectors, which is obviously a different bracket. I think with that, we're seeing the data set is still small, which I'm sure is what is happening across galleries. But what we're seeing with the online viewing room is that sometimes they are new collectors who are possibly known to the gallery but haven't bought through us and might follow some social or be signed up to our newsletter. Then there were some who possibly hadn't bought for a long time through the gallery, they might have a contact at the gallery they haven't spoken to for a while, but they've possibly engaged in a meaningful way. I think activating those collectors is possibly quite an important part of online. That's very much done, if you've got a big audience, which our gallery is lucky enough to have. You're more finding that you're tapping into people who do actually know the gallery, know the brands, know the artists very well. And that's what's happening, what we're finding.

J.M. Presumably that's also because at this much higher end we are talking about a very small number of people, aren't we?

**“ONLINE REALLY EXTENDS YOUR
GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT AND REALLY
SERVES THAT HIGHER-END COLLECTING
COMMUNITY THAT'S VERY BROAD.”**

E.S. Yeah. And I think it to the point of data sets. One thing that someone also with an economics background would point out is that we shouldn't sort of draw large conclusions because with everything I've seen, it's really driven by the inventory. Depending on what inventory you put out there, you get a certain kind of audience. And so, creating an average of that really has not been a valuable insight for us.

J.M. At the beginning I think people noted with Zwirner that if you're selling something that is very recognisable, like Donald Judd or Yayoi Kusama, that it is probably easier for people to buy online. I wondered if you sort of signed up to that point of view. It seemed to me that if you've seen an artist's work a lot at exhibitions or at art fairs, pressing the button isn't quite so scary as maybe an artist whose work you don't know.

E.S. That is the hypothesis that I also had. And generally, we have seen a lot of those artists have a strong, obvious interest. But I've been really surprised. Bringing the exhibition of Bill Traylor, for example, online had an enormous response. He was an artist that we had not worked before. We did a show with him uptown this fall with works from his estate. It's just been incredible, the

kind of response we got. So, it's totally unexpected in some ways. The artists that get the most interest and inquiries are not necessarily the biggest names that you'd expect, although, of course, there is an audience for that.

J.M. Can you share any names?

E.S. Well, like I said, I mean, Charles White was an exceptional viewing room and that was great. And some of the works that we did there actually went to institutions, which is incredible to be selling online. And it works.

J.M. Well, I was surprised by the fact that you have actually been making sales to museums online when we talked about this earlier. How is that happening? Why is that happening?

E.S. If you have the right works and the broad reach, it becomes a place where all types of collectors, including institutional trustees, would come and look. The other thing is that we've really communicated to our collectors that if you want to see our whole programme, it's not just the six gallery spaces. There is this online portal. And they know that that is part of the gallery exhibition programme to a point that when you walk into our New York space, there is actually a vinyl listing of everything global and for online. And I think that that sort of shows the kind of commitment and dedication that we have.

**“THE ARTISTS THAT GET THE MOST
INTEREST AND INQUIRIES ARE NOT
NECESSARILY THE BIGGEST NAMES.”**

J.M. I was interested looking at some of the service. Again, I keep repeating this thing about small datasets and not complete data. Nonetheless, I think Hiscox said that the things that motivated people to buy online were things like same quality of art, quality of navigation, reputation of the seller and price transparency. And I think this figure came from *Arts Economics*: only 12 per cent said it was their preferred way to buy. What do you think are the barriers to people buying online? What have you got to change? I mean, let's face it, because we've touched on one, which is the physical inspection of the work, which you're trying to deal with through the way you present the work and the films. I think the things that people are always going to be concerned about are issues like provenance, authenticity, reputation.

E.S. Well, I think having a brand is obviously a strong advantage. The fact that we are the primary representatives of many of the artists which we show and that we obviously have a reputation within the art world and we're at fairs and

people know of our brand obviously gives them sort of trust and assurance. And of course, when you're buying works of Yayoi Kusama or Donald Judd, you want to make sure that the provenance is there; you want to know that the quality of shipping and handling and as well as just the art historical narrative that you get, and that the salespeople are educated in that way. And so, I think that obviously offers huge benefits. Clearly, I think that online is still a new channel to a lot of collectors. But from what we've seen, it's not a resistance. It's rather that they might not be aware of it, I guess. But, again, it's different from the report there.

“OUR ONLINE OPERATIONS ARE VERY MUCH DRIVEN BY A COMBINATION OF VERY SOLID GAGOSIAN PILLARS OF THE BUSINESS. EVERYONE IS FAIRLY INVOLVED.”

J.M. Yeah. And also, to be fair, most people are not offering sales openly priced. The question will be: will the statistics change? I guess maybe if people are doing it more often and it's just a more standard practice that you can say it was. We've been talking repeatedly about the issue of price and seeing the work and being able to see it well. Can I ask a little bit about the way you organise your teams and how many people are involved? Obviously, you're both significant galleries—from 200 to 250 staff. You're big operations. How many people are engaged in the online operation?

E.S. It's a tricky question because, of course, there is the online sales team, as I mentioned, which is my team. We do these incredible exhibitions and it feels like we're still sort of a small start-up within this much bigger entity in the New York office.

J.M. So about five or six of you, something that?

E.S. Exactly. So, it's six people. However, we also rely on the resources of the marketing team, the technology team and, obviously, the photography and video teams. And so, while those are not strictly online sales, they support everything that online sales do extensively, as well as support everything around the exhibitions programme around the world. So, there's really not a clear answer because of this. And I don't know if you'd have a similar set-up?

O.M. I think what's quite interesting about the way that online sales have developed within the gallery is that it's been very much driven by Alison MacDonald and Sam Orlofsky. Alison is publishing director and has worked on establishing the *Gagosian Quarterly* magazine and then bringing the magazine

online and driving videos. Then there's Sam, who's got a huge amount of experience working with artists and is the sales director. Then my team's side of things is digital marketing. And so, it's been very much driven by a combination of what I'd say are a very solid Gagosian pillars of the business. It's very important that the projects that we're doing online are content-rich. And so, again, I think it's difficult to define. Everyone that works within the gallery is very aware, works digitally, has to be aware of the promotion of exhibitions and their artists' online presence, even Google searches; people have to be aware of these things. So, everyone is fairly involved.

J.M. But are you under pressures to deliver large sales targets? You're obviously quite a small group by the sounds of it, within these big operations. Or is the gallery judging success in other terms? I mean, what are the sort of measures of success that you are trying to foster or meet?

E.S. Success for us is our artists being engaged and wanting to exhibit in the programme of online. I think that's sort of reflected in the goals that we set out. While the price ranges, it's not necessarily only sales driven because we want to be able to use this as an experimental space and have a viewing room maybe of one piece or just very non-commercial entities that we feel should be shown and that artists feel that they want to bring that part of their practice to the audience. And it is our goal to fully support that. Of course, it is a sales platform and as a gallery our responsibility to our artists is to support them in a commercial way and make sure that they have livelihoods. At the same time, I think that for us, success is sort of a broader concept, which is artist first, but of course, also just the level of engagement that we have from our audience.

J.M. So, you're counting the number of inquiries, for example?

E.S. Of course, inquiries and views. And for us that that's important metrics.

J.M. Yeah. What about for Gagosian?

O.M. I'm sure it's the same. There are metrics that are very much not about sales, about how the artist feels about the content that's being produced, whether they're happy to be involved. On the other hand, there's the metrics that I mainly focus on, which is about engagement, reaching new audiences, what we're doing in terms of digital advertising and new contacts; for example, how many people have read our newsletters. They're metrics that are important across all businesses because everyone has an online element. So, it completely varies and we look at lots of different metrics to measure success.

J.M. Okay. But I say with the kind of sales, clearly, you've achieved something very interesting, and the sales are something I'm sure you're looking to grow. But it'd be fair to say at the moment, wouldn't it, that this is probably a fairly small slice of the gallery's turnover.

E.S. We don't talk about sales in, you know, those kinds of terms, but I think one public number we did put out there in the year is we had 400 per cent growth in terms of the sales value and 160 per cent growth in terms of inquiries, which gives you an idea as well. I think you referenced some of these reports, and the average sales price were \$5,000-10,000. What we've consistently seen is that, while within our viewing room, the price range has been from \$2,000 to almost \$2 million, we're really seeing a much higher average price than what the reports are showing.

J.M. Yeah. And I think also a lot of the reports say that most galleries, it's about 6 per cent of turnover that is coming from online. But again, I'm guessing that both of you are imagining that that is going to grow significantly. I mean, would you be surprised if in ten years' time it was still around those kinds of numbers?

**“IT’S REALLY THE TRADITIONAL ART
WORLD ESTABLISHMENT THAT WE’RE
STILL TRYING TO WIN OVER.”**

E.S. Definitely. I mean, auction houses are one industry benchmark that I think we can all look to, where I believe right now about 25 per cent of the lots for Sotheby's and Christie's go through online. Of course, for value, it's different—I think about 7-8 per cent. But it's, of course, natural that it's going to grow. I think that, if anything, one of the things we've seen is the collectors are getting more and more on board. And as you can hear from us, the artists are more and more willing to take that risk because they're able to. It's really the traditional art world establishment that we're still trying to win over.

And in that sense, what we've been doing, for example, is bringing new work that artists are putting together, curated exhibitions online and they haven't entered yet into that sort of critical discourse. What I'd love to see happen in the next I don't know how many years is that the industry responds and, in a way, acknowledges that. A few years ago, people were talking about Netflix and streaming and whether that was something viable, that is eligible for awards or is eligible for reviews. Now that's not even a question. Now, I think Netflix Studios has something like 20 Oscar nominations. And so, I'd love to

see how long it takes and what it takes from our side for the art press, many of who are here, to start thinking about these as actual shows, because artists are.

J.M. Well, that's a challenge to some of us in the art press and I'd say some of the traditional art world. I'm sure some of us here are in the traditional art world. So, this is probably quite a good time to go out to questions. Would anybody like to ask Elena or Olivia about their online experiences?

QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: I'm Marion Papillon from Paris. I have two questions. I think that a lot of small and mid-sized galleries are here. So, do you think that these online developments are only possible because of the brands of Gagosian and David Zwirner? How should smaller galleries go about developing their online exhibitions or shows? But also, should they concentrate on doing this kind of online development? Or should they work more with platforms that maybe have a bigger audience already?

**“DEVELOPING WITH VIDEO ALL THIS EXTRA
NARRATIVE AND EDITORIAL IS SOMETHING
THAT EVERY GALLERY CAN DO.”**

E.S. Well, you know, I'll just say that I think that every gallery should figure out their own route for online. I would say that from what I've seen, there's many great smaller and medium-sized galleries, everyone from the Journal to Esther Schipper to David Kordansky, really figuring out their own model for this.

J.M. Can I ask what you think they're doing that's so good?

E.S. They're trying something out. I think that what's valuable is just that kind of level of experimentation and asking your artists how they want to engage with the platform. I think a lot of what you talked about with this content and the idea that we are also invested in developing with video and all this extra narrative and editorial is something that every gallery can do. It provides a greater archive and resource for collectors. So, it's really, again, a hybrid element, and I would say embrace a hybrid strategy in that way.

J.M. And it's been interesting the degree to which you've been experimenting with different things.

O.M. I also think that possibly what other platforms offer is a kind of a fairly straightforward way to get inventory online, which means that you can push people to it from your newsletters and from other kind of more traditional marketing strands. So, focusing on sort of growing newsletter subscribers and doing all of those things that really are still hugely important to the gallery. It's something that I think I put a lot of work into.

E.S. And Joe Kennedy, who was here on stage earlier, was such a great example of a gallery that's really taking ownership over the online strategy and having such a large top end of the funnel with the Instagram audience and the newsletter audience. And then really, I guess from his description, being targeted in the way that he approaches things.

J.M. You use a lot of opportunities to grow your newsletters, don't you? How do you do that?

O.M. Well, I mean, there's ways. A post may push people to subscribe from Instagram stories; there are ways like that to do it. But also, I think programming feeds a huge amount into what we're trying to do online. We have a big public programme of exhibitions, film screenings. We're working with others; you're reaching out to new audiences as well through partnerships, through working with brands sometimes, sometimes other cultural institutions. By doing that, what you're allowing yourself to do is then to create online connections. Some of it's as simple as tagging people and posts then reaching wide audiences. Those things have a big impact, and then in time translate into more solid online sales strategies. I'm obviously more on the content side, so that's the side I put more effort into.

Q2: I'm Andrew Goldstein, editor of Artnet, and I just want to say this is a fascinating field that you guys are working in and are obviously the pioneers into what is going to be a big part of the future of the art market. So, Olivia, you mentioned before that some of the hesitation that you're seeing is coming from the consigners. And, that reminded me that I was just in Taipei Dangdai a couple of days ago, which is incredible to think about. I was in the Zwirner booth and I saw that there was this beautiful Raoul de Keyser on the wall and started wondering where I knew it from. I think that I recognised it because of an incredibly memorable video that the artist Harold Ancart had done, where he said, "Whenever I see a Raoul de Keyser, it makes me want to go to my studio and paint."

E.S. That's an amazing quote, by the way.

Q2: It is and it was an unforgettable video. And that makes me think, if you are doing these online viewing rooms and you're putting work up on the Internet for a huge audience to see—particularly with something like the Albert Oehlen show where you've got one work that is getting a huge amount of attention—how do you hedge against the idea that this thing gets burnt? Is there a way that you can have a guarantor perhaps who's ready to step in, or are there mechanisms to prevent an artwork of that calibre from not being sold? And then the second question is: what is the philosophy towards archiving these kinds of sales? Because I don't think there's much archiving of previous sales.

O.M. To the first question, I don't really work in straightforward sale, so I didn't do the Albert Oehlen consignment or anything. But I think that with that project in particular, there was a lot of market analysis that was published as part of that online viewing room. So, we published a lot of data, there were a lot of graphs included in that about Oehlen's market and the strength of the market. The gallery is obviously very behind the idea that this was a great painting at a great price at the right moment. I think there was a sale for \$7.9 million at auction for one of Oehlen's works in June, and it really did continue to rise. I think that the gallery had great faith in that. It was really a strong work to be presenting online in a solo booth. So, I think that's really the kind of story behind that particular project.

E.S. In terms of archiving, for us, we do keep our viewing rooms online after they have closed. So, we do remove the pricing and availability information that was made public for the five to six-week period the viewing rooms were live. I think it's important because, in the viewing room, if something's on reserve, you see it; if something is sold, you see it. But after it closes, we keep the complete archive, but remove that sort of pricing data.

J.M. And the moment you don't have any archives on public view.

O.M. No. So, it's like a completely separate microsite. You can visit it but it's not archived. You can't access the inventory of works, but they're very widely published. You know what we present.

E.S. I will add one more thing that we've actually found that, from several viewing rooms that have happened in the past, we continue to get several inquiries weekly because we leave an inquire button. For Neo Rauch, that's been so incredibly successful that we continue to see sales and inquiries. That one, because it was prints, it's something that we actually have additional inventory of, so we can offer it to clients.

J.M. So, you're basically getting a benefit from leaving it up. Can I ask, out of interest, why do you take the price information down?

E.S. Because over the years, it might become different and the collector will have a different expectation. It's something we've been doing since 2017.

Q3: Talking about reputation, the question was already asked because you have a big credibility so we can see how clients are not reluctant to buy from Gagosian and Zwirner. I just wanted to ask something about, again, smaller and mid-range galleries. How would that affect their reputation? In the sense that before, when we spoke about the young money and millennials, we spoke about introducing art to different aspects, different industries: architecture, interior design, a bit of this Russian constructivist spirit, let's say, where art is part of life, which is very nice.

**“WHENEVER THINKING ABOUT
COLLABORATIONS, ONE NEEDS TO
BALANCE HOW TO ENSURE THE ARTIST’S
WORK IS PRESENTED IN THE BEST
POSSIBLE WAY.”**

We can think of examples of other crossovers: Diesel, which is a fashion brand, did a very nice collection of beds and sofas for Moroso and lights for Foscarini; but that's sold in interior design shops. Also, Yayoi Kusama did a collaboration with Louis Vuitton; I guess it was only sold in Louis Vuitton. I just went on your online shop for Gagosian and I saw a handbag. So how do you think it would affect small galleries if, all of a sudden, they started selling handbags and other products that are not art on their websites? Do think it would affect them? Do you think Gagosian has that power to do that just because of the reputation? Or maybe we should ask ourselves whether there is even a line drawn nowadays between these luxury businesses. Maybe we can just sell everything.

E.S. Well, I remember a few years ago in Miami, I saw some great projects that were really artist driven, and that's what would be my suggestion: as long as it's coming from the artist, they're working on it and it's authentic. I think that that's where you can incorporate that as part of your gallery programme or exhibitions online. Of course, I think that whenever thinking about collaborations, one needs to balance how to ensure the artist's work is presented in the best possible way and really true to what their goals are. So, I don't think it's only the large galleries that can do brand partnerships. I speak

from experience because at Artsy, one of the things that I ended up doing in my last couple of years was running artist projects, where we would work with big brands. Everyone, from Microsoft to Gucci and Dior, is really supporting a lot of younger artists and really enabling them to do large-scale projects that they could not have realised otherwise.

J.M. We've certainly seen artists design projects with small non-profits. I'm thinking about House of Voltaire in London. I know that's a non-profit, but it has a very successful shop, which, if anything, I think probably means that people have heard of it. So, I guess it's what you do.

O.M. It's also about the artist. Obviously, if an artist has been involved in one of these projects and is making a handbag, they wanted to be involved in it and therefore want you as someone that represents them, to be communicating it and communicating it well across different platforms. So, I think that's very much where Gagosian stands.

J.M. So, I guess there's projects that work and projects that don't.

Q4: I'm a PhD student in art market research. Hearing you speak about videos and doing interviews for the online exhibitions, I can't stop wondering whether future galleries are turning into media houses.

**“THERE IS A HUGE VALUE EVERYTHING
THAT WE ARE PUBLISHING ONLINE, AND
THE ARTISTS REALLY WANT IT AS WELL.”**

O.M. So, I actually do have an editorial background. I worked for *Dezeen*, which is an online magazine, for a long time. We had a huge readership and a lot of that was about communicating what architects and designers are doing to a very wide audience who are mainly mobile first, so it's very fast journalism. I do think that those skill sets are attractive to get to galleries. But then equally, the gallery creates a catalogue, which resonates at the other end of the media spectrum. It all is about promoting an artist. There is a huge value in all of the books that they produce and everything that we are publishing online, and the artists really want it as well. The way that we work on the magazine, print and online, is largely artist driven as well.

J.M. I think you said that Lucas Zwirner has taken over as head of all content, is that right?

E.S. Yeah. But that's been a big change, of course. I think it speaks to the media shift you're talking about. I'd sort of reframe it as publishing 2.0, in the sense

that now publishing is no longer just the books and traditional formats we think about, but also really extends into video and online in all these different channels. And so, Lucas Zwirner was at the helm of all of our publishing efforts and really in the last couple of years, he's taken over as the role of all of the content, which does include a lot of digital and the podcasts and dialogues. I think that now our collectors see it as a holistic way to learn about our artists through all these different facets.

J.M. We had the discussion on this last time, actually, and then we were really discussing what the challenges might be to traditional publishers like myself. But it certainly seems to be that most of the big arts businesses are absolutely moving in this direction. Sotheby's and Christie's are producing enormous amounts of content.

Q5: My name is Eric. I run the Tbilisi Art Fair in Georgia. My question is, do you notice different patterns from the sales online? And does it help blur the difference between the materiality of the objects. I mean, do you sell video art, digital art or photography more easily online, than you would do from the gallery?

“PUBLISHING IS NO LONGER JUST THE BOOKS AND TRADITIONAL FORMATS WE THINK ABOUT, BUT ALSO REALLY EXTENDS INTO VIDEO AND ONLINE IN ALL THESE DIFFERENT CHANNELS.”

E.S. Great question. I can say that, you know, again, I think it really varies across price points. One of the really curious things that we found is that amongst the higher value works we tend to sell, there's actually an overrepresentation of sculpture. That's been really fascinating for me. I think it's partially because of the video's ability to really capture texture and the round quality of the object in a much stronger way than just a pdf or jpeg can.

J.M. I think that is fascinating. I thought you were going to say painting, obviously.

E.S. Well, and then for, of course, the lower end, we do work with our artists on monoprints, a lot of different printmaking, and that just tends to, if it's in the lower price bracket, obviously be very accessible. However, I think it really speaks to the quality of the inventory that you put online. I will note another thing is that online has a tendency to sort of erase hierarchies that exist. We even did a project of a viewing room based on this idea of playing

with scale, because a tiny work can get the same attention as something that is completely vast and you can give it that kind of treatment as such. So, I think there are truly unique opportunities that online offers and which, as we've been learning, we've been tending to lean more and more towards and explore those.

O.M. We've had sculpture sales, painting sales, global sales. Interestingly, I think the benefit of all of online for us has been showing true scale, which has also been really important for collectors to see what they are buying. And so, video and particularly the way that Gagosian presents a real online viewing room space play into this. The work is scaled in a room with a chair, so you can see the size of it. That's across sculpture, painting and photography. We've sold a lot of different works online.

Q6: What percentage of artists use the digital as a discursive space and what percentage are working in digital media? Any idea?

“ONLINE HAS A TENDENCY TO SORT OF ERASE HIERARCHIES THAT EXIST.”

E.S. You know, I don't have percentages off the top of my head. We do have an archive, so you can go and see. But I would say that your question sort of speaks a lot to some of the aims and some of the longer-term projects, because I think developing a way that artists can interact with technology and new media online is something that we're increasingly interested in and you'll be seeing in seasons to come. I will note a couple of artists, obviously within our programme, such as Stan Douglas right now, whose show just opened; Dana Thater who is a new media artist; Jordan Wolfson... We certainly have artists who are very interested and aware of working across digital media, and you'll be seeing exciting projects with them soon, I hope.

O.M. Gagosian represents a very broad range of artists in various different mediums. But in terms of artist using digital platforms themselves, when I meet artists, they always ask me lots and lots of questions about social media and are very, very interested too. I'm sure you've got the same. It's just very much part of the discussions that happen within the gallery.

J.M. So basically, you're helping a lot of them get online.

O.M. Lots of them are online and drive their own online presence, of course.

Q7: Do you plan to use all this data that you collect from your online activities, using artificial intelligence, machine learning? Do you plan for future years to come to do something with this data?

J.M. Do you actually collect big enough data sets to do that?

E.S. Well, again, when I was leaving Artsy, I think that they were just exploring the field. And just to give you a perspective, Artsy has obviously thousands of partners and hundreds of thousands of works. And so, when you're talking about big data, I think that's a better question for third-party platforms in a way. Of course, we're going to be taking feedback and iterating based on the learnings that we have. But I don't think that at a scale of doing, two exhibitions online per month, I can really justifiably call it big data. I hope there's a lot of different things in ten years, and certainly, I was one of the people who was in San Francisco last week, and I think that our world has a lot to catch up on and a lot to learn. So, hopefully, we'll be learning not just that, but a lot more.

**“THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE
FUTURE IS TO INVENT IT. THAT SORT OF
MENTALITY IS WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD
BRING TO THE ONLINE SPACE.”**

J.M. If there was one learning tip you'd like to share or something you've done that you'd like to share with the audience. What would be your advice to all these people, these smaller and midsize galleries here? We all look at your budgets and think, well, it's alright for them. But what would you like to share with the audience as a kind of final takeaway?

O.M. What I wanted to say was somewhat covered in the last session in the question about looking at data and how that informs what you're doing online and in terms of promotion. I guess to use it, but also to exercise caution in many ways about staying true to your programming and your artists. I think that really for me is something that we are really trying to do, as well as simultaneously assessing things. So that's probably the thing I would say.

J.M. Listen to your audiences, but don't be so hyped up because people can't really imagine what they haven't already seen. Elena?

E.S. For me, the kind of mantra I would share is something I keep going back to: the best way to predict the future is to invent it. And I think that sort of mentality is what everyone should bring to the online space.

J.M. So constant experimentation. On that note, thank you very much to our panellists and thank you for your many questions.

Kenny Schachter

has been curating art exhibitions in museums and galleries across the globe for over two decades. He has also been lecturing in art history and economics in international institutions for more than thirty years. Schachter has been a recipient of the Rockefeller-supported grant in Mexico and has contributed to numerous books and artist monographs. Along with his longstanding column for Artnet, Schachter writes widely for various international publications. He has been profiled in The New York Times Magazine, Observer, Independent and Telegraph. In addition, Schachter has exhibited his own artworks internationally, including in a retrospective at Joel Mesler's Rental Gallery in New York and solo exhibitions at Sandra Gering Gallery in New York and Kantor Gallery in LA. He also deals in international art from the Impressionist and Modern periods as well as contemporary art from the physical and digital worlds.

God Is Dead, and So Is Art, the Art Business and Mid-Level Galleries

SPEAKER
Kenny Schachter



God Is Dead, and So Is Art, the Art Business and Mid- Level Galleries

Kenny Schachter (K.S.): Jerry Saltz just wrote a book about how to be an artist. And, well, I've completely changed my mind about the topic of the discussion and I'm always contradicting myself; I probably will about five times during the course of the next hour.

Forgive me, but I don't have a gallery, which means I'm probably the last person that's qualified to stand up here and speak about galleries. There's been so much discussion about big galleries that are stepping all over the smaller galleries that I know that pretty much no matter what I say, I'm sure I'll alienate some of the people in this audience, because there are people from small galleries, big galleries. My editor from Artnet, where I write, is here. So, I'm bound to make more than one person angry and I apologise before I get started. But Jerry Saltz just wrote a book on how to be an artist, and he's not an artist. Magnus Resch wrote a book on gallery management and he never had a successful gallery. So, I guess I'm in pretty good company.

The title of this talk has no bearing on what I'm about to say, because, obviously, everyone believes in something and I would never be presumptuous enough to say that it doesn't exist, whatever you all believe in. And I believe in art and I love art. When I did have a gallery for about five minutes (it was actually two years), it was designed by Vito Acconci. And I was pretty much the worst art dealer that ever dealt art. I always joked that I can't sell drugs to a drug addict.

I had a space for two years in New York before I moved to London for fifteen years. It was a great, amazing space. I really never intended to have a gallery. To be honest with you, which I am painfully honest, I did it just because I wanted to get close to him and to work with him because I thought he was such a genius. Vito Acconci shifted from poetry to conceptual art, performance art and he ended up in design and architecture, and he designed the space for me. Those two years were an extraordinary experience.

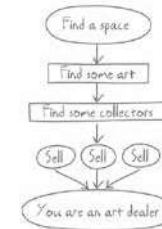
But I have carved out this kind of niche for myself in the art world. What I love about the art world is there's so many people here that are doing such extraordinary things. This morning you've heard about how the Internet is changing the way that people experience and consume art. There're so many different models about how galleries could function today and in the future.

The fact is I studied philosophy and I never knew art galleries existed until I was 27 years old, believe it or not. Now I'm far, far older than that. I thought, naively, that art went from the artist and the studio right into a museum. I went to museums when I was in university, but I had never gone to a gallery. And in my own practice, I do everything: I write about art; I've been teaching at the University of Zurich in the Executive Art Market Studies Program for eight years; I've been teaching since the early 1990s at the New School at NYU, at Rhode Island School of Design; I've lectured at Columbia University; and now I recently gave a class at School of Visual Arts and may continue teaching there. As a dealer, what I am is a dealer-to-dealer dealer: I don't work with private collectors because I just don't have the personality or the patience for it, as you're about to find out.

**“WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THE ART WORLD IS THAT
THERE ARE NO RULES AND REGULATIONS
ABOUT HOW TO HAVE A GALLERY.”**

But nevertheless, what I love about the art world is that there are no rules and regulations about how to have a gallery, what to do in a gallery, how they should function, why they should function. They're all different, and they always will be different. They're wildly changing. But as far as making money in the art world, Ernst Beyeler had a great line at his seventy fifth birthday party when he said, “You make money selling art. Thank you for everyone who bought art from me and enabled me to fund this great foundation in Basel. But thank you more to the people that didn't buy art from me, because they made me wealthy.” Again, there's a million different reasons to have a gallery. Making money is obviously not the first and the foremost because there are a lot easier ways to make a living than having an art gallery, I'm afraid to say. But believing in art, loving art and collecting art is an extraordinary way to create wealth, if you're passionate about it and dedicated to it, like anything else. And that's exactly how Beyeler ended up with his museum: because of his great and vast and deep collection that he put together over the course of over fifty years.

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL GALLERIST



Actually, there's an art gallery that I'll talk about, Edith Halpert, which opened in 1926 in New York. This quote is from Roberta Smith in an article about that Halpert: “Art galleries are by definition fluid and ephemeral: self-created worlds characterised by changing shows and changing addresses. Most are built to vanish”. It's amazing to think about just the nature of this comment about being built to vanish. In a way, that's kind of a sad notion, this fleeting aspect of art galleries, where most of them are not even intended to have a succession plan and to go from generation to generation or from investor to investor or whatever. It varies.

To backtrack a little, I studied philosophy and there were no philosophy jobs. And then I went to law school just to hide. I went to night school. I told my family and my bosses that I was in night school. But there was no night school and I just took the exams. I had never been to a gallery until Warhol's Estate Sale transpired in the late 1980s, in 1988 at Sotheby's. I went there to procrastinate between jobs. It wasn't just his art *per se*, but it was his collection. They were also gearing up for another regular spring sale at Sotheby's. And I just had an epiphany of sorts. I could not believe that art actually was something that was sold. Like I said before, I was an *idiot savant* and naively thought that it just immediately went into a museum. I just couldn't believe it.

After that, I had actually passed the bar exam to be a lawyer. I was as shocked as everybody else was around me who knew me. I took a part-time job as a writer in a law firm. Then I went to a gallery. I'd seen an announcement in *The New York Times*, and there was a print show by Cy Twombly, Joseph Beuys and Sigmar Polke, and I went into the gallery and was so taken aback that you could buy these treasures. I didn't have any money, but I had a part-time job at a law firm and I went to the bank and asked for a \$10,000 loan to buy some Cy Twombly prints. They sort of turned their heads sideways at me at the bank, like you do when the dog doesn't understand the commands that you're

giving it. Of course, they refused flatly and quite explicitly. But then I had the manager of the law firm call up JP Morgan and he told them how much money I was making and I got the loan. I immediately started dealing to other dealers.

At the time, before the YBAs and before the whole art scene in London popped up, it was really Cologne. It was. I'll never forget. In 1991 on the front page of *The New York Times* magazine section was an article asking whether the centre of the contemporary art market was Cologne or New York. At the time, there were great, great, great art dealers—I'm thinking of like Colin de Land from American Fine Art and Pat Hearn in particular. They were just glorious human beings, impresarios, fabulous people that nurtured artists' career and were artists themselves. They've both unfortunately passed away. But I thought that there was nothing I could bring to the table, and because I wasn't tied down to a physical space, I was able to travel. So, I just travelled all over Germany non-stop while I was a part time lawyer. I would buy art and then sell it to either galleries and dealers—like Andrea Rosen I sold stuff to—or I would sort of arbitrage by buying stuff all over Germany and then selling it to the lawyers I was working with, or to Sotheby's and Christie's. I remember I bought this multiple by John Chamberlain and I boldly walked into Pace Gallery and sat myself down and tried to sell it to them. Again, I got the same kind of resistance I did from JP Morgan Chase. In the end, I put the Chamberlain into Sotheby's and Pace bought it for themselves in any event, which is kind of very redolent of the kind of experiences you have.

But back to the gallery situation. I when I first walked into a contemporary art gallery in the late 1980s, already well into my twenties, I was just taken aback. I sort of I hated galleries. I couldn't believe this kind of mentality where they would look you up and down—I mean, I'm wearing pants now, but I'm mostly prone not to, to walk around in my Adidas track pants—but they look you up and down, look at your shoes and make these assumptions. I mean, today, if you walk into Hauser & Wirth—which I'll get into a little bit and hopefully no-one's here from that gallery, I'm not so sure—you can't even get the price of an art piece in the gallery anymore, which is like absolutely ridiculous if you ask me. I mean, these are shops. They're selling art. And you can't even get a price. They won't. You can't. You have to speak to seven people, these layers, before you can get past this kind of wall about just finding out how much the art costs that they're selling.

So anyway, my entire career, the art that I make, the writing that I do, speaking about these things, it's all a kind of reaction. It's not against dealers, because

I've grown to love dealers, art gallerists in particular more than anyone else in the art world. Like I said, I can't sell art to private collectors. Either you like something or you can't. And I'm not the one that's going to convince you to buy it. But art dealers, most of them, or many of them started out making art. They've already made this kind of conceptual leap of faith and they love art and probably more than anyone, at least as much as artists. I love gallerists and love to speak to them, and I only do business mainly through other art dealers anyway.

**“MY ENTIRE CAREER, THE ART THAT
I MAKE, THE WRITING THAT I DO,
SPEAKING ABOUT THESE THINGS, IT’S
ALL A KIND OF REACTION.”**

As far as dealers not having succession plans: There's the Mugar family and the Nahmad family. There's David Zwirner's son. There's Lisson Gallery, father and son; Pace Gallery; the Acquavella family. But mostly, galleries, really like Roberta Smith said, they sort of pass out of existence. Now you have these mega-galleries today, which seem to be on the tip of everybody's tongue.

One of the biggest questions is what's going to happen when Larry Gagosian passes on. In between, he's created this new advisory business and he's hired Laura Paulson, who used to be head of Christie's, and he created this kind of leadership committee. But he probably doesn't care too much about what's going to happen afterward. I'm not being flippant about it. I just think that Larry Gagosian, out of all of the mega-galleries, I would say I probably have the most respect for, because he started with nothing and he's put on some of the very best shows I've ever seen in private institutions ever. I left New York sixteen years ago, and to this day, one of the only shows that I remember from a gallery is a Brancusi show that Gagosian did. He also kept the eminent Picasso scholar John Richardson, who would do like one show every five years, on his payroll for years.

I was in talks with the Metropolitan Museum. There's no one from there, is there? I was meant to do a show there, and they had no money to paint the walls in the Metropolitan Museum between shows. I mean, the resources of public institutions today are so limited. I'm not going to get into private museums so much now, but in my mind, to a certain extent, it's a travesty that so many resources, money and art go into private museums, leaving all of these amazing public institutions in the lurch and not able to carry on.

I made a post about Hauser & Wirth the other day and someone said it was a hotel brand that did collaborations with artists. Then I made another piece about the Hauser & Wirth hospice. I mean, now they're in fully fledged into the hotel business—farms, restaurants—the next step is an old age home. Then I made a bit of a joke the other day. They just stole George Condo away from Per Skarstedt. I mean, you think about the allegiance. It's not just these big galleries approaching the artists, but George Condo had to show up at Per Skarstedt Gallery right in the middle of his show, his art hanging on the wall. He decides to defect and go to another gallery. And that's really the world we live in. So, it's not just the dealers that are complicit. It's the artists and everyone else who continues. So, I made this joke that Kaws himself—like he also is with Per Skarstedt—that he went to Hauser & Wirth as well. Then I had two hundred phone calls, including from *The Art Newspaper* and various publications, whether or not he had—he hadn't.

**“IT’S NOT JUST THE DEALERS THAT
ARE COMPLICIT. IT’S THE ARTISTS AND
EVERYONE ELSE WHO CONTINUES.”**

And again, like it may not sound like it, but I wouldn't judge. Whatever anyone does in the art world that enlarges it is a good thing. Believe it or not, I don't care if there are hedge fund people in art, if art becomes an asset class, if people are lending money on art, borrowing money on art, if they're in it to please or show off to their friends. Whatever it is, it makes for a bigger and broader audience of people that participate.



Go ahead. Follow the money. Maybe those who risk being artists can't be blamed—too much. But H&W's greed mimics Staples and B&N, killers of smaller businesses & local vitality. What top can be lonelier than a top-heavy one?

This is something Roberta Smith just tweeted and posted yesterday. So, again, it's like she's really making this kind of sweeping generalisation that these mega galleries are bad. But I don't see why. I make fun of them and at the same time, I don't really think they're bad at all. I was going to originally talk about how these galleries are taking away all the opportunities and stealing the breath out of the mouths of the younger galleries, but then I was speaking to more and more people, especially Lisa Spelman from 303 Gallery and she was just sick of hearing about it, even though she is adamantly against the Hauser & Wirth model of Megadeath galleries.

**“WHATEVER ANYONE DOES IN THE
ART WORLD THAT ENLARGES IT, IS
A GOOD THING.”**

You're not going to go to a mega-department store like Bloomingdales if you want to buy some funky T-shirt or something. Barneys, which used to be like one of the most highly regarded stores in the world, just went out of business. I just think whatever it is, is. Jerry Saltz and Roberta themselves are constantly complaining about these big galleries. But so what, really? They are because they are. But that doesn't mean that it's a zero-sum game where they're taking away every single opportunity from other people because there's just a million different ways to progress in this business. And throughout today and tomorrow, you're going to hear of some incredible stories of a gallery with twelve equity partners in the gallery, people that are utilising the Internet in various ingenious new ways.

There are so many different models to proceed in this business. And really, the architecture of the contemporary art gallery as we know it, the white cube, is all the same, which really pissed me off also when I was getting started. Every gallery is closed on Sunday except in the Lower East Side. Galleries keep the same hours. They all look the same.

I'm jumping ahead of myself, but some of the dialogue which I was originally, prominently thinking about before I started putting my notes together for this talk was about the huge number of conversations there has been in the last couple of years about how these small to mid-level galleries are suffering today. There have been articles in *The New York Times* about Shane Campbell gallery just closing in Chicago. And then there's been a lot of rhetoric about why these galleries are closing, that it's all about money and there's no more

discourse. And these are some of the quotes of various galleries about the reasons of people closing.

I always used to joke when I had museum groups come to my house and look at the collection: I would say that I don't get to speak about art normally because I'm in the art business and nobody wants to hear about it. Everybody wants to hear like where the artist is showing who's buying it, etc. Because really, in a way, the critics have lost their teeth in a certain respect. It's the collectors that have taken over by having these things like the Rubell Collection in Miami, which sets a whole ton of collectors getting behind the artists that they are showcasing.

But really, they are art galleries and not a sacred cow and it's like any other business. Art galleries have to change with the times. And if there are bigger galleries coming to the fore and taking business away, well, you have to be adaptable and flexible to the changing times—and they're changing so quickly.

**“IF THERE ARE BIGGER GALLERIES
COMING TO THE FORE AND TAKING
BUSINESS AWAY, YOU HAVE TO BE
ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE TO THE
CHANGING TIMES.”**

Again, just to make a kind of comparison to earlier times, in 1991 the recession in the art world was far, far worse than it was even in 2008. There were so many more gallery closings, especially proportionate to how many galleries there are today. You can't even relate what happened back in the early 1990s to what's happening now to these mid-level galleries. So, again, Magnus Resch, a friend of mine who only had a gallery that went out of business, wrote a book about gallery management. If you look at the number of galleries in existence today, there's a huge number of galleries in the world. There are more artists than have ever worked before, more galleries than have ever been in existence before and more of everything. So really, we're not in a crisis whatsoever.

In fact, we're in burgeoning times and it's exciting. I've been in this business for 30 years in every capacity that you could be in. And I think it's damn exciting times with more opportunities for people than ever before. Again, people complain about art fairs the whole time, and there are great art fairs, and art fairs are an incredible resource to find information. It's not the best way to

see art, obviously, in a store with three walls where people come and go, and their attention span is no more than a flea. But José Freire from Team Gallery moaned and groaned and famously complained about art fairs. And then it turns out that he's having problems paying his artists and keeping up with paying his artists. In the art world, the degree of hypocrisy is enormous, and it keeps me thinking about all these different articles that I write and keeps me busy trying to write about it and bring light to it. But it never stops, and it only seems to get exaggerated.

**“WE'RE NOT IN A CRISIS WHATSOEVER.
IN FACT, WE'RE IN BURGEONING TIMES
AND IT'S EXCITING.”**

Unfair was really the first kind of alternative fair. So again, like Cologne was in existence before Basel as the first and foremost contemporary art fair in the world. Cologne was launched prior to Basel for contemporary art. This is Damien Hirst's piece at Unfair 1992. I don't mean to showcase his work; he doesn't need any more attention than he has. But this was a piece he did. The Unfair was one of the first alternative fairs in existence. There's an art gallery in Hove in the UK where they have their gallery in the back of a vape shop of all places. There are incredible places to find art that you would not ordinarily find in some of these alternative art fairs. It would be a shame if it comes to this kind of zero-sum economics mentality, where if people would only go to art fairs and never go to galleries, that would be shameful, in a sense.

But when I started in the business—again, dating myself as to how old I am—if you wanted to communicate as a visual artist what you were doing, you would have to take a sheet of slides and send them in an envelope, and the gallery would hold them up to the light. That was the only way that you were able to communicate visually what you were doing. I remember Brian Calvin, an artist who's now showing with Anton Kern but was then living in Ohio, contacted me and wrote me this whole letter. He wanted advice to break in and get a foothold into the system. It was during the recession in the early 1990s. I just simply wrote back—not to be brusque or anything—but I wrote, “Move to New York.” And really, if you didn't move to one of the centres of where the markets were in Germany, in America, in New York or Los Angeles now, which is burgeoning, there was really no way to get started.

And then now we have online sales and the Internet, which are just exponentially growing. It's incredible to think that. I've been writing since 1992, except no one ever read anything I ever wrote because it was before. I'm not sure how many people do now, but that was before. I mean, the iPhone came out in 2007 only and Instagram in 2010. And my kids always tell me how addicted I am and how awful it is that I never take my eyes away from the screen. But really, it's been like this wrecking ball, and it has democratised art in a way that just makes the hair stand up on my arm, because I have never seen anything that reduces the hierarchical nature of the art world. And back to when I first walked into these galleries and they just looked askance at me, knowing that I had no money to spend, except for Colin de Land. He said that I could pay him a dollar a week for a photograph for the rest of my life, which I thought was quite extraordinary of him. And he meant it, which is why he never quite succeeded business-wise.

**“THE INTERNET HAS BEEN LIKE
THIS WRECKING BALL AND IT HAS
DEMOCRATISED ART IN A WAY THAT JUST
MAKES THE HAIR STAND UP ON MY ARM.”**

But you could be making art anywhere in the world. I curated a small show in Los Angeles of a British modernist artist called Roger Hilton, which just opened two days ago. Then there's another show, a painting show that I curated where the artists largely came from Instagram. I'm organising a booth in Felix Art Fair, coming up in February. It's again, a new alternative fair started by the art dealers Morán Morán, two brothers and a collector. This fair is burgeoning, the only alternative fair to Frieze right now that's commercially successful. Only I will end up losing money doing it because I'm showing eleven artists from seven different countries in a teeny, little hotel room. That's just the nature of how I function. But I found a large number of the artists on Instagram although, again, nothing will ever substitute standing in front of a work of art.

It's funny because when I first started, I was curating shows and I worked with young artists. I found them to be like very, very difficult people to work with. Even though I'm one of them and I've been told by my editor on a regular basis how awful and difficult I am. But I used to think like these artists behave as if they're curing diseases and they're not. I did some charity work with my kids in London at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, and it turns out that the hospital is actually accredited as a museum. They have a very proactive

position of putting art in the public spaces and commissioning artists to make art for the rooms. Clinical studies show that as a result, the patients are having shorter hospital stays, requiring less medication.

There's not a day that goes by in my life that I don't wake up and rub my nose against a drawing or painting. I started with drawings and work in prints because it's such an accessible way to collect art, and it really does make a difference in my life, with my family and the communication with my family. In London, for fifteen years I had an office with no windows but surrounded by art. So aside from selling art at some of these very bogeymen people that I mentioned—Hauser & Wirth, David Zwirner and Gagosian and all of these galleries and private dealers that I sell bits and pieces of my collection with—I just did a sale when I was moving. It took like a shovel and four people working, helping me to pack things up for four months because I just hoard things all the time. I always envisioned, like all of my art falling onto my head and suffocating me and killing me. So, I did this online only sale at Sotheby's.

**“THE MORE PEOPLE DOING DIFFERENT
THINGS WITHIN THE ART WORLD MAKES
FOR A BROADER ART WORLD. THE MORE, THE
MERRIER.”**

I don't bemoan anyone. I think the more people doing different things within the art world makes for a broader art world. The more, the merrier. I've always said that and literally I teach all the time. I thesis advise, people contact me from DM, from Instagram. I meet with anyone. In London I just was there for two days before I came here and had three or four meetings from people that just contact me to speak to me for advice, whatever bad advice I can offer them. And I think it's so important. Well, so I sold 116 lots online only at Sotheby's. It went extraordinarily well and I had no reserve, and there were some complaints, like from two artists who complained about the low estimates. They were low estimates, but no reserve, so any price that someone bid would get them a piece of art if it was the winning bid. And there was this actor in London, Russell Tovey—here I go, starting to misbehave—but, I don't know him from a hole in the wall. And he wrote on my Instagram site when I posted a catalogue of my sale and he said it was shameful what I was doing. When I started, there were five sociopaths in a gallery opening, drinking Rolling Rock beer and that was the audience. There was no audience for contemporary art the way now you have Kanye West saying he would trade

two Grammys to be taken seriously in the art world—I think it would take a few more. But I mean, Brad Pitt is making art with Thomas Houseago and Matt Dillon is making art. The world has changed.

But this actor who has a podcast called Talk Art with a great dealer who works with Carl Freedman Gallery said it was shameful that I was selling all this art. Nothing that I sold I've owned less than four and a half years. There were pieces of art I've owned for twenty-eight years, twenty years, fifteen years. I just thought, today, everyone puts their fingers up in the air and the wind blows and everyone wants to talk about contemporary art, finally, after it had painted itself into a corner and in America, at least, nobody cared for so many decades. I thought it was just plain rubbish that this actor now has a podcast. He publicly criticised me for selling art of people that I've collected. I still have hundreds of things; I've been collecting art for thirty years and it's a very important aspect of what I do and I live with it and it makes a huge difference to me and I buy it primarily from small galleries. And then I found out that this actor, in fact, had sold stuff he'd recently bought from various galleries, two of which I mentioned in this talk. It is just typical of all the kind of hypocrisy you find in the art world.



When it comes to galleries and the history of galleries as we know them, Alfred Stieglitz had an incredible gallery from 1885 to 1917. I love the way that it had

a skirt around it. It's inspired me to choose my next show. But it's funny that first he had a fight. This was a time where they were trying to get photography taken seriously in a contemporary art context. It took like literally almost a hundred years for this, more than a hundred years for this. How photography fits in the discourse of contemporary art is still a battle in people's mindset. But him and his partner, another famous photographer, were arguing amongst each other about how to structure it. They had a consignment deal of 15 per cent, so literally nothing changes in the art world. And I used to think that I was running away from big business when I went to law school to go into art, and then art became bigger than the business I was running away from. But at the same time, art was more conservative than all of the law firms I used to do part-time work for. Nothing really changes; it's so backward-looking.

**“THE ART WORLD HAS GROWN MORE
IN THE PAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS THAN
THE PREVIOUS THREE HUNDRED YEARS.”**

So, this is what I mentioned before. There was just an incredible show at the Jewish Museum in New York. Roberta Smith wrote two reviews, one in 2006 about a book about Edith Halpert, which I highly recommend reading. There was this exhibition and this woman was one of the two most successful businesspeople in her mid-twenties in New York City. She saved all of the money from being a consultant and opened a gallery. It was one of the most significant, so far, far ahead of its time. She was commercially very successful and represented some top-flight galleries. I love how some of the ideas that she had were just so cool, like this ad she took out in a magazine. Instead of jewellery, buying a car, buying fashion or buying a TV, why not buy art as a gift instead of all of these frivolous types of things? It is incredible when you think about it. And also, she started the first gallery ever to have a layaway plan. All of these things are employed today still by galleries.

She also showed black artists way before it's finally become normal. Women and artists of colour have been subjugated in the art world for so many decades. Then you have artists like Baselitz saying in *Der Spiegel* and many other publications that the reason female artists have lower prices than male artists is for one good reason: that they can't paint. And there should be a bigger backlash against his market for even saying stuff like that on the public record—it's just ridiculous. And finally, now things are changing, but this is nothing new.

This is something that I made a little bit of a joke here with all of these, but Edith Halpert wrote a letter to Martin Hartley when she couldn't sell one of his paintings during the Great Depression. She told him she couldn't even sell his painting for \$300. There should be a soup kitchen for millionaires. I don't mean to be flippant about this, but everyone's complaining about the uncertainty and the straits of the art world today, but the art world has grown more in the past twenty-five years than the previous three hundred years. Edith Halpert died even before the Scull sale, which was the first time contemporary art ever entered an evening sale. Then it went dormant until the mid-1990s, where really impressionist and modern art was the profit centre for the art market. The only art that ever sold at auction financially successfully was impressionist and modern art until 1996/97.

**“THESE BIG GALLERIES NEED ART
BECAUSE THEY ARE MACHINES. THEY
ALSO NEED TO TAKE ADDITIONAL
SECONDARY WORKS.”**

When Abbey Rockefeller opened the Museum of Modern Art in 1929, that was the first kind of clinical white cube type architecture. Her husband was so unsupportive. It's not just because she was wealthy that she was able to start the MoMA, which was on like the 10th floor of a building on 57th Street. She started it by getting donations from people because her husband wouldn't give any money whatsoever. Ultimately, he warmed to contemporary art and he donated the location which became MoMA as we know it. But this was the first time, really. And the reason that they had this white-cube architecture was to kind of confer value on a Pollock painting—no one would conceive spending \$3,000 for splatters on a canvas at the time. So, this kind of gallery model was created to confer value and kind of a credibility and an imprimatur on the art when there was only a small handful of galleries in the world that were catering to it.

Julien Levy was another amazing avantgarde dealer and he was already playing and toying with the architecture of MoMA. He incorporated these curving walls and film, which was again extraordinary stuff happening then, which would still be considered radical today, shockingly enough. He did the first Frida Kahlo show.

And then you have Betty Parsons in 1946. She was being poached for artists in the mid-1940s and she was really annoyed about this fact, but then she picked up subsequent artists. So, you see the degree to which art dealing is like a rock in a creek: she was annoyed by the fact that all of the artists that she nurtured were being poached, similar to what's happening today. Hauser & Wirth just announced two days ago that they have taken over the artist Simone Leigh and trying, demanding worldwide exclusivity, blah, blah. But this is nothing new. It's happened the whole time. And she just found some other artists who happened to be Agnes Martin and Jasper Johns among them.

So, to where we are today. In my conversation with Lisa Spellman, she told me she was constantly getting information about the death of mid-level galleries, while she saw they were much more full of life than the big galleries. When I first announced that I was going to talk about the death of mid-level galleries, I came around to the fact that, you know, the more I thought about it, the more I realised I've never bought anything from Hauser & Wirth and I've never bought anything from David Zwirner—sorry in the front row—although I've sold stuff to them. And even though I've angered some of these very people by the revelatory nature writing that I do, if I have a painting that they want, they still talk to me. These galleries need art, these big galleries because they're machines. Hauser can't get by just showing the ninety artists that they presently represent. They also need to take additional secondary works. So, if I have a blue Picasso, which someone I know in Zurich happens to have, I could be the most annoying person in the world, and they're still going to deal with me because they need art to sell.

And so, Lisa was complaining about these big galleries and I said, “who cares?”. It just is what it is. And she said she cares. And everyone she speaks to cares, but she's flourishing. It was her idea in the first place to speak about successful mid-level galleries. I just think Gagosian is a self-made person and what he's done is extraordinary. And if he chooses to have a gallery in every beachhead across the world—I wouldn't, if I was him, but he does—so who cares? I mean, really, if he wants to have a shop open 24 hours a day, that's his prerogative. And in fact, I don't think it takes away from the initiatives of other galleries. So, I decided over Christmas to draft these very haphazard questions, which I sent to 27 galleries. Just silly things, but things that immediately came into my mind in relationship to what it is like to have a gallery. Are these people really under the gun? Are they suffering? Are they angry? Are they not making a living doing what they are doing? Because like I said before, there's about 19,000 galleries in the world today. So, somebody is doing well. They are still

getting up every morning and going, opening the doors and turning the lights on and doing shows.

How long gallery	*Gavin-brown	
Best exp? Worst	Essex-street	
What could be better?	*Sadie-coles	*Carlos Ishikawa (Dec 25th)
In black or red?	*Carol-green	Von Ammon (Dec 26th)
Do you like artists?	*The-Clearing	*Canada (Dec 28th)
Has view changed?	*Chateau-Shatto	*Magenta plains (Dec 29th)
Art fairs? Auctions?	*Simon-Lee	*Moran Moran (Jan 2nd)
Do you use advisors?	JTF	PPOW (Jan 3rd)
How do you use net?	*Kordansky	*303 (Jan 4th)
Would you want kids in biz?	Blum-and-Poe	Kandhofer (Jan 7th)
Can critics move market, museums still?	*Nino-Mier	*Emalin (Jan 7th)
Do you like collectors? Are they the new critics?	*Union-Pacific	*Ginerva Gambino (Jan 10th)
Private museums, yes no?	*Canal-47	Mitchel Innes Nash (Jan 10th)
Been flipped?	*Fortnight	*Frederics Freiser (Jan 18th)
Does waiting list exist? Can I jump que? Black list?		
What would make it better?		
Would you still want to do this in 5 years? 10?		
Do you collect your artists? Others?		
Best part of job? Worst?		

This was a series of questions I asked. And this is the group of galleries that I questioned. Most of the galleries I sent the questionnaire to are in America, which is where I come from—I just moved back after 15 years in the U.K., I have three kids in college in New York—but there's galleries also from other countries and everyone loved art and everybody couldn't conceive of doing any other thing. The ones on the left are the ones that didn't bother replying to me; the ones that are on the right were kind enough to respond. I even gave the day because I sent out the questions on the 24th of December, just before Christmas, and you could see when people replied. The little round circles next to each gallery are the galleries that I bought stuff from before over the course of the last 30 years. So many of the galleries I bought stuff from still wouldn't be bothered to reply to me, which is not surprising, because my family rarely responds to me. If someone asked me why I am here, why I am speaking here, I would scratch my head. I thought a bit about it. First of all, you're a captive audience and no one listens to me at home. And now you're all stuck here, whether you're sleeping or not. So, you're here obviously to hear other people. But the fact is that as long as somebody calls me and wants to, I never say no. So, I had five lectures in November. I'm speaking in Mexico after this and Switzerland and all over the universe just because I respond to anyone who sends me a message and asks me a question because I feel it's my obligation. I've been doing this for thirty years now and I've seen so many different changes and I've changed so much myself. I've already contradicted myself seventeen times in the last forty minutes and I'll continue to do it.

But the fact is, I care so, so, so, so deeply about what I'm doing. And that's really why everyone's here. That's why I've grown to love art dealers so much, because it is kind of a hapless, difficult job. It's a hapless life to lead. But you do it more because it chooses you than you choose to do it on a certain level. And the fact is that I feel like I'm compelled to share all my experiences. I've never been spinning. I've never repeated the same lecture ever. And I do it because it keeps me thinking, and it keeps me focusing on these things that are so very important to me. I think it makes me better at whatever it is that I do, actually, which I'm still trying to figure out.

Vanessa Carlos spoke here last year. She said there's no white artists that have anything to say anymore, even though her stable is half filled with male white artists. And again, not one of the galleries that responded to this questionnaire as ad hoc as it was. You see lots of continuity, lots of threads that they all have in common in relation to their answers. They all love what they're doing, like there's no tomorrow. They love art fairs. She said how much she loves art fairs and the conversations and the great collectors that she has. At the same time, she complained about travelling. So you can't say I love travelling all over the world to go to fairs, but I hate travelling. I mean, I think the one disappointment I have in my life is that. It's incredible, having lived before Internet and getting my first computer when I was in law school in 1984, a big IBM thing, but getting on a plane and go from one location to another still takes so long. It's such a major disappointment that they haven't been able to, like, deal with that issue because we could go to more art fairs.



This is a young, small gallery, only open for one year, Von Ammon, in Washington, D.C.



CANADA Gallery's Katherine Bernhardt just had a show that opened. Phil Grauer has had the gallery for twenty years. I did a show with Katherine before back in 2003. He was one of the few people that would rather his kids not go into the art world. For me, I would love if all of my kids went into art because it's really the only coinciding spheres of interest that we share amongst us. And in that regard, I curated shows with my kids in China, in L.A., in New York and in London.



Magenta Plains is a gallery on its third year. They recently showed a young artist called Ebecho Muslimova. She was drawing for ten years and only just started painting about three years ago. I think her work is quite extraordinary. The gallery was the brainchild of mid-career artist David Deutsch, who's maybe in his early sixties. It was his idea to start the gallery in Los Angeles and they put two partners together to run the gallery. One was his assistant and the other girl, Olivia Smith, who's the main kind of person running the show. But again, I think there's no orthodoxy to the model of running a gallery. There are so many different ways to do it. All of you, I would say, know better than me. The future is sitting right in this room and there's going to be so many new ways to do it. Even how Instagram has changed my life and changed the way that I access art and learn about things has been so monumentally profound that what's to come in the next three or four years is going to be even more earth-shattering.



Morán Morán is a gallery in L.A. They just started. I guess questions like a waiting list is like this total kind of fictional element that many galleries have where anyone jumps the waiting list if they're considered to be more hierarchically significant than the next person.

But, I mean, it's amazing how many galleries said that there are great young collectors that are involved in their business practices, that they're nurturing, that they have very super goodwill. I mean, from what you would read, you would think there is not. I'm guilty myself because I write about the high end

of the auction market, about people flipping stuff and speculators and criminal activity and all of the stuff that goes on—and there's plenty of it. I've been a victim of some of it recently myself, which I'll be writing about shortly. I mean, for me, I'm kind of like a pervert when it comes to all these terrible things that happened to me. At least, it's the basis for another story to tell.

**“IT’S AMAZING HOW MANY GALLERIES SAID
THAT THERE ARE GREAT YOUNG COLLECTORS
THAT ARE INVOLVED IN THEIR BUSINESS
PRACTICES.”**

The fact is that none of these people were jaded or cynical that I spoke to. They were all really happy with the support system they had for their galleries.



**PPOW
37 Years**

the best encounters are when you believe in an artist and then gradually with time they become appreciated by a greater audience. Worst encounter is the opposite and having to tell them.

Also, always worrying about finances and always having to move - as we never owned our spaces.

We have been doing fairs basically since we opened and always saw it as part of the business. Of course now it is a constant pressure with about 7-8 fairs a year.

Would you want your kids in biz? My daughter works for us.

More money so our artists can create their dream shows. Less dealer competitiveness and more collegiality.

Would you still want to do this in 5 years? 10?

Yes I hope so we just signed a 10 year lease.

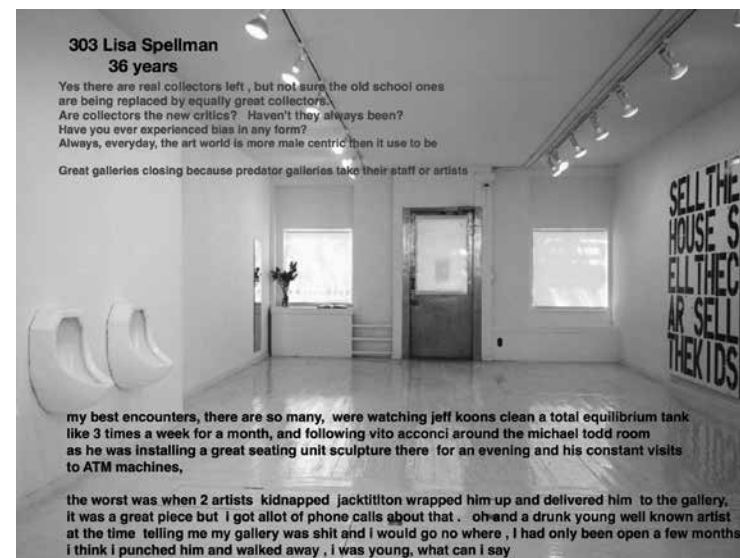
Auctions can be very hazardous to our business. We find we have to support our artists at the sales and of course we are ever alert to avoid flippers. We also dislike how they are now acting like dealers with none of the integrity.

This is an incredible sight. I mean, of all the stories, I think this may be among the most incredible: PPOW gallery. They showed David Wojnarowicz, one of the great artists, who died of AIDS in the 1990s and Martin Wong. They've been around for 37 years. When you think about the perseverance and the tenacity in showing political art through the boom in the 1980s and all of these various times, like in the market today, where people just focus on the commercial aspects and the hotness of young artists and the saleability of

artists, and these dealers have just stuck to their course with such great focus, it's just it's an incredible success story. And now, after David Wojnarowicz just had this incredible travelling exhibition that was in Spain and was all over the world, it's amazing to see the success that they're having commercially today after all of these years. Now they sell out all of their shows. It's just a great story. And unlike my bad experience when I started, they continued to have great relationships with their artists and loved them very much.

**“EVEN THOUGH THINGS HAVE CHANGED AND
THE DOORS ARE OPENING TO THE EXTENT
THEY’VE NEVER OPENED BEFORE, WE ARE FAR
FROM PARITY IN THE WORLD.”**

But one of the questions was about sexism and racism, and I think even though things have changed and the doors are opening to the extent they've never opened before, we're far from parity in the world. In terms of the commercialisation of art, I just saw an incredible group of posters by Guerrilla Girls pinpointing the kind of disparity between male and female artists in the Maxwell Museum. And it's still terrible, but it's gotten much, much better than ever before.



**303 Lisa Spellman
36 years**

Yes there are real collectors left, but not sure the old school ones are being replaced by equally great collectors. Are collectors the new critics? Haven't they always been? Have you ever experienced bias in any form? Always, everyday, the art world is more male centric than it use to be

Great galleries closing because predator galleries take their staff or artists

my best encounters, there are so many, were watching jeff koons clean a total equilibrium tank like 3 times a week for a month, and following vito acconci around the michael todd room as he was installing a great seating unit sculpture there for an evening and his constant visits to ATM machines,

the worst was when 2 artists kidnapped jacktitton wrapped him up and delivered him to the gallery, it was a great piece but i got alot of phone calls about that . oh and a drunk young well known artist at the time telling me my gallery was shit and i would go no where , i had only been open a few months , i think i punched him and walked away , i was young, what can i say

Lisa Spellman has put 36 years of hard labour in the business. And this was an early show she did with Robert Gober and Christopher Wool before anyone was interested in either of their works, when she first started. Funny, she said one of her best encounters was watching Jeff Koons clean his fish tank every five minutes because he's a little bit anal retentive. Jack Tilton was kidnapped; she didn't mention who the two artists were that kidnapped him.



Emalin Gallery is in London, another emerging art gallery. They've been showing Alvaro Barrington, a young artist of colour, who's had enormous success in a very short period of time.



Ginevra Gambino is another gallery. She made up this name because she felt when people owed her money, if her last name was Gambino, maybe they'd be moved to pay her quicker because it's a name of a famous Mafioso family in America. Not sure if it worked. But again, her gallery is about the size of the stage and she ploughs through it and does a great job and shows incredible young artists. These types of companies exist all over the world. Like I said, and it gives great hope for someone, as cynical as I may seem, that you still discover great artists in these galleries, see great shows. And when there's a fair like in Cologne, that's when you visit some of these galleries that you wouldn't ordinarily visit. So, there's a kind of spill-over effect from all of the reported prices of like \$450 million for this "Da Vinci" painting, which I've written about. At the same time, like with all of the negative things, with all of this stuff, you never read about these small galleries that are doing well.

“WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE WRITE AN ARTICLE IN THE NEWSPAPER ABOUT ALL THESE GALLERIES THAT ARE CELEBRATING THEIR SPACES AND THEIR CAREERS?”

Why doesn't someone write an article in the newspaper about all these galleries that are celebrating their spaces and their careers and their relationships with collectors, with critics, with museums? It just doesn't make for good news. So, you just hear the headlines about how midsize galleries are struggling. I was getting sucked into it myself by starting to think about just writing about what I was reading until I just spoke to more people and kept an open mind.

The fact is that there are great opportunities today and a lot of these people are thriving, thriving, thriving, thriving, despite all the rhetoric and all the stories and all the rubbish that you hear again and again and again. It's really not the case. Like I said, like, if you saw all the dots, I'd been buying way too much stuff. I'm hoarding again in my new place in New York. And I can't stop because, like for most people, it becomes like a disease. But I just love patronising these small spaces. And then you hear art is too expensive. Or you can buy posters; I do. I buy prints. I'm so non-hierarchical in the way in my bedroom are posters and prints. A Christopher Wool print for \$500. You can get stuff from any artist so accessibly—go to art schools and buy paintings for under \$1,000. It's really not the case that you read all the time that art prices have grown so exponentially. It's just not so. And really, it's as accessible as it was the first day that I got into the business and started by buying prints.

Mitchell Innes Nash since 1996

Do you generally like artists?
I certainly admire their creativity.
It has been a wild ride and never boring.
Certainly working with Pope. L is one of the best experiences.
Art fairs? Auctions? They will all be digital in the next 3-5 years.
Might not have to go to a physical venues any more.

Advisors: When they are good they are an asset and I would even argue a necessity starting out today unless the collector has the time to do the leg work (literally).

When they are uninformed (don't know the difference between De Kooning and Pollock when standing in front of both (yes it has happened) they are a liability. Nowadays we will only invoice the collector directly.



“THE FACT IS THAT THERE ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TODAY AND A LOT OF THESE PEOPLE ARE THRIVING, THRIVING, THRIVING.”

Mitchell-Innes & Nash has existed since 1996. It's all like kind of doing time, like being a lifer in prison by leading this life that we all lead—but think of the alternative! I mean, I couldn't think of a better thing to be standing here having all you guys stuck listening to me, but it's joyful in a sense. And from here I have to run off to Brussels where I'm going to be curating a show, and then to Hamburg where I work with Harald Falckenberg, who has a private museum, and then to Tokyo, where I'm doing a show with Blum & Poe of my own artwork. I never would have dreamt twenty years ago or even five years ago that I would even have that opportunity. It's extraordinary that these people, as commercially successful as Blum & Poe—although they didn't bother replying to my questions—have offered me a small project space to do a show of my own work. And it was inconceivable that a gallery like that, which exhibited Yoshimoto Nara, Takashi Murakami and Mark Grotjahn when there was no market for those artists. They've been in Tokyo for thirty years.



We have Fredericks & Freiser, who showed Jenna Gribbon. She did her first exhibition there, and now her career is launched: the paintings are 5,000\$ more or less. And they sold out her show. And this gallery has been running for decades and doing really well. They had negative comments about younger art. Today, at Phillips, you can see paintings that still smell like paint that they're selling, which may not be the best thing. And again, like it's a normal course of business if you buy something from a gallery and sell it six minutes later. Well, the gallery is just never going to sell you a piece of art again. And that makes perfect sense and it's their prerogative to do so. But that's just the way it is.

Carol Greene has an incredible gallery; I remember she was working for John Good Gallery and I was showing the work of Rachel Harrison and she chose a few pieces for a group show she was curating. Rachel Harrison just had a retrospective at the Whitney Museum, which was an incredible show. She didn't answer my questions, but she had good reason: she's running around and expanding her gallery like never before. She gave a nice recommendation to my kid so I couldn't fault her for that.

But then you have like 47 Canal, which is one of the top young galleries in New York, and I get an answer saying they have a blanket no-comment policy. I just wrote to Mike, "How pretentious can you be?" I just asked him these

simple questions to share with you guys in this talk. Then, my friend sitting to the left of me, Georgina Adam tweeted when she went to Condo the other day criticising some small galleries for the lack of enthusiasm the staff had in talking about the art. She's cringing right now; sorry, but too bad. You did post it on social media. Condo was this great kind of gallery-sharing model started by Vanessa Carlos. And Georgina couldn't get a conversation going with them. These are young galleries and like this guy couldn't be bothered to speak to me, but like, why? I mean, it's not that I'm trying to exploit him or write an article and talking smack about him. I'm trying to share the success of his gallery. Then you get comments like this and then like Maxwell Graham, who owns Essex Street Gallery, a great young gallery of conceptual art in New York. He said he had a no-interview policy. I retorted it was not an interview, just have a few simple questions.

**“ART ONLY EXISTS WHEN IT’S A MEANS
OF COMMUNICATION.”**

When I first started, it was this kind of mindset that turned me so off galleries that everything I was doing was against this kind of attitude which still exists today. The galleries are doing well, some are not doing well. Some are struggling, some are thriving. But this kind of mindset, you still find more in the art world I would say or in fashion or these other kind of snooty professions where you experience this kind of attitude, which is just kind of sad because really, art only exists when it's a means of communication and to share with you, which is the reason that I'm standing here.

I don't mean to be like Hans Ulrich, who I really like and respect, and dart off to the next event or the next thing because I have to go to Brussels. I love Hans, but I just made a joke in my last article that he's in like one of these Star Trek teleporters because he disappears from one opening to the next before he's even finished with his own talk. And if anyone has any questions about anything, and I don't think I'm the greatest, most successful person to rely on for any advice or anything, because I'm not. But in any way that I can help share any information that I've gained over the past three decades, I'd be happy to do so. And I feel like it's that's what I do. So, I'll wrap it up just in time.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: Thank you very much for your talk. It was very interesting, as always. You mentioned about a lot of galleries are creating art fairs. And again, people keep complaining about how tiring they are and are not really generating enough new clients. It's really costly to do art fairs. And we can see so many galleries have started doing alternative exhibitions, like exhibiting in holiday places or outside of the white cube spaces. I mean, do you think with the global travel economy a gallery might start searching out new options to engage with alternative spaces or maybe hospitality? Do you think it's more cost-effective for mid-size galleries? Do you think it's more experience-economy focused rather than generating the real sales? What's the opportunity you see?

K.S.: Well, out of the eleven people that responded to my questionnaire, not one of them said they didn't benefit financially from going to fairs. I think that it's absurd to do fifteen fairs a year like some people have wanted to do.

**“THERE ARE ART FAIRS ALL OVER THE
WORLD, AND THEY CATER TO DIFFERENT
AUDIENCES AND THEY’RE DOING WELL.
OTHERWISE, THERE WOULD BE TWELVE
LEFT AND THERE AREN’T.”**

I just think if you prune down the fairs, it's alright. Literally not one person even complained just about being there physically, the existential part of sitting in a gallery in a fair booth. Everyone I spoke to had a positive experience from one fair or another and found it a crucial part or aspect of their business to meet new clients still. I mean, José Freire complained in a two-part article—one part wasn't enough—about how awful it was for him. Yet every single person that responded to me said that art fairs were continuing to be a very important, crucial part of their business model.

And they still make money if they do Condo and switch venues with another gallery. Those things are great and the more the merrier. There's another space in London, which is like a timeshare where you join as a member and you can get a room in this building, which is in Kensington, and you can showcase your work. Sure. Anything that works, works. But art fairs work. Otherwise, there wouldn't be six million of them. I mean, they've grown from like 50 in the year 2000 to like 300 today. And that's not going to change.

Q1. But what would be the opportunity for mid-size the galleries to exhibit in alternative spaces, especially those travel destinations?

K.S. I don't know. Take over space, work with another gallery, go to one of these smaller fairs like Felix, the Independent or the Internationale in Paris. These small fairs are killing it. They're doing so well and they're going to continue to do well. There's one in Brussels and there's one in Cologne and in every place in the universe. There was just one in China that did extraordinarily well. That was an alternative to Hong Kong because of the political unrest that's going on now. There are art fairs all over the world, and they cater to different audiences and they're doing well. Otherwise, there would be twelve left and there aren't. And they can continue to do well. It's just, again, that I just don't believe that's true.

“IF YOU'RE FOCUSED AND YOUR PROGRAMME WARRANTS IT, AND YOU HAVE THE GOOD ART, THEN YOU'LL SELL IT IN AN ART FAIR.”

Q1. Then it's not a good alternative.

K.S. Anything that works financially is a good alternative. I can't say what that alternative is. Rent a space. Pop up a space. Do something in a hotel. Do something in a friend's shop. Do something in an apartment. Like I said, with that stupid little graph; find some clients and sell, sell, sell. I mean, art fairs generate traffic, whether you like it or not. When people have these Instagram-reduced attention spans—myself included—go to an auction preview. You see the most incredible things in the quickest amount of time. It's like the best free lunch in town. Galleries are all over there. There are so many different ways to consume art, though, when it comes to buying art. Art fairs exist because they work. I mean, they worked for all of these people that I spoke to in a very profound, meaningful way. Not enough for them to stop it. None of them complained about it other than they have to get on the plane and they're very costly. But if you're focused, and your programme warrants it, and you have the good art, then you'll sell it in an art fair. It may not be Basel; it may not be Frieze; it may not be the Armory or the big one. But there's another one somewhere that you will find a niche. Nothing's going to replace art fairs anytime soon. Just not going to happen. Sorry.

Q2. You have interests in activity across different cultural industries. Do you think that we'll move towards a kind of elision of different cultural industries, or do you think that, you know, fashion, music, media, art will always have the really distinct economies and businesses?

“IT'S GREAT THAT INSTAGRAM AND THESE THINGS ARE SPREADING THE WORD OUT TO A FAR WIDER AUDIENCE THAN EVER BEFORE. BUT THESE CROSSOVER THINGS, I'M A LITTLE BIT SUSPECT.”

K.S. I think there's more crossover now than ever before. But still, I mean, art is art. And I mean, I don't like to admit how stupid I am. I'm film illiterate. I lived in London for fifteen years, and I saw the Mormon thing, whatever it was, the Mormon show play. I don't go. I don't. Everything I do is art related seven days a week because I just think I love it so much and I'm so deep into it. But I mean, it's interesting that in a way I could say good and bad about all these fashion companies. Now, it's like art was this. I mean, in the 1980s, it was one fashion TV show in the world with Elsa Klensch on CNN. And there were no designers that were celebrities and supermodels and all of that. I did a questionnaire where from Harlem to Wall Street, I asked a series of questions to random people about art; if they knew about who somebody like Matthew Barney was when he had a retrospective at the Guggenheim. And nobody even knew who he was at the time. So, I think like this whole thing with Louis Vuitton and Hermès, all these scarves and Jonas Wood scarves and pyjamas and Alex Israel sheets and blah, blah, blah. I mean, do we really need that? Is that a good thing? Whatever. I mean, I'm not going to pass judgment on it. I know that I wouldn't be sleeping under Alex Israel's sheets. But, you know, I'm not going to say he shouldn't make them. But I don't think it's really furthering the cause. I mean, really, art is either you like it or you don't. It's like a switch that turns on or off.

And the fact that these this Korean pop groups are now like supporting art. I mean, please stop. It's annoying. It's just all marketing. I just hate to see it. Before fashion, art was like the last bastion; it was so erudite, and it pissed off and alienated so many people because they created this environment where you had to be so brilliant even to understand what was hanging on the wall. And you have to be rich and you have to be clever.

It's great that Instagram and these things are spreading the word out to a far wider audience than ever before. But these crossover things, I'm a little bit suspect. It's great if it brings new people in. Swizz Beatz is now like on the tour curating shows and doing art fairs and again, great. The more the merrier. But sometimes what really annoys me is like this whole Virgil Abloh stuff. Bless him, he's obviously a genius. Maybe I'm a little jealous, but him having a show at the museum in Chicago: that's terrible because there's only so many slots that the museum in Chicago has to showcase art in a given year. And I understand that it's top box office draw to have Bjork at MoMA and all of these James Franco and this whole Klaus Biesenbach thing of celebrity culture. But they have their space, they have their money, they have their resources. Leave us alone and let us just we fill the museums with art for the artists that need art. I'm sorry. Whatever.

**“THE REASON I LOVE ART DEALERS
SO MUCH AND GALLERY PEOPLE IN
PARTICULAR IS THAT THESE PEOPLE
LOVE ART MORE THAN ANYTHING IN
THE WORLD.”**

Q3: Thank you for the informative talk. Just to round it up: my question is personal. What still motivates you in the art world? What makes you believe in the art world still after you experienced the 1980s, the 1990s?

K.S. I mean, to be honest, I just had a terrible personal tragedy where I lost one of my kids. And it's inexplicable the suffering and the grief that you experience. And I somehow was so naive to think that art would even make my family stick together forever. All this economic stuff and all this art stuff is meaningless, really, in the big scheme of things, when you face a tragedy like that. But honestly, again, like every day of my life, I look at a piece of art and it just makes me feel better. It's just I love it so much.

I would travel all over the world to give a talk to anyone about anything, and if I can, help kids in relationship to what I suffered. At School of Visual Arts I tried to introduce my more personal experiences. I won't bog you down with these now, but I just think that for me, art is like the only thing that helps me get up in the morning. And the reason I write these articles that often get me into trouble and people try to beat me up in restaurants and threaten my life, as you can begin to see why. But I mean, that's all I believe in, to be honest with

you. That's the only thing I believe in besides my family. My feelings haven't diminished from the first day that I saw art in front of my eyes and it's such an extra. I think if I had \$10 billion in the bank, I would pay a billion dollars for a painting. It wouldn't even faze me whatsoever.

And the reason I love art dealers so much and gallery people in particular is that these people love art more than anything in the world. Otherwise, they wouldn't waste their time with all these struggles that they're facing. It just gives me such solace and such a peace of mind to just see the creativity, the manifestation of human creativity. It still moves me so much. It's like when the Supreme Court were asked to define pornography and the judge said he couldn't describe it, but knew it when he saw it. When I see a piece of art which may look like junk to somebody else or may look repulsive, if it touches me in a way, it just gives me a reason, you know, and still does. And I don't think it'll ever change. Thank you.

Haro Cumbusyan

is a social entrepreneur and a collector of media art. He is the Founding Director of EK BIÇ YE IÇ, a social enterprise based in Istanbul that focuses on alternative food production and consumption ecosystems in big cities.

Between 2012-2027, he ran collectorspace, a nonprofit organisation that through its exhibition program, off-site events, and publications, aimed to open up private collections to public view, and subject them to critical review. Collectorspace brought significant artworks from reference-worthy private collections from around the world to its storefront location at the edge of Taksim Square in Istanbul. Haro is currently involved in metamorphosing collectorspace into producerspace.

Miguel Ángel Sánchez

founded ADN Galería, in Barcelona, in 2003 as a hybrid platform between commercial mediation and cultural contribution aiming at promoting current artistic ideas and trends. The program focuses on content-based productions that work as a semantic reflection of the contextual dynamics in which they emerge, thus encouraging reflection on current socio-political issues. In 2013 the gallery opened ADN platform, a second space located in Sant Cugat, at the outskirts of Barcelona, which hosts a wide range of projects and public programs. Following its expansive spirit, in September 2019 ADN Galería moved to new headquarters, located at Mallorca 205, in the heart of Barcelona's Eixample district.

Carolina Ciuti

is currently the Artistic Director of the moving image art festival LOOP Barcelona, which she joined in 2015 as part of the curatorial team. She has curated the publications *I Have A Friend Who Knows Someone Who Bought a Video Once* (LOOP Barcelona, Mousse Publishing, 2016) and *Before the name: a book on an itinerant performance project* (RAM Editions, May 2018). In 2017 she co-founded CRiB, an art collective that creates hybrid projects between visual arts, performance and theatre, recipient of the Movin'Up Spettacolo/Performing Arts 2018 Award (MiBACT).

Buying Time: The Market for Video Art and Moving Image

SPEAKERS

Haro Cumbusyan & Miguel Ángel Sánchez

MODERATOR

Carolina Ciuti



Buying Time: The Market for Video Art and Moving Image

Carolina Ciuti (C.C.): Hi, everyone. Thank you for sticking with us for this presentation. Thank you, Lluçia and Sol, who are part of the team, for inviting us to talk about moving image art. I'm really happy to be here with Haro Cumbusyan and Miguel Ángel Sánchez, who have been part of the LOOP family for a long time. Since we're going to be talking about video art, I thought we might as well start this conversation by watching a fragment of a video.



These were the first two minutes of a longer video that you can find online¹. It's *Video Art Manual* by Keren Cytter, an Israeli artist who I'm sure you all know. It's a forty-minute work that reviews and outlines the development of video art throughout the decades. Possibly not one of the most known videos by Cytter, it points to some of the topics that we'll try to deal with over this presentation.

Even in this brief introduction that you've just seen, that blinking bearded man points to some of the things that I think distinguish video from the traditional media that we know. First, its similarities to cinema or, as film critic Jonathan Walley would say, "the modes of film practice within which the moving image is used and circulated". Second, the novelty of its language, which, back in the day, implied the emergence of a new type of viewer, who is definitely different from the viewer of painting or sculpture, and who is possibly also a producer of content. And third, its suitability to represent human thoughts and register the current mood in society. As you know, it is often said that video is the medium of our time, inasmuch as it gives artists the possibility to see reality

¹ *Video Art Manual* by Keren Cytter is available to watch on: vimeo.com/90758296

and represent it. Let's think of the etymology of 'video': it comes from the Latin *videre*, which means 'to see': it is a medium that gives artists practitioners the means to see a reality that is bigger than the one we live in. At the same time, I think that video has been able to integrate into life better than any other media has done: nowadays, we can see moving images on all the screens that surround us.

Over the years, it has allowed artists to share personal accounts and it has been an elastic and powerful tool for exploring identity and also representing history. However, and here's where I would like to kick off this conversation, its inherent temporal nature, its high reproducibility and ephemerality don't make it easy for video on the art market.

**“ITS INHERENT TEMPORAL NATURE,
ITS HIGH REPRODUCIBILITY AND
EPHEMERALITY DON'T MAKE IT EASY
FOR VIDEO ON THE ART MARKET.”**

Let me introduce a study that was carried out by the French Ministry of Culture in 2017, two years ago—I wasn't able to find more updated data on this topic. They were looking in general art collecting trends in Europe and a part of this study was looking at what were the most collected mediums by private collectors. The way they went about this analysis was by interviewing gallerists in France and fair exhibitors. The result, for me, was surprising, because even though they say that video was one of one of the most deployed mediums by artists, if not the first, it was the least collected, only followed by performance. I have my personal opinion on why the situation is such. But I would like to ask you, why do you think that is? And before we delve into this debate, I would like to know from both of you, Haro, how you started collecting moving image and, Miguel Ángel, when you started working with artists that use video.

Haro Cumbusyan (H.C.): Great question. But first of all, so nice to be here. I was a little bit worried about having to follow the brilliant discussions this morning and this afternoon, as well as the very entertaining and engaging presentation that Kenny did. But fortunately, we have some good questions. And thanks for the introduction and also thanks to Kenny for getting rid of my concerns about alienating and offending a lot of people in the audience.

I started collecting at the beginning of the 2000s because it seemed like it was the natural place to start for me. I grew up with watching music videos, MTV and so on, so moving image was part of my life growing up. I was involved with technology. I was not worried about putting together cables and screens. It seemed like the screen was in front of us all the time anyway. And I had an office job and I was looking at the screen all the time. So, having them at home on the walls wouldn't be a big deal. And at that point, I was in New York with my wife and we were involved in some of the museums' young collectors' groups, and that gave us an insight into what young curators were looking at. It was then clear that they were very much interested in what artists were doing with video, so we got to see some of those works. That got us thinking that it was the right time to start collecting video because established collectors have inertia. They already have a collection of whatever it is, paintings or sculpture, and changing direction is sometimes not that easy, whereas when you are just starting, it's a clean slate. Now, I feel like after about twenty years I feel I might be stuck with video! Because I get shown video works, I don't get to see good paintings. So, I don't know what's happening on that market. So, there are issues like that.

**“THE VIDEO ART MARKET IS
QUITE SMALL.”**

But, for me, it has been a great journey and to jump ahead a little bit, too, to your other question, why is video not collected as much? I want to bring a counterpoint saying that nowadays when I see a video that I really would like to acquire, it is not that easy for me to get it; it is actually quite competitive. So, there are certainly works that are sought after in the video market. But of course, compared to all the other works that are being sold, it's a tiny amount and it's still not where it needs to be. And we can talk about what the reasons might be.

Miguel Ángel Sánchez (M.Á.S.): So, let's face it: the video art market is quite small. It's based on content. There is no presence on the secondary market, but on the other hand, we have really engaged collectors following what's going on. I don't know the study, I don't know the figures, but actually most of the work produced doesn't sell.

I don't see any difference in the video market compared to the other sections of the market. We've been exhibiting video since 2003, since the very beginning of our gallery. Our programme is basically content based. So, it is impossible that we didn't jump into video and I'm very optimistic. I think that we are a

bit spoiled: we need to see the indicators changing quickly in order to pay attention. But there has been a quantum leap in the last ten, fifteen years. Over the last sixteen years, we have sold almost 200 videos.

H.C. That's amazing!

M.Á.S. In fifteen years. So, it's not that much. But at any case, what I am trying to say is as the new generation of dealers and galleries comes of age, we will see more video display in art fairs. We will see more video programmes on a regular basis at galleries and then the market will follow.

**“AS THE NEW GENERATION OF DEALERS
AND GALLERIES COMES OF AGE, WE WILL
SEE MORE VIDEO DISPLAY IN ART FAIRS.”**

H.C. But to be fair, it has been very slow. When we were buying our first videos, we thought by mid-2000, it would be a mainstream thing, and it didn't happen. And actually, for a while, it was nowhere to be seen. Now it is coming back again a little bit. And that was quite a surprise. Who might be responsible? Certainly not the artists. Artists have been producing videos for the past sixty years, and they stuck with it. They are still doing it, even though nobody is getting rich except maybe a few people. It's really not the most lucrative medium to do work, but there is so much that can be done. That's the advantage of video.

M.Á.S. If you take the allegory with photography, how long did it take for photography to really get into the blue-chip section of the market? I think it's a matter of time. We're really too close to the beginning to say that the development is being slow. It's a slower than I'd like to see, but I think I'm very optimistic about the potential of the medium, in practical terms.

H.C. So am I. But again, it still it is surprising because we had precedents like photography that had already done the difficult job of selling limited-edition works. And in the past twenty years, things have been progressing so fast driven by technology that what used to take thirty or forty years now takes three or four years. So that's why I am surprised. There are certain reasons why it has been difficult, which I think we need to understand a little bit. If artists are not responsible, then neither are curators. They are showing video: if you go to a biennial, it's all video. It's also practical to show video in a biennial: you

don't have to insure the work, it is easy to transport etc. But also, there's a lot of content in video, and biennials are usually more content driven. Museums are acquiring a lot of video, and a lot of their shows have video in it. So those are not the barriers.

What has happened again in the past twenty years is that the art fairs have become much stronger. They've become a real force and have changed a lot of the dynamics. I'm sure you feel that, Miguel Ángel. It has changed how artworks are being acquired and sold for galleries and also for collectors. And let's face it, it's very difficult to sell video at an art fair, which is why we don't see any: it doesn't fit into that art fair format. It just does not work, except here in Barcelona with LOOP, which is a setup that does work. Every year I come here to LOOP and I see a bunch of faces with a big grin, because finally they are able to see a lot of video works in a setting that is appropriate, where you can control the light and the sound and give people time to actually sit down and watch.

**“WHEN WE WERE BUYING OUR FIRST
VIDEOS, WE THOUGHT BY MID-2000, IT
WOULD BE A MAINSTREAM THING, AND
IT DIDN'T HAPPEN.”**

C.C. Yeah, I think one of the inherent problems of video is duration. You need time because of its processual nature. And it's a problem that we experience in our everyday lives, which are ruled by a hectic pace. In last few years, as I was visiting fairs for LOOP, I've been doing an exercise of actually counting how many exhibitors were presenting videos. This data is not that accurate because I did it myself, but it was I would say less than 5 per cent of the general offer. And I'm looking at fairs such as Frieze, FIAC, Artissima, Miart, ARCO Madrid. And as you're saying, fairs are gaining more and more power and maybe—Miguel Ángel, you can confirm—are the places where most of the acquisitions are made outside the gallery. And so, what is the future for video in that panorama?

M.Á.S. That's a very good question. I always try to show one or two videos at every fair I go to in spite of it being a bit more difficult to sell. For instance, two or three years ago in ARCO, I showed a video. Pretty much no one noticed. The next year the artist showed the same video at his studio and we almost sold out the edition. It was quite funny. But again, maybe I'm naive, but I think we're

going to see more video at art fairs as a new generation of galleries comes of age. I think it's a matter of time.

C.C. Even if the fairs don't change the format?

H.C. I'm not so sure about that because it's just very expensive to show video at an art fair. It requires a lot of floor space if you want to do it right, if you want to isolate it.

M.Á.S. That I agree with.

H.C. If not, then, you don't really experience the video properly. That's probably why it usually doesn't sell.

“IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO SELL VIDEO AT AN ART FAIR, WHICH IS WHY WE DON'T SEE ANY: IT DOESN'T FIT INTO THAT ART FAIR FORMAT.”

M.Á.S. Compared to maybe bigger galleries, we only sell one out of three pieces that we show at an art fair as an average. So, the promotional part of the job we do at art fairs, we cannot disregard either. So maybe you don't sell the video because you are not showing it in the proper conditions and you have it on your TV – no matter its quality –. It's not the perfect display. But you keep building on, you keep promoting it. And I'm crazy enough to show hour-long videos at an art fair. I know people are not going to stand in front of it more than three minutes, but then maybe that curator, maybe that institution, maybe that collector pays attention and then it's easier to transfer the file to see it in a proper way, in a calmer way at home. So, I think for me, it's an excuse to build on what I've been doing in the gallery with video.

H.C. It's great that you have that persistence because I reckon a lot of galleries feel like they cannot afford to experiment with it because the cost of participating at a fair is so high that they just have to sell. So that pressure, I think, is resulting in fewer videos being shown in fairs. But for instance, what we have in Basel with Unlimited gives video a big platform. Of course, there are only limited slots where you can see video, but you know that it is a big presentation of video to collectors, and I assume that there's a transaction that happens on that platform.

C.C. We all agree that it's not a problem of the offer because we say that there are a lot of artists working with video. You've also said that you find sometimes difficulties to buy video because it is really competitive to get one; maybe it's not even a problem of demand. So, what is the problem?

H.C. Maybe the big problem is that there is a lack of secondary market and there is this idea—not mine, but my interpretation—that collectors are driven by different forces. It could be the intellectual challenge, intellectual pursuit. It can be the financial drivers. Or it could be what I call vanity, which is the social aspect of having social recognition, having nice artworks on their walls, whatever. And no collector is driven 100 per cent by one of these three aspects alone. It's a combination of the three. But whether somebody is 80 per cent intellectually driven and 20 per cent financially driven, or the opposite, makes their decisions very different in terms of where they would go when acquiring works.

“IT'S NOT A PROBLEM OF THE OFFER BECAUSE WE SAY THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF ARTISTS WORKING WITH VIDEO.”

If I may generalise, it is when they don't think that there is a chance of reselling the work that everybody who has some level of concern in terms of the financial burden that will come with acquiring the work or the potential that it brings would obviously think twice, whether they are speculating to make a quick buck or doing it as a long term asset preservation. So, we have not managed to create a secondary market. The auction houses, I think, are not also that motivated to create a platform for video. They have tried briefly, very haphazardly, maybe opportunistically, I would say, and failed. That was during the financial crisis of 2008, and after that, nobody would put their works from their collection up for auction because nobody would give the right price for it. So now it's a spiral that has bottomed. I don't know how to reverse those dynamics, but certainly there is an issue with the resale market of video. And maybe we can talk about it.

M.Á.S. That could be. I mean, you're right. But at the same time, for me it's a blessing that there is no secondary market and craziness behind video so far. Let's be honest, for us in the middle and the middle-lower echelons of the food chain, the secondary market cannot be a reference. So, it has helped us a bit to keep expectations regarding prices a bit low, and that helps rotation. That helps closing deals for us, for me at least. So, I don't want to be provocative,

but I wouldn't be so willing to root for having a secondary market of video erupting in the next years. I think eventually it will happen as some of the most significant artwork nowadays is done with video. So eventually the market has to follow, will follow, if the market pays attention to quality and pertinence.

H.C. I absolutely agree. And I am certainly not in favour of increasing prices. On the other hand, we want the resources to go to the right places. We don't want artists to have to produce the bright and shiny works that somebody can hang on their wall so that they can finance the real work that they want to do. So that's the concern, that we don't want the misplacement of resources. But I completely agree; when we think about these works, being in biennials, in museums and being reference works at some point, obviously, collectors will follow.

**“MAYBE THE BIG PROBLEM IS THAT THERE IS
A LACK OF SECONDARY MARKET.”**

C.C. Well, I also think that as you were mentioning, it really depends on the profile of the collectors. I think it's really difficult to envision a market for video that would function in the same way as the market for any other media, at least looking at how the situation is now. I also hope that it would not evolve into the same market. Collectors who acquire video may of course be collecting other media. And they're certainly preoccupied with financial gain. But if you buy video, maybe your expectations need to change. The kind of reward that a collector might have in buying video can be of another sort.

H.C. That could be very interesting. The issue is that the additional difficulty is that it's not easy to produce a video. It requires in some cases substantial financing. And who finances artworks? It's by and large the collectors. So, if there is a difficulty in that route, if collectors are not financing the works, then a lot of works are not being made. So, we have to find a way of financing these video works.

C.C. Maybe it's not that you will expect some financial gain by the prospect of reselling videos in the future; it's just a collector could maybe be the producer of that video and then gain some sort of recognition, having their name in the credits or even getting a copy of the video after having contributed to its production. So maybe that type of game is different.

M.Á.S. Maybe I'm not answering the same question, but I'm lingering on a previous thought. Let's be honest again. Most of the work is not going to give a return, a financial return in the future. We all know that. I mean, I think we are all tricked by the blue chippers, but in the end, the secondary market is only good for a few winners and bad for most of the artists.

H.C. The only difference is that everybody who buys a painting thinks that they may get a blue chip, whereas the ones who are buying a video have no hope.

M.Á.S. But then they are wrong.

H.C. Yeah, absolutely. They just don't know it.

**“IF COLLECTORS ARE NOT FINANCING THE
WORKS, THEN A LOT OF WORKS ARE NOT
BEING MADE. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY OF
FINANCING THESE VIDEO WORKS.”**

M.Á.S. So that is not the issue in terms of production. Again, depending on what the piece requires, producing video can be also as cheap as producing a photography show. So, depending on the subject matter and depending on where you have to travel and all the technology that you require but, in my humble opinion, most of the most significant works I've seen ever since the 1970s to today were not expensive to produce. So, production is a way of looking into what we do. But you can always find a way, you can always find complicity with a collector that really knows the artist and is willing to buy the piece even before it's been produced. Or you can reach an agreement with a couple of collectors that are buying any video produced by these artists. And it's a win-win deal because they're paying the same amount they paid for the first piece. So, it's a matter of looking for complicities and being open-minded about talking to collectors and talking to institutions. An institution can produce a video and then recover the production if they decide to add some more resources, patrimonialise the work.

H.C. I agree with you that the works that need to be made are made. Usually that's the case. It may require a little bit more time, a little bit more pain on the part of the artist and the gallerist who stands by the artist but at the end they do get made.

C.C. Of course. I think it also depends on what artists and what video works we're looking at. There's a wide range of video. If we think in terms of production, just to give an example you'll know, *Cremaster* cycle by Matthew Barney or *24 hours* cycle by Douglas Gordon both required an incredible effort in terms of production. It was solicited by the part of the institution that commissioned the work, and then a lot of private collectors jumped in. But then we can look at other videos – as those that are usually presented at LOOP: they are mainly single channel works and made with less equipment. The first two cases I mentioned are maybe more similar to cinema production, but video doesn't have the industry that cinema has.

H.C. But it's up to the artists and some of the artists do want to cross over or maybe push the limits of video. So yeah, a lot of great work can be done with very low budgets for sure. It's up to the artist in the end, and some of them do want to create more elaborate works that require a budget, that require a team. It's not just the old type of artmaking where the artist just got a canvas and some paint.

**“SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
ARTWORK NOWADAYS IS DONE WITH
VIDEO. SO EVENTUALLY THE MARKET
HAS TO FOLLOW.”**

M.Á.S. As you said, you find your way. There is this organisation in London called Apolitical and they are making a collection, but only producing the works. So again, it always has to be a win-win deal. So, they may invest less than €60,000 euros in producing a trilogy of videos by Democracia, and they buy all of them for €60,000, which is the amount they advanced in production. So, they are putting together a collective to do things that one alone could not do. And they're building up a collection, a cheaper collection compared to what they are acquiring.

H.C. I think that's the way that we have to go. You were mentioning what the additional benefits are that can be given to someone who would support video production. Credits might be one of them, especially for collectors who are driven by the vanity aspect of collecting; if they want social recognition, then having their name on the work as co-producer certainly has some value. It's difficult to quantify. But, you know, I'm sure some people will like that. But if we move closer to cinema and the film production world, where everything is driven by finances, all decisions are so well documented and structured, then

there will be some return expectations as well and we have to think about how to structure it.

M.Á.S. And if you allow me, that doesn't fix anything because how many good filmmakers cannot carry on their productions? So, it doesn't make a difference.

C.C. Also, to go back to the modes of film practice that I was mentioning at the beginning – i.e., those things that constitute the similarities of cinema and video. If we look at the reception and the audience, it's completely different. Even though an artist might want to step into the cinema industry, then the audience for that specific video will never be the audience of a commercial cinema.

H.C. It might be even bigger, but not at the moment of release. That's maybe the difference between art and cinema. Cinema is made for the general public now, and the bigger the audience, the better the outcome, at least financially. But artworks have a longer lifespan.

**“CINEMA IS MADE FOR THE GENERAL
PUBLIC NOW, AND THE BIGGER THE
AUDIENCE, THE BETTER THE OUTCOME. BUT
ARTWORKS HAVE A LONGER LIFESPAN.”**

M.Á.S. They get better over time.

H.C. Exactly. I mean, the good works actually find their value twenty years after they are produced. And at that point, people may line up to see that work, but that doesn't help the financing question. We have a similar problem in literature where publishing is basically driven by how many people will buy the book. It's a financial decision and a lot of people have to read the book for it to be published. But that means that some books that would be amazing works of literature would not come to the market because today there is no audience for it or it's very small. But in twenty years, they might still be there. Fortunately, publishing has found ways of getting around that problem and there are smaller houses that allow those kinds of works.

But we don't want art to be subject to mass appeal. We don't want popular works to be made all the time. There should be work that only the crazy few might go ahead and finance, might still be willing to support the artist doing what they think is necessary even though they may hate it. A handful of people

might be sufficient to create those financing mechanism for the works. If we go the crowdfunding route, we may just get popular works, and we know how populism ends up in many different areas. So, my preference would be to find ways of the current financing system. In a way that makes sense for video production, and it's not clear how it is at the moment. As you say, you struggle and you find. But it's too much struggle and not everybody knows how to do it. If you can share your experiences with a lot of other galleries who are trying and failing, that may be very helpful.

M.Á.S. There is no formula. But again, since for me, there is not a mindset when I deal with video and a mindset when I deal with installation. So, to me, it's difficult. I do have to find my way anyway.

“WE DON'T WANT POPULAR WORKS TO BE MADE ALL THE TIME. THERE SHOULD BE WORK THAT ONLY THE CRAZY FEW MIGHT GO AHEAD AND FINANCE.”

C.C. So do you think that the limited-edition model and the fact that it's living together with on-demand or online streaming platforms might be holding back collectors from acquiring video? I can give an example. There was a video work by Fischli/Weiss that was acquired by a collector. A year later, it was available to buy for €30 on DVD. At LOOP—not to be autoreferential, there are other platforms like ours—we have an online streaming channel that's called VIDEOLOOP hosting a lot of the videos that were presented at the fair throughout the years. You can access the video for free. And of course, those videos were sold at the fair, as is maybe the case with some of your artists.

M.Á.S. Circulation confers value. Maybe I'm just too optimistic here, but I don't really see the problem of two systems co-habiting. We all want the artist we work for or the artist we include in our collections to really have an institutional career. So, if we don't have a limited edition, if we don't deal with scarcity, how are we going to ask institutions to really take care of those works? But again, buying video is a set of rights, getting an agreement with the collector, the mediator and the artist. I want my videos to be seen by as many people as possible, so I don't understand why that is refraining collectors from acquiring the work, if they are acquiring the rights to exploit, resell, communicate and enjoy the work anyway.

H.C. The fact is that it actually is a problem for collectors. In a way, I would like the collectors' mindset to change. Probably it will, because we are moving in that direction in all sectors. I haven't bought a music CD or whatever music is now sold in because I stream it. A lot of things are on a on-demand basis, but again, that impacts the financing. The pains that the music and film industry have gone through with streaming highlights this fact.

M.Á.S. But it is a matter of audience. We're talking within the millions.

H.C. Yes, for collectors rarity has always been an important aspect of the value of the artwork. The whole market is based on only being one out there. And if I don't get it, somebody else will, and then I lost my chance. So, I'm willing to bid a little bit more at the auction. So that's how things get out of control.

“DO YOU THINK THAT THE LIMITED-EDITION MODEL AND THE FACT THAT IT'S LIVING TOGETHER WITH ON-DEMAND PLATFORMS MIGHT BE HOLDING BACK COLLECTORS FROM ACQUIRING VIDEO?”

When you have limited edition, we still preserve some sense of rarity. But the question is where are the breakpoints? In my opinion, an edition of ten is not collectable in the sense that we see at auction or in the painting world. But galleries typically see it as a linear function. They talk with the artist and—correct me if I'm wrong—work out the amount of effort the artist has put in and the money they want to get in return for that effort, let's say \$30,000. The gallery has to make some money out of it, so they'll keep 50 per cent. The work has to generate \$60,000. We can either have ten editions at \$6,000 or five editions at \$12,000. The gallery will say it's probably easier to sell at \$6,000, so let's do it that way. But the reality is that for the collector, it is not a linear function, especially thinking about the secondary market, where prices react exponentially to the lack of alternatives, not linearly. So actually, by increasing the edition size, they are removing value from collectors

Another issue is that there is no standard. One gallery goes for five plus one artist's proof; another goes for seven plus one; and some works are in three editions. In the collector's mind, there is no way of comparing the prices of two works with different edition sizes, especially because the relationships are not linear. So that creates another confusion. These are just little things

that make the video market a little bit uncomfortable for collectors. If you are concerned with the investment side of the equation, you just stay away. If you are just involved with the other two parts—the social or intellectual aspects—you don't care and then you go ahead with it. So basically, what you are trying to do is to find those collectors, but they are not that many. That's the problem.

M.Á.S. But there will be.

H.C. Well, we can hope.

“FOR COLLECTORS RARITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE VALUE OF THE ARTWORK. WHEN YOU HAVE LIMITED EDITION, WE STILL PRESERVE SOME SENSE OF RARITY.”

C.C. Yes, exactly. And I think that artists cannot be held accountable. Curators cannot be held accountable. So how can we get around this scarcity of acquisition or how can we find those collectors, even though there are but very few? Even though I've been working at LOOP for the past five years, I still struggle to find an answer to this question and to how the limited-edition model can work when applied to video. If we look at the inherent nature of video, it's temporal. It's processual. It's highly reproducible. And even now, with the proliferation of platforms, market circulation remains necessary.

H.C. Well, beyond the limited edition, we have to understand that for digital works, the copy is as good as the original. And again, for some collectors, that's a scary thought because you lose the idea of authenticity, because all of them are authentic, in a way, and maybe none of them are. But this is nothing new: we had that with instructions-based works; as long as we have the instructions, they can be reproduced. So, again, it's a matter of establishing standards and building trust about how it will work.

C.C. And I wanted to ask you, as we've been talking about these online platforms, I know that you have artists who have all of their videos online and artists who have problems with that. We see on the Internet different types of platforms. For example, Kadist Foundation inaugurated the Kadist video library last year. They put up all their video collection there and you can access it for free, but you have to sign in. So, they'll get your contact. And those are all works that they've previously acquired.

Then there is another model, which is blinkvideo, founded by Anita Beckers. She tries to establish relationships with galleries and artists. The archive that is up there is not a collection, so it wasn't previously acquired. It's just a video library. You can access it by signing in. And what we have at LOOP would be a third model, where we talk to galleries who participate in the fair and ask them to allow us to publish the video on a completely open platform and for free. Of course, artists can decide to publish it with a watermark or at a lower quality. And of course, you cannot substitute the experience of seeing a video installation. But what do you feel would be the best option, thinking not only about the artist, but the collectors as well?

“VIDEOS NEED TO BE SEEN. AND THE MORE PEOPLE THAT SEE THEM, THE MORE VALUE THE WORK HAS.”

M.Á.S. Well, again, there is no formula, but we sign contracts. A contract is meant to protect the collector and to respect the artist's will. So, you can navigate between those two poles and find a way. Yes, some artists don't want their work to be put out on public display; other artists will have minor resolution works for public displays. I don't want to sound naive again, but I don't really see it. For me, it shouldn't be a problem. If I own a video, what is the problem with ten billion people knowing it and having access to it? It's going to give value to the work. Circulation adds value. It doesn't restrain. Of course, maybe because the video art I deal with is in the lower bracket of prices, so I would never think that if I put €5,000 or €10,000 into buying a video, I was going to become wealthy out of that. That would be naive, too. It can happen, but it cannot be the driving force of collecting. Maybe I'm just spitting into the wind, but this is what I think: videos need to be seen. And the more people that see them, the more value the work has. As simple as that.

H.C. That is true for all types of art. Obviously, artists are making the works for them to have some impact. And the more they are seen, the greater impact they will have. The difference, I guess, is what rights are being transferred to the public when we put those things online. It's all relative in terms of the numbers that we talk about, but a lot of the good artworks now are at a price point that people cannot just be fine if they don't get anything back at some point, if the next generation doesn't have something in return. So that that is a question mark that is holding back the adoption.

M.Á.S. What do you think about contracts in which you explain clearly what the transmission of rights is?

H.C. I have one in my pocket! The question is, as long as it's not standard I think it will be a problem.

M.Á.S. But how can we do it? The tax system, it's different in every country.

H.C. And it's a problem.

M.Á.S. It's a problem.

H.C. And that's why people have to jump through hoops.

M.Á.S. But what I'm trying to say is that the big things like taxes are crazy. Why do we need a standard contract? It would constrain because some of the artists find it very restrictive. And other artists, they don't really care that much. Why should we force both poles into the same box?

H.C. This morning we were talking about transparency. I think in the current system, the collectors don't know what they are getting. They certainly don't know what they are getting.

M.Á.S. Knowledge is another thing. Of course, we have to work to educate people and see into transparency, but that's another problem.

C.C. But maybe contracts are a tool for that towards transparency. And with that, we can open up to Q&A.

QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Q1: I have a few questions from my video artists to you. The first one is about acquisition. What makes each of you decide to screen, feature or buy a video artwork? And in terms of valuation, what sort of price brackets do you suggest for emerging mid-career video artists? Is there a kind of rule of thumb? And last, a more specific one: how many copies should there be in an edition?

H.C. I have a strong opinion on that. I think we have to come up with a number that makes sense. And unless there is a significant reason to depart from it, we should stick with it. Five seems to be reasonable to me. You know, if it's a really good work, I would assume that one or two at least would be going to institutions. The first one might go to the coproducer, and there might be two that go to individual and private collectors, and that keeps it manageable. In an ideal world, maybe we get rid of the ownership idea and find a different financing system, which I don't know how to do. But as long as we keep this system, an edition of five plus one artist copy—not two; one artist copy—is, I think, a good system.

M.Á.S. Regarding prices that's a tricky question. Production cost doesn't dictate but has an influence. You need to, at least, recover the money you have invested into a work, as my colleague says. Personally, I'm very conservative with prices when it comes to young, young artists because, again, I'm obsessed with circulation. I consider the gallery as a platform for communication, as a media, indeed. Selling zero copies at a very high prices gives you zero income. So, I'd rather have a few pieces circulating for a lower price, especially if the artist is young. Then everything gets complicated as the artist gets a few institutional shows and some become emblematic; we are all a bit spoiled sometimes. But let's put it this way: you can find very, very good videos between €3,000 and €6,000, if that gives an answer.

Q2: I'm Aylin Seçkin from Istanbul Bilgi University. My question is what do you think about the impact of blockchain technology on video art? If blockchain technologies are used to distribute the screening rights, could that be easier maybe to keep up with the distribution channels? And can that also increase the visibility of the art? We call it conversation currency, which is very important, and it is a very strong exchange rate for artworks. The more the artwork is talked about, discussed, the further its currency, the value of currency increases. So, what do you think about that?

M.Á.S. Not an educated answer, but again, I do believe that unfortunately the art world is not so one-dimensional. So, trust is still a player. And I am not a techie. So, to my knowledge, blockchain technology prevents people from stealing information etc. But I think if I do something really wrong to Haro here, I'm out. So, nothing else I can say about it. Sorry.

H.C. The blockchain could be a tool to facilitate the distribution. By itself, it's not going to be sufficient, because you still have to attach it to the work. But

it's a public repository, which is a good thing to have. I'm not sure it's necessary, but potentially it could be used.

“BLOCKCHAIN COULD BE A TOOL TO FACILITATE THE DISTRIBUTION. BY ITSELF, IT'S NOT GOING TO BE SUFFICIENT, BECAUSE YOU STILL HAVE TO ATTACH IT TO THE WORK.”

Q2: It could promote the visibility of the artwork.

H.C. I don't see that.

C.C. In what sense do you mean that it could promote or enhance the visibility of the artwork?

Q2: You can publish it. You can visualise it. It will be easier to publish these works. And you can trace who publishes where and when. I think video art needs more exposure, but this exposure should be tracked well. So, tracking part would be undertaken by blockchain technology, and so we would know how many times and by whom the video was seen.

H.C. Well, on Vimeo you can track or YouTube you can track in terms of who is watching. Actually, that's a point that we didn't touch. But video also has a big competitor because now everybody's a video artist. And when there is such a flood of the same medium, people get confused.

C.C. Well, and especially with social media and the online platforms that we were talking about before.

H.C. Yes. It's so easy to produce the works that somebody is basically deciding which ones belong in the gallery, which ones belong in YouTube and are freely available. Sometimes there are exceptional videos on those on those platforms, which is also an issue.

C.C. Yeah, I think that the democratisation of tools in this sense made it more complicated. But it's also interesting if we have to envision a future for the market of video and we look at artists like Signe Pierce or Molly Soda who are making most of their artworks online, and not just online but on platforms such as Instagram. So that will also be a natural evolution of a fragment, a segment of that market.

Q3: I come from the photography market and before knowing editions in this market, there were only prints going through collectors building a market. So why don't you think the video market, which is young enough, should just start by producing videos, no matter the number of editions?

H.C. Well, there are a lot of videos circulating. I mean, there is no lack of videos.

C.C. The offer is not a problem.

H.C. Yeah, I think so. I mean, there's quite a bit of supply.

Q3: You could build on the rarity by growing prices, for example.

C.C. Well, but then you cut out a substantial part of the audience, who are collectors who are actually buying video.

H.C. And also, what would be the incentive of paying the price when there is an unlimited edition?

Q3: That's what makes things rarer. If you go to auction and you put your work on the secondary market, you might have bought it really cheap and, because it's now getting rarer, because it's unachievable and unreachable, you can establish a new price.

M.Á.S. That will be the exception. It doesn't happen that often that you buy something really cheap and you make profit out of it.

Q3: But at the beginning of a market, maybe the market is changing too fast. I don't know, maybe the question was too open.

Q4: I just have a question about how you feel about video stills being sold as photography, because I've encountered various artists having completely different opinions. Some of them like it and they do consider that video stills should be sold as photography, while others really just don't want that because they think that the essence and actually the narrative is not there in just a single photo or video still. So, what's your feeling about it?

H.C. It's a financing mechanism. And I think buying the video itself is much better value. So, I personally wouldn't go for the still, but if it is serving the

purpose of financing the works and the artist is fine with that, there's no problem that I see.

M.Á.S. For me, it's a decision that belongs to the artist.

H.C. But if you can get the real work, why would you get a still? The video has the whole content, which is the purpose for doing the video in the first place.

**“I PREFER THE VIDEO, BUT IF I CAN ENRICH
THE STORY BY GETTING ADDITIONAL
MATERIAL, I WOULD DO IT.”**

C.C. In an essay that Erika Balsom published two years ago, she was suggesting, as an alternative, the production of collateral objects to video works as a solution to probably bring more collectors to acquire the video alongside an object that would satisfy the fetishism behind collecting.

H.C. It's unfortunate that we have to go that far. We still need some fetish object to reassure us that we have something of value. My hope is that we can just bypass that.

Q5: Now, my question was exactly that question. Also *Cremaster*, that you mentioned before, made money through the object, through the photograph, through the sculpture created by Matthew Barney alongside the video. I have a gallery in Milan and I work with video makers. And when we sell the video, we sell also all the material which comes with the video. I wanted to ask you, if you consider as a collector the acquiring of this object. Do you prefer just the video or would you consider all the other material, all the other work?

H.C. Well, in the case of Matthew Barney, the objects are themselves very interesting. I would love to have them, but especially when we look at prices, sometimes the stills or the objects cost more than the video. So, yes, I prefer the video, but if I can enrich the story by getting additional material, I would do it. I wouldn't get the still I but I would get the material that was used or any documentation that goes with the video. I'm interested in that.

Q5: And sometimes collectors prefer to buy the video and the objects generally correlated to it.

H.C. Sure

Q6: I apologise, I'm not going to ask a question, I'll share two quick observations. Number one, all of Matthew Barnes *Cremaster* films were marketed with display cases with objects in them. It was only a few films that were actually just the films themselves. The *Cremasters* sold themselves because there were that many museums and private collectors who would donate them to museums that committed to the first one and were then committed to buying the whole series. So that became its own self-generating system of selling that was unique unto itself.

The other observation I'd like to share regarding pricing is that when, there was a photography market and an art market, they were very separate. Starting in the late 1970s, early 1980s, when artists turned to photography as a medium as distinct from a photographer, the pricing tended to have an equation with painting and sculpture, meaning a Cindy Sherman film still, in an edition of ten, was the same price at times ten, including the whole edition, as, let's say, a Robert Longo sculpture would have been at the time. So, there was a kind of equation there. There was a switch that happened in the market, which was kind of inexplicable but which I think in retrospect makes sense and came along with Andreas Gursky. All of a sudden, a single photo from an edition of five or six, I can't remember the edition size, would sell for the same price as a unique painting by an artist of similar stature and of the same generation. So, the switch that happened all of a sudden was that that a photographic object was viewed in terms of painting, and the collector who wanted to buy it felt more confident in the value of it because there were more people buying it than just himself. So, these are just a couple of flips in the market that are unique unto themselves.

Q7: You mentioned that collectors don't know what they're buying. I was wondering what you think could give collectors confidence to buy video and what is it you think they need to know to have that confidence?

H.C. I think that gallerists and artists don't exactly know what they are selling, either. So, it would make sense for all three groups to come together and discuss who is buying what. It's a rights management issue. And we need to understand who owns what right.

Q7: There's a protocol for agreements on the LOOP website. Does that help or is that too jargon and too complex?

M.Á.S. I think it helps.

H.C. I think it's a very simple document. The question is, does it address all concerns? I think it's a very good start. We have to move on that front but include more opinions so that it covers everybody's concerns.

M.Á.S. But it helps.

H.C. Certainly, yes.

Q7: What are some of those concerns? Maybe you don't have time now.

HC. I think we should go through the rights that are assigned. They are a little bit broad in terms of the language. And also, the question is that there is always a negotiation. How is that going to be handled? That also has to be thought about.

But the copyright issue, the viewing issues and the issues of who gets credit are all by themselves quite important subjects. For instance, when museums exhibit a borrowed work from the gallery and they don't give courtesy credit to the other collectors, I think they are missing an opportunity to create value for collectors. And that can very easily be standardised: everybody who owns the work gets a credit because it's the same work. If the museum is showing it, if they are choosing to give credit, they should give to all of them. But those things are not in contracts. Collectors don't know if they have the right or not. Usually, collectors assume that they have all the rights, and artists just assume that they haven't sold any rights.

CC. We'll wrap it up. We were not aiming at giving you a video art manual, but hopefully we generated an interesting debate. Thank you.

Tim Schneider

is the Art Business Editor for Artnet News and the writer behind the Gray Market, the conversation-starting industry-analysis column. His work combines nearly a decade of firsthand experience in the gallery sector with insights gleaned from research into economics, technology, data analysis, and related subjects. In 2017 he released his first book, *The Great Reframing: How Technology Will—and Won't—Change the Gallery System Forever*.

Are Professional Sports the Role Model Galleries Need?

SPEAKER
Tim Schneider



Are Professional Sports the Role Model Galleries Need?

I'm assuming that at least some of you out there in the audience looked at the programme, saw the title of this session and wondered why on earth we would want to compare professional sports and the gallery world. I believe this is especially the case because I think there are also some of you who specifically got involved in the arts to avoid the worst-case scenarios of sports. I'm talking about things like *Rocky*-esque training regimens where you're beating up sides of meat in a cold storage locker, being yelled at by middle-aged men in windbreakers, or even getting a stupid haircut for the sake of team unity.

This is the kind of stuff that we got into the gallery system to avoid, right? However, when you start to look at the structure of these businesses, there are also a number of ways in which they are actually very similar; some of these are actually really fundamental and as old as they get, some of them are newer. We'll cover both really quickly.

The first, oldest and most fundamental of these is the fact that both galleries and professional sports require leaps of faith. Both pursuits share a low probability of success to base your life around. Obviously, only a very small number of professional athletes manages to make a living doing what they're doing. Even fewer people manage to own professional sports clubs of any kind. And, galleries, as we know, are not an easy business to be in.

Now, what are the odds of success in the gallery business? This is a very difficult thing to quantify. As we all know, when it comes to sharing information, the gallery system is in many ways a black box wrapped in a veil thrown into a river under cover of darkness. There's a lot of stuff that goes on that we just don't know about.

But what we do know is that most galleries are small businesses, and we have a lot of information about small businesses in general. According to a report by the U.S. Small Business Administration released a couple of years ago, only about 20 percent of small businesses in general survive their first year. Of that

group, only about 10 percent managed to reach their fifth year. And again, out of that group, only about 3 percent managed to make it ten years. And this isn't just something that recently happened. To quote the report, this has been remarkably consistent over the years.

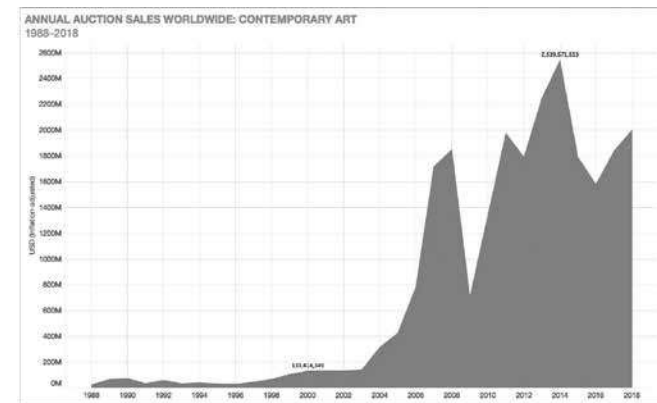
“OVER THE COURSE OF THE PAST GENERATION, PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AND THE GALLERY SYSTEM HAVE BOTH BECOME STAR SYSTEMS.”

This is one way that professional sports and the gallery system are similar, but it's not the only one. Some others are much more recent and maybe even more difficult to deal with. The one that I want to focus on today is the idea that, over the course of the past generation, professional sports and the gallery system have both become star systems. What this means is that your ability to succeed over the long term increasingly depends on your ability to work with star-level talent.



So, as ridiculous as it might seem at a glance to put LeBron James, Jeff Koons, Lionel Messi and Yayoi Kusama on the same slide, the reality is that, in their own disciplines, each of these people carries the same kind of outsized ability to draw in audiences, to draw in revenue and to keep their teams, either literal or figuratively, at the top of their industries. This is a recent change, which helps us quantify it.

Now, of course, I understand that auction data is not primary-market data. We all know that those are different things. However, we also know that you can't have a strong secondary market for an artist if you don't first have a strong primary market for that artist. So, with that in mind, this is a chart that was put together with data from the Artnet Price Database. What it shows is worldwide sales of contemporary art at auction between 1988 and 2018. For reference, we're defining contemporary artists as artists born after 1945. This prevents us from falling into the traps that sometimes auction houses set where, for instance, you could have a Leonardo da Vinci in a contemporary sale and all of a sudden, he'd be classified as a contemporary artist.



The stretch I want to focus on is between 2000 and 2014, when the market peaked. In 2000, worldwide sales of works by contemporary artists at auction generated about \$130.5 million. Now, that's a lot in comparison to where it was in 1988. But in between 2000 and 2014, that figure jumped nineteen-fold and ended up at over \$2.5 billion dollars. That is a colossal jump in value.

And what's important about this is that it's not as if every contemporary artist is sharing in that gain equally. In the first six months of 2019, contemporary art sales at auction worldwide fetched \$940 million by value. Of that total, the top fifty contemporary artists by value generated \$662 million, i.e. over 71 percent. The other thousands of contemporary artists at auction collectively generated \$277 million, which is less than 30 percent. That is a hair-raising statistic. And it is a hair-raising statistic because, of course, there are way more than fifty galleries out there. Which means that it's not as if every gallery has a star that they can depend on in order to survive.

Overall, you start to look at gallery system that is largely dependent on stars, and not everyone can have a star. It reminds me of a quote from a basketball player named Michael Ray Richardson, who played for the New York Knicks in the 1970s. In the middle of a particularly disastrous season, journalists asked him in the locker room after a game how the season was going. To which Richardson responded, “The ship be sinking.” And that’s what it feels like for a lot of contemporary galleries right now: it feels like the ship is sinking. On the other hand, as Kenny Schachter pointed out earlier, you can also argue that it’s always been sinking and this is not any different than it ever has been. However, I think that the star-system aspect changes the game a little bit.

**“THE GALLERY SYSTEM IS
LARGELY DEPENDENT ON STARS,
AND NOT EVERYONE CAN HAVE
A STAR.”**

Now, before I continue, I just want to point out that there is, of course, no moral necessity for everybody who starts a gallery to be able to continue operating until the end of time. It’s a business like any other. It’s your job to go out and put together a programme that people are going to be interested in, to try to find a way to engage your audience, to try to overcome the challenges. That said, the deck is increasingly stacked against the average person who wants to start a gallery. It’s become bad enough that you have a lot of people who are out there who are trying to suggest solutions for how to stabilise the system.

One of those people was David Zwirner, who, in April of 2018, got on stage at a conference like this one and suggested the idea of an art-fair tax. Now, the idea here would be that since big galleries have way more resources, they can pay more for their booth at any fair. And by virtue of them paying more than smaller galleries that are more vulnerable if things don’t go well at that same fair, those smaller galleries can pay less. Other people have also suggested the idea that maybe booth fees should be based on the amount of sales that you actually do at the fair. So, if you don’t do well, you’re not penalised further for the fact that you’re overpaying for the booth to begin with.

With all due respect to the people who are making these art-fair-based solutions, I don’t think they go far enough. To me, it’s like offering somebody who hasn’t eaten a decent meal in a week a couple of ketchup packets. It’s too little, too late.

In a star-based gallery system, if you wanted to do something structural, one option would be to try to regulate the movement of stars. And if you’re going to talk about the movement of stars, you inevitably have to talk about poaching. Now, again, Kenny Schachter talks a lot about the idea of poaching. It’s something that has always been a part of the system, and it comes from the fact that there is a fundamental imbalance within different levels of galleries.

To take a hypothetical example: imagine a major, major gallery like Gagosian and a smaller gallery like Joe Kennedy’s Unit London. Hypothetically, if Gagosian were interested in one of Joe’s artists, they could go to that artist and offer them a certain amount of money, certain immediate opportunities and better institutional connections. It creates a situation where it becomes hard for that artist to say no. This is just the reality of the system.

**“IN A STAR-BASED GALLERY SYSTEM,
IF YOU WANTED TO DO SOMETHING
STRUCTURAL, ONE OPTION WOULD BE
TO TRY TO REGULATE THE MOVEMENT
OF STARS.”**

Professional sports have the same imbalance. You can look at it in American baseball, where you have a major-market team like the New York Yankees against a smaller-market team like the St. Louis Cardinals. And at some level, those two teams of varying sizes and varying resources are competing for the same players. Getting closer to home, it also happens in European football. You can have a major market club like Arsenal, which plays in the English Premier League, looking at talent in a much smaller French club, such as Lille OSC.

The difference between the gallery system and athletics is that pro sports have taken this imbalance as a fact of life. They understand that there is going to be poaching. They understand that rising stars are almost inevitably going to end up going to larger markets no matter how much time they spent in a smaller market being developed by people who were putting in blood, sweat and tears when that eventual star was just an undependable, unknown quantity.

The system that FIFA, which is the international governing body for Football Leagues worldwide, put in to try to solve this problem is called transfer fees. Transfer fees are exactly what they sound like. First off, this is not a thing that they just came up with on the back of an envelope. The actual transfer-fee rules cover 83 pages. They are an incredibly intricate dissection of how the fees are

supposed to work. The gist is that they cover rising stars who are going to larger foreign clubs. And when those stars move, the club that is acquiring that star pays compensation to the club that is losing that star. And in FIFA's case, that compensation is just straight cash. It's either a pre-set buyout amount established in the player's contract or, if there's no pre-set buyout amount, the acquiring club pays the prorated portion of their contract with the club they're leaving. The point of all of this is that the entire system has been designed to try to work for everybody. It's supposed to be major-market clubs working with small-market clubs to get to sustainability.

“POACHING HAS BEEN A PART OF THE SYSTEM. IT COMES FROM THE FACT THAT THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL IMBALANCE WITHIN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GALLERIES.”

I criticised the art-fair solutions earlier because I just don't think they do that much. To give you a sense of the scale, the two football clubs that I mentioned earlier agreed to the transfer of winger Nicolas Pepe. Arsenal acquired him for a fee of €80 million from Lille, the French club that he was a part of before that. And in fact, the owner of Lille has developed an entire business model strictly around the idea that what they are going to do is develop players so that they can be poached. Which may seem like a crazy idea at first, but according to the owner of this team, in the course of the past two years alone, this strategy has generated over €200 million for the club. This is a big difference from knocking 10 percent off your art-fair booth cost. It is a major, major shift involving lots of money.

Let's take it back to the gallery system. Now, the first person that I know of to talk about this idea of transfer fees for galleries is a collector and analyst named Alain Servais, who I'm sure some of you in the audience know. I believe he first proposed it in a speaking engagement back in 2012, and it's come up a few times in the discourse since then, but the basics of it seem pretty easy to deal with on the surface. Again, the talent involved would be rising-star artists moving from a smaller gallery to a larger gallery. The compensation is something that would have to be worked out.

“FIFA'S SYSTEM OF TRANSFER FEES HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO TRY TO WORK FOR EVERYBODY: MAJOR MARKET CLUBS WORK WITH SMALL MARKET CLUBS TO GET TO SUSTAINABILITY.”

You could do a few different things. In theory, you could just do straight cash. You could do it so that the gallery that's acquiring the artist pays a sales commission of some amount for some set amount of time to the gallery that they acquired that star from. Or you could have the artist just make a set number of works for the gallery that he's leaving, hand it off to them and then they have the ability to hold the works, to sell them, whatever. The gallery being left behind can control when they capitalise off of those assets. They have something in their pockets that they can fall back on so they're not being left with absolutely nothing.

It seems like an interesting idea, right? There's one thing, though, that we have to go back to. There is something professional sports have which the gallery world does not: regulation. I mentioned that there is an 83-page set of guidelines for how transfer fees work in FIFA's governing bylaws. We don't have anything like that in the art market, of course. In order to have something like it, we would need to have representation contracts that would be the equivalent of the contracts that football players, baseball players or any other sport's players have with the teams that employ them. Those contracts are what make a transfer-fee system actionable. And contracts are not something that very many people in the art world want to get involved with. As somebody who worked in the gallery system for several years and has been involved in trying to get artists to sign contracts, I can tell you from personal experience, trying to get the average artists to sign a contract is about as appealing to them as trying to get them to take on an alligator that you just fished out of the sewer.

How FIFA Transfer Fees Work	How Gallery Transfer Fees Could Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation: Governed by 83 pages of guidelines. • Talent: Rising stars → larger, foreign clubs. • Club Compensation: Pre-set or pro-rated buy-out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent: Rising stars → larger galleries. • Gallery Compensation: Cash, sales commissions, or works. • Regulation: ??????

So, if contracts are this big a problem, it raises the question of whether this entire idea is hopeless. I don't think so, and that is specifically because of the pro-sports example.

An interesting thing that happens if you start to go back in time and look at the timelines of the gallery system and professional baseball, at least in the US, you find out that they actually operate on fairly similar chronologies. So Knoedler, which we all know ended in infamy after a gigantic forgery scandal, was nevertheless the first commercial gallery that was established in the US. That was all the way back in 1846. Twenty-five years later, we had the beginnings of the first professional baseball league in 1871. The National Association of Base Ball Players was so old school that they actually separated "baseball" into two words.

“THERE IS SOMETHING PROFESSIONAL SPORTS HAVE WHICH THE GALLERY WORLD DOES NOT: REGULATION.”

But if you fast-forward to the present day, there are huge differences in the way that these two systems have developed. It may not be an all-inclusive example, but a pitcher in Major League Baseball named Gerrit Cole, was just signed by the New York Yankees two months ago to a nine-year, \$324-million contract. It's a colossal amount of money. And again, it's set down in writing in a contract that governs his employment and that his club can then use to trade or hold onto his rights. It gets very complicated very quickly. It may have been a gradual shift, but, when it comes to baseball and other professional sports, the majority of this kind of change has actually happened a lot more recently than you might think.

Nolan Ryan was a pitcher who starred in the major leagues in the late 1970s. He's now in the Hall of Fame. He's retired. But at the time when Nolan Ryan, who was at least as good a pitcher as Gerrit Cole, came into professional baseball, the game and the rules around the game were still so underdeveloped that most players actually had second jobs in the off season to make ends meet. Nolan Ryan, one of the greatest pitchers of all time, spent his first offseason in the league installing air conditioners. So, what changed?

What changed is partially the structure of professional sports. Now, obviously, each league has its own variations, but in general, we can break things down like this. When it comes to talent, the players compete on the job, but they

unionise off of it. It's actually impossible to be a professional athlete without being a part of a players' union. Management, meaning the people who own the clubs: same situation. If you're on a gameday, these people want to beat each other's heads in. But as soon as a labour issue comes up, they gather together and they try to figure out a way to pull in the same direction and get the best deal that they possibly can.

Another key element of this is governance. Now, every professional sports league has a central commissioner, either an individual or a governing body that oversees both sides of this. They work with the players, and they work with the people who own the clubs, to try to make sure that the entire system can operate in a cohesive way. And they do this by establishing these large-scale agreements that cover hundreds of pages, that codify every single thing you could possibly think about in terms of both the rules of the game itself and the rules of the business that's built around that game. So, in a capsule, this is what the structure of professional sports looks like.

“IF WE THINK ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROFESSIONAL GALLERY SYSTEM, IT GETS UGLY VERY QUICKLY.”

If we change over and we start to think about the structure of the professional gallery system, it gets ugly very quickly. It's like the World Wrestling Entertainment event called Battle Royale, which is exactly what it sounds like: a bunch of guys who get into the ring and beat the crap out of each other until there's only one man left. We could get more specific here and just do the absolute one-to-one comparison. Looking at the talent, artists compete against one another. I'm not saying that they're not friendly with one another and they don't collaborate on projects and things like that. But when it comes to the actual labour issues, there is no real meaningful artists' union out there. There are some in Europe; there are none in the US whatsoever. And based on the research that I've managed to do, even the ones that exist in Europe are not particularly strong, not anywhere near what you get with players' unions in professional sports. Management, meaning the owners of the gallery: same situation. There are, of course, professional associations, but they're optional.

Governance: again, there are no real third parties. There's no commissioner of the gallery system to oversee everybody and make sure that they're getting along. And the internal rules, of course: we have no collective bargaining agreement, we don't have hundreds of pages of long documents showing how

this whole thing is supposed to work. The best thing that we have are a series of optional codes of conduct that either come from a professional association like the Art Dealers Association of America, or an event-specific code of conduct like Art Basel premiered at the end of 2018. And for comparison—this is not a criticism of those documents for the record, but just so we understand what we’re dealing with—the types of rules that you have in the Art Basel code of conduct are as basic as: if you sell an artwork at Art Basel, you have to pay the artist. I mean, you would hope that would go without saying, but apparently it needs to be said.

that’s never going to happen. So I think in a gallery context, what you would have to do is you would have to have representatives from galleries that are working at different levels of the market coming together and trying to figure out how you could stabilise the system for everybody involved.

You would have, for instance, the representatives of two different optional professional associations: the American Art Dealers Association of America (the A.D.A.A.) and N.A.D.A. (the New Art Dealers Alliance), which usually covers galleries that are much lower on the price spectrum, more in the emerging tier.

“IN A GALLERY CONTEXT, YOU WOULD NEED TO HAVE REPRESENTATIVES FROM GALLERIES WORKING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE MARKET COMING TOGETHER AND TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW YOU COULD STABILISE THE SYSTEM FOR EVERYBODY INVOLVED.”

It’s a nice idea. But there’s another thing that we have to talk about here. It’s not just the “how” of the way professional sports manage to structure up. We also have to talk about the “why.”

The “why” comes down to money in a lot of cases. If we think about the original revenue stream of professional sports way back at the very beginning, it’s very simple: ticket sales. These leagues grew out of the idea that people were going to physically show up to an event and buy a ticket so they could watch a game or a match in person.

That is no longer the case. In the years since, what has happened is that the demand for these sports has progressed so that you have all of these different ways that people want to interact with these games. For instance, TV broadcast rights: it’s no longer just people who want to go to the games in person. You have a bunch of people want to watch them on TV at home or at a bar.

TV rights are an incredibly lucrative revenue stream for professional sports leagues. Just to give you one data point: the English Premier League currently has a TV rights deal that covers three years and swells to \$12 billion. That’s a colossal amount of money.

Basic Structure of Pro Sports Leagues	Basic “Structure” of Gallery System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent: Competes on the job, unionizes off it. • Management: Same! • Governance: Central commissioner oversees players and franchise owners. • Internal Rules: 100s of pages-long agreement contractually establishes rules of business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent: Competes against one another, period. • Management: Same! • Governance: No third parties involved. • Internal Rules: Optional and/or event-specific codes of conduct only.

So now that we see that there are actually these colossal differences between the way that the gallery system is structured and the way that the professional sports world is structured, it begs the question of how professional sports became so codified and so structured. There’s a lot of ways you can answer this question, but the thing I want to focus on is a phrase I mentioned earlier: collective bargaining.

This is exactly what it sounds like. Basically, what you have is two groups with competing interests who elect representatives to come together into a room with an independent arbitrator and try to work out an agreement. It comes up not just in professional sports, it comes up in all kinds of labour contexts. Any union battle ends up being a collective-bargaining situation.

Here’s the thing about collective bargaining: it makes sense in a professional-sports context, and it *could* make sense in a gallery context. It would be a little bit different because usually it’s workers against employers. The “worker” case in the art world would be artists, and we just talked about artists: they don’t even have a union to begin with. I don’t think that you want to base the whole system on whether or not artists are ever going to unionise, because talking to some of the most labour-relations-active artists that I know, they just tell me

But it's not all. There are also corporate sponsorships. Corporations want to be engaged with these professional sports teams, from sponsoring the jerseys or the kits that the players wear, to running promotions at the arenas. All of these things are other ways that professional-sports leagues and professional-sports clubs manage to make money. And then, of course, you also have merchandise. You have fans of the team who want to show that they're fans of the team. They'll go out and buy a jersey or a kit, or they'll buy a towel with a logo of their favourite team, or one of the other infinite options. And again, it brings in millions and millions of dollars every year.

**“THE GALLERY SYSTEM IS STILL
DEPENDING ON THE SAME STREAM OF
MONEY THAT IT HAS ALWAYS DEPENDED
ON: ART SALES.”**

Going back to the gallery system, what's the original revenue stream in contemporary galleries? The answer, of course, is art sales. The difference is that they don't really have any other consistent revenue streams that get anywhere near what we see in professional sports. It's really just art sales.

Obviously, there are corporate sponsorship situations. You'll see corporations sponsor art fairs, but you're never going to really see or rarely see, I think, a corporation offering to sponsor an exhibition at a commercial gallery. It doesn't happen. And merchandise is still an outlier. It's not a consistent, everyday part of every gallery. And so, I think that it leaves us in a scenario where the gallery system is still depending on the same stream of money that it has always depended on. And that limits the amount of options.

Given all of these differences that we've encountered, it kind of begs the question: what sport is the gallery system most like at the end of the day? After talking to an artist named William Powhida, who thinks about this stuff a lot and makes works specifically about this issue, he gave what I think is the best answer. And the answer is that the best comparison isn't professional football, isn't professional baseball, isn't professional basketball. It's none of the big sports that we really think of as being huge draws for people. It's probably horse racing.

How Are Galleries Like Horse Racing?

- No Strong Talent Unions
- No Guaranteed Contracts
- No Sustained Mass Audience
- Base = a Few Thousand Wealthy People
- Engagement = Placing Big Bets .. or Passive Viewing

Why? Let's cover some data points here. First off, there are no strong talent unions in horse racing. There is a jockeys' guild, believe it or not. But it is so weak that it turns out that the jockeys, even in the biggest events in horse racing, get paid less than one hundred dollars to compete. And of course, the horses are not unionizing.

That also means that there are no guaranteed contracts and no guaranteed salaries. Again, similar situation with artists. On top of that, there is no sustained mass audience. There is a sustained audience but not a sustained *mass* audience. There are also, in each case, a couple of different times a year where you can get a sort of critical mass of people that don't usually show up to these things. The shortest and sweetest way I can say it is that you can think of the Kentucky Derby as the Art Basel Miami Beach of horse racing, and you can think of Art Basel Miami Beach as the Kentucky Derby of the art world.

What that means is that the real base in each of these instances, in both horse racing and the gallery system, is a few thousand wealthy people who are primarily engaging by making big bets on who is going to succeed in an extremely competitive situation. Either that or you have a larger mass of people who are largely just passive viewers. You can watch the Kentucky Derby on TV. You can go to a gallery show and walk around and not buy anything. And that's totally fine. That's just the way that these things operate.

So, in light of all that, I don't think that there's an immediate pot of gold waiting on the other side of collective-bargaining agreements for the gallery system. They're not going to come out of the boardroom and say, "Hey, we figured out a way to govern the transfer of artist from gallery to gallery and now, thank you very much, I will take your deal for \$12 billion for the TV rights to this." That's just not going to happen.

What that means instead is that, if collective bargaining or any kind of other major concessions or changes are going to happen in the gallery system, it's going to have to come out of something that is much more abstract and much more long-term.

Once again, there is the issue of sustainability, which was the goal of transfer fees in the first place. We have the idea of major galleries and smaller galleries working together because they believe that the value of the system itself is more important than any other obstacles that might be in front of them. Now, that isn't an easy process. It's not one that I would be anxious to initiate on my own if I were a part of this. But as they say in sports, no pain, no gain, right?

CONTRIBUTIONS AND QUESTIONS (C/Q) FROM THE AUDIENCE

C1: I have a comment that may not necessarily be a question, but I really want your feedback on this idea. You mentioned the art world is a star system and we can observe a lot of major brands, like Sotheby's, doing collaborations, for example the Old Masters sale with Victoria Beckham. I think it shows how the art industry can draw a mass audience through collaborating with stars. But the problem for smaller galleries is they have neither the fame nor the funds to invite these celebrities to either gain publicity for their brands or even do collaborations for artworks, which I think would reach a broader audience. So, I was wondering whether the art industry could really start up a patron programme. We could include aspiring collectors or people interested in the industry. They could pay some money or a membership fee. The ones that can really fund a smaller gallery could create a programme. Artists who wanted to do celebrity collaborations could make suggestions to these celebrities and create a programme, after which patrons could be invited over to private deals. Maybe this can be a sustainable way to do business.

T.S. Yeah, I mean, it's an interesting idea for sure. And there are a few things that exist out there that play into that one way or another. For instance, Liste, the fair that runs concurrently to Art Basel every year, runs a programme called Friends of Liste, which is just a collection of patrons who give a set amount of money to the organization, and they use that to defray the costs of first-time galleries going to show up there. So again, it's this idea of people believing in this system, believing in a super-rich world, not in a monetary sense but having diversity and a variety of levels that you can relate to, and choosing to fund that in a very direct manner.

Let me also add just that the great irony of the whole poaching situation is that it proves that the system works. If the idea of smaller galleries developing artists so that they eventually become bigger stars wasn't a viable one, big galleries would be coaching those artists to begin with. So, it's not necessarily that the system is broken. It's more about saying, "If we like this, we think that this is the way things should work, and we understand this is probably a fact of life, how might we be able to control it in some way, shape or form?" This is one possibility and there are many, many others that are out there.

"I DON'T THINK THAT THERE'S AN IMMEDIATE POT OF GOLD WAITING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF COLLECTIVE-BARGAINING AGREEMENTS FOR THE GALLERY SYSTEM."

C1: I think that's a really long term-issue.

T.S. Yeah, it is. And the problem is that long-term issues are not super sexy. People want immediate, simple answers to questions now. And I think that has got us into a lot of trouble in a lot of different walks of life. The reality is that these are hard problems that are probably going to take a lot of effort and a lot of time to fix. It's difficult to start the process, but I don't think that there's any way of getting around it.

C1: Actually, when you think about a new market like where I am from in China, it is a huge trend to do this, as celebrities are like superstars. They need some art to brand themselves like key opinion leaders, like bloggers. They don't have any of this artistic flair. So, there's a big trend for these smaller artists, not galleries, to go to China and then they find collaboration with these kinds of celebrities, who give them this publicity. On the other hand, the person like the Chinese superstar, they get an artistic feel. So maybe that's a new market is the opportunity.

T.S. You may have just voiced a start-up idea.

C2: I was actually really excited about this talk when I saw it in the programme because I come from a family of sports people. I'm from Serbia and we're big in basketball. I happen to know a lot of agents that have dealt with the transfers and stuff into the NBA. Alain Servais did have this idea in one of the Talking

Galleries a couple of years ago, the difference in the gallery system being, of course, as you mentioned, that you also don't have this middle person, which would be the agent. I just wanted to point out some things that do happen in the professional sports that are not so great, wondering whether this could happen in the art world. It does happen that players get transferred from the European leagues to the NBA league, and while they were stars in the European League, in the NBA, because there are so many stars, they end up sitting on the bench. They get a lot of money but they don't actually play much. However, when their contracts expire and they need to get back to Europe, nobody wants them because they know they haven't really been playing for a while. So that's the end of their career. That's just bad agency.

“IF THE IDEA OF SMALLER GALLERIES DEVELOPING ARTISTS SO THAT THEY EVENTUALLY BECOME BIGGER STARS WASN'T A VIABLE ONE, BIG GALLERIES WOULD BE COACHING THOSE ARTISTS TO BEGIN WITH.”

At the same time, it can also happen that some players' agents tell them that it's better to go to another team for more money, even though that team is not doing as well as their current team, which is also kind of the end of a career. So, my question would be: could it also happen? You know that a big gallery gets a rising star but doesn't get to show him as much because there are other stars in that gallery and therefore, maybe other artists would have been better off staying with their original gallery.

T.S. Yeah, I think that this actually happens a lot more often than we tend to think when we talk about this issue. There are a lot of cases—I'm not going to name names—but I think that most of, or at least some of, the biggest galleries out there have more or less shown that they're not really that interested in cultivating young artists' careers. It has actually been detrimental to some artists to make the jump as soon as humanly possible. The whole idea of coming up with a smaller gallery, whether that's a small gallery that's operating a storefront on the Lower East Side or a gallery that's operating in the always-talked-about middle of market. The idea is that those people have a real investment in trying to get the artist to the next level. And you don't always have that at bigger spaces.

The reason that poaching happens is because in theory galleries believe a certain artist is more or less a finished product, and the amount of caring, nurturing and developing they require is pretty small at that point. So I think that is somewhat of an example of what you're talking about: you can have somebody who looks like they're set to be a star player when they're coming up in Europe, and all of a sudden they end up on the Knicks or the Lakers or whatever, and then it just turns out that they weren't ready yet. And the team may not have the development staff to get them to an NBA-ready level. So, yeah, there are always problems with these things. Nothing is going to be perfect, ever. But I think it's more dangerous to ignore possible solutions because they are not perfect.

Q1: I believe professional sports people like insure their arms or their legs.

T.S. Actually, their whole bodies.

Q1: But how does that kind of longevity exist in this model if transferred to the gallery model? How do you protect talent in that kind of ecosystem?

T.S. Injuries mean that, of course, athletes can't work, they can't play, so they can't earn money. I think the reason that athletes can insure themselves against these cases is because those sports have managed to reach such a level of profitability that insurance companies can see those as good bets. I don't think the gallery system is at that place.

I think that what you're asking about just speaks to the fact that there are all of these nuances within this larger construct. Once we decide what we're going to do—we're going to try to regulate this thing—then we have to ask these second-level questions or third-level questions. And it illustrates the fact that, once you start to really think about it, it just becomes really difficult really quickly. I think that turns a lot of people off.

I don't know that I have an answer for it, or even that there is a good solution. All I can say is that you're right. We can't just pull one lever and decide these two worlds are similar enough for us to take the exact playbook from professional sports and just transfer it all onto the gallery system and everything will make complete sense. I don't think that's the case. You would at least have to retrofit it in some way or another. But do the basic underlying issues make sense or offer a possible solution? Maybe.

C3: On that note, in Germany, it's very possible to have insurance as an artist. You tell them what you make roughly. You give them a contract with a gallery if you have one. Then it's normal insurance if you lose your ability to do your work. And so, if you are a performance artist that dances, you need your hands and feet to do that. Or if you paint, it's predominantly your hands. I don't know about the rest of world, but I think you could possibly look into that. I've worn many hats throughout my career as I worked at *Arte* at some point, but I'm also a conceptual artist.

Just a thought on the sport we could compare the art world to closest: hiking. Hiking is something you can only do if you are in a place where you have free time. You don't need any ability to go hiking. Anyone can do it at their weekends. But once you get to a climbing-Mount-Everest level, you need a team. You need preparation. You need a lot more time. And then the number of people taking hiking to a level where everybody knows their names is even lower. So, it's kind of like a very low entry point. I think the problem is with sports, we have very clear rules, what the abilities are you have to bring to the table to even be eligible to compete. Whereas, with art, we might even discover a new form of art tomorrow, and then that person is an artist and gets to play with it.

T.S. Yeah, it's an interesting idea. I hadn't thought of hiking or like rock climbing, and as you started saying that, I started thinking about watching *Free Solo*, the most terrifying movie I've seen in my entire life. It's about this guy who just climbs mountains without any kind of harness or anything, and if he slips, he dies. That seems actually really parallel to artists in a lot of ways because it is such a high-risk kind of endeavour to devote your life to.

C4: I was thinking about the fact that this might be a leverage problem from the standpoint of the gallery and the artist. Let's say, for example, you get honorary support from your base and you actually withhold some of the inventory of that artist. He goes to a big gallery and he makes it big. At the end, that inventory that you're holding is your leverage for him leaving you. And it's the same thing as in a sports team. When they do a transfer, sometimes there are special fees. Let's say this player wins the Champions League next season: the club is probably going to get some money out of that. They also measure the amount of games they play. So, I think, as a contract goes, on both sides, there's an intrinsic leverage on this point. What would you say about that?

T.S. That's definitely a conversation to be had. If you decide that, as a gallerist, you are going to essentially hold some of your artists' work back on the possibility that something could go wrong. I'm assuming that you're saying this like, "Oh, we're going to keep this in case you decide that you're going to go to Hauser & Wirth." I think that this just gets to the crux of what we're talking about here, where, if that's just something that you as a gallerist decide that you're going to do without there being any kind of conversation about it beforehand, I think it's going to really mess up that relationship with the artist very quickly. It suddenly becomes very adversarial and it becomes adversarial in retrospect. This is why contracts, in theory, are a good idea: before you get into the relationship, you get together decide and *how* you are going to do it.

**“THIS IS WHY CONTRACTS, IN THEORY,
ARE A GOOD IDEA: BEFORE YOU GET
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The artist is going to consign X amount of works to the gallery, and the gallery is going to hold that as a backup in case the artist jumps ship to a bigger gallery. If people know that going in, that's a different thing. I'm not saying it's not still going to be contentious, because I'm sure it is, but it's a lot more of an even-handed exchange if everyone knows that before the relationship gets started, as opposed to working together for two years and all of a sudden the artist starts asking about that white painting they gave the gallery last year and the gallery explaining they have kept it in storage locker in case the artist decided to cheat on the gallery. I just don't see that going well personally. But that's just me.

C4: It's just being straightforward with it from the beginning.

TS: Yeah, I mean contracts aren't there for when things are going well, right? They're there for when things go bad. I think that, regardless of whether you have a contract or you don't have a contract, the point is that a good artist-gallery relationship has everybody understanding what the terms are up front. And if you don't have that, you get into all kinds of trouble.

C5 (Sunny Rahbar): I've been thinking about the football model myself for a while because I'm not a football fan, but I had an ex-boyfriend who is a

professional football player. He told me they even have transfer windows—it's very elegant and civilised: it's only this time and this time you can actually sign transfers. I do agree that we can learn a lot from the from the sport world.

But I was also thinking about what's happening or what happens when big galleries buy up smaller companies that could compete with some of their brands. I have a gallery in Dubai and I have had many of my artists poached. At first, I'd get really upset, and then I was flattered. And then I thought, "Maybe I'm just an incubator because I'm in Dubai, which is not one of the centres. Maybe I should look at it as a compliment that such-and-such a gallery is coming in and looking at my artists." Obviously, it is only once they reach a certain price point that they're interested. However, they're also interested in artists from certain markets because they are a way for them to get those collectors. Instead of coming and poaching my artists and killing the business, they buy the gallery, and then everyone's happy although I'm not saying that's what I want to do.

The other thing is that there are other revenue streams, as we saw today in the talks. I mean, merch, artist's merch. Like the other products that artists are making. So perhaps that could come in as well. If you get this artist, then you also get the merch deal and then corporate sponsorship. It is like Virgil and IKEA. These corporate sponsorships of the art world are already happening, like with big fashion houses, doing a collaboration with an artist. And so perhaps that could be a thing. But who would regulate it?

T.S. Those are deals that the companies have with the artists, not deals that the company has with the gallery necessarily. And obviously, you have to navigate that. The companies will never just be making a deal with the artist unless that artist is totally done with their gallerist and doing whatever they want.

But it's not that this stuff doesn't exist. It's that right now, it's not anywhere near that level and consistency. You can't be a professional sports team without having just a huge amount of merch behind you. But you can certainly be a gallery, and be a very well-respected gallery, without going down that road. So, we can talk about whether or not that should be the case. I'm sure it would be a very contentious discussion to have. But it's not that this couldn't happen; it just hasn't happened yet.

Allan Schwartzman

has more than 20 years' experience in advising some of the world's most influential and sophisticated collectors in forming their holdings of contemporary art, both individually and in conjunction with their stewardship of major museums. Schwartzman co-founded and led Art Agency, Partners, an art advisory firm that was acquired by Sotheby's. From 2016 to 2020, in addition to running the advisory practice, he served as Chairman and Co-Leader of the Fine Art Division at Sotheby's. In 2020, he founded the art advisory firm Schwartzman & Associates. Schwartzman is also widely respected as an independent curator, most notably for Instituto Inhotim, the visionary contemporary art park set within a 5,000-acre botanical garden in Brazil. As creative director and chief curator of Inhotim, he has been central to developing the collection of the renowned institution and commissioning its signature site-specific works by artists including Chris Burden, Robert Irwin, Giuseppe Penone, Matthew Barney, Doris Salcedo, Doug Aitken, and Olafur Eliasson. Known equally as a tastemaker in contemporary art and an authority on the art market, Schwartzman was trained as an art historian at Vassar College, he was a founding staff member of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City and served as curator from 1977 to 1980, and has written extensively about art for numerous publications including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. He serves on the Board of Artists Space, one of New York's premier alternative spaces.

Melanie Gerlis

became the weekly art market columnist for the Financial Times in 2016 and also contributes regular articles for the paper. She was previously Art Market Editor for The Art Newspaper, reporting on auctions, art fairs and market news globally since 2007. Before entering the art world, Melanie worked for ten years at Finsbury, a strategic communications and investor relations firm, advising investment banks, hedge funds and other financial services clients. She has a BA in English Literature from Cambridge University and an MA in Art Business from Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. Melanie is a trustee of The Art Academy and Art360 and a member of the governing body for Sotheby's Institute of Art. Her first book, *Art as an Investment? A Survey of Comparative Assets*, was published in 2014 and her forthcoming book, *The Art Fair Story: A Rollercoaster Ride*, will be published in 2021 (Lund Humphries).

The Art Market: How It Is Shaped and Challenged

SPEAKER
Allan Schwartzman

IN CONVERSATION WITH
Melanie Gerlis



The Art Market: How It Is Shaped and Challenged

Melanie Gerlis (M.G.): It's my pleasure to be here and to conduct the keynote interview now and to introduce someone who needs no introduction: sitting with us is Allan Schwartzman, one of the world's smartest and best-connected art advisors. He is the Co-founder and Principal of Art Agency, Partners, which was bought for an impressive \$85 million in 2016 by Sotheby's, where Allan is now also chairman and co-leader of its Fine Art Division. Allan is many things beyond his official biography. He's also a writer with some enviable turns of phrase, a critic and a curator. Plus, I learned while doing some research, Allan helped start New York's New Museum as its first employee and curator. He's also someone who has worked seemingly tirelessly in the art market and all it touches for some forty years. And so, as we've got you here, Allan, I'm going to get some free advice by downloading as much of your brain as possible in an hour.

Allan, when we spoke, you mentioned that forty years ago the art market didn't exist, which I thought was a fascinating point to make. I just wondered if you could give us your potted history of how the art market has been shaped.

Allan Schwartzman (A.S.): I became involved in the art world in 1976. I was nineteen years of age, maybe it's eighteen and I'm not sure. I took a year off from college to see if art history was an avocation or a vocation. I found myself working as an assistant to a number of curators at the Whitney Museum, one of whom, Marcia Tucker, was fired three months later. She decided she would never be fired again and started her own museum, which was the beginning of the New Museum, from which she was later fired—I should say, "retired". But that's another story.

People didn't collect contemporary art when I entered the art world, quite frankly. I mean, there was no market. The entire scene was organised around artists. It was a small world. You kind of knew everybody or you knew half of everybody. There were a few galleries that dealt with emerging artists. But there were probably as many co-op galleries in Soho, which was then the

centre of the art scene in New York. The organisation of the art world at that point—the New York art world—was around alternative spaces which were created by artists as an alternative because there were no venues open to them since there was no market for emerging art.

And because there was a lot of very cheap real estate, then artists like Richard Serra began working on an architectural scale. Alanna Heiss, before she created PS1, had access to massive storefronts for practically no money because they were vacant. So, there was this interweaving of the artists and the supporters for what they did. And those supporters were those few people who created alternative spaces and critics, or more commonly, theoretical critics. The art market that existed was for pop art and, to a much lesser extent, for minimalism.

**“PEOPLE DIDN’T COLLECT
CONTEMPORARY ART WHEN I ENTERED
THE ART WORLD, QUITE FRANKLY.
THERE WAS NO MARKET.”**

There was one gallery in a most prominent way dealing with emerging artists. That was Paula Cooper. It’s interesting to hear so much of what was spoken of in the morning yesterday because there were no price lists, because there was no one buying art. So, these really were open venues for looking at and experiencing art. My guess is that they were rarely asked for prices. The market started to evolve in the late 1970s. There was a collector named Holly Solomon, who was a collector of pop art. She was—let’s call her—a second string collector, meaning Leo Castelli would not sell her the great Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtensteins, but she got the Lichtenstein landscapes instead of the comic book artworks, which in the end were all great and valuable. But there were three collectors of pop art. There were the Sculls—but let me not digress naming, I’ll just try to run through some decades quickly to get us where we are.

M.G. Three isn’t many.

A.S. No, it was small. I should actually back up and just point out one fact, which is there is an essay or book that Suzi Gablik wrote in the 1970s. In it, she said there were fewer than fifty so-called modern artists living in New York City in the 1950s. By that, I think what she meant was avant-garde or in those days, abstract. When I entered and it was still a little world, there

wasn’t a block below 14th Street that had fewer than fifty artists. And in many cases, there were fifty buildings per block that were filled with artists. And so, with the baby boomer generation, as was identified yesterday, art became a pursuit. Every university had an art department, you could become an artist. There wasn’t a market for it, but there was a world which I wouldn’t necessarily say fully supported it, but that embellished it; that supported it emotionally, if not financially.

**“IN THE 1970S, WITH THE BABY BOOMER
GENERATION ART BECAME A PURSUIT.
EVERY UNIVERSITY HAD AN ART DEPARTMENT,
YOU COULD BECOME AN ARTIST.”**

Holly in the late 1960s, early 1970s decided that her annual budget, which was \$50,000—and at that time, I think that was probably a fairly significant sum—could be better spent. She had noticed that artists were going outside of the gallery system, outside of studios and the institutions into the landscape, and they were forming their own spaces. The artist who led her thinking the most was Gordon Matta-Clark, who had created 112 Greene Street, which was one of the leading alternative spaces at the time. So, she decided to take her \$50,000 budget and instead of buying art, she would create an art space. She felt that was a more effective and appropriate way to be utilising an art budget, which was courageous and actually right on target.

At some point, that alternative space turned into a commercial gallery. That was the beginning of this art market. There were very, very few people collecting it. The art that she showed ranged from Gordon Matta-Clark, Mary Heilmann and Laurie Anderson to the artists of what became known as P&D: Pattern and Decoration. That was the radical emerging movement, radical in a kind of retro way in that it was a return to painting and to painting as a kind of decorative form.

So you had Holly here, who’s through her own moxie convincing a couple of outlying people that they should buy art and buy it from her. And then in Europe, you had basically two figures: Bruno Bischofberger and Thomas Ammann, one a veteran in the field and one a rather new person in the field, both Swiss, both functioning in Switzerland; and then there were some others, a few other dealers who were waiting for the next generation of Warhols to emerge. Most of the art in the 1970s was anti materialistic. Much of it was ephemeral in nature. Probably the greatest influence on art then and continuing through to today, but not still recognised fully, was feminism, which turned its back on

the system of objects as we knew it. And so, these guys were waiting for that to happen.

You had a primary market-focussed gallery in New York. You had a secondary market-focussed group of a small number of dealers in Europe waiting to buy things in order to sit on them, in order to raise the prices and then accelerate a market. Holly wasn't comfortable with that. Every artist who emerged wanted to show with Holly because, I mean, Paula had twelve artists. It was a very specific stable of artists. Holly was much more diverse and multi-generational. And she wasn't really playing ball with this notion of an accelerating market. Along comes Mary Boone—who had been the secretary at Bykert, which was probably to the early 1970s what Paula was to the later 1970s—and starts her own gallery. Originally, the artists she represented were the artists from Bykert that the big galleries didn't pick up. So Bykert included artists like Chuck Close and Brice Marden. It's interesting because some of these post minimalists are now having a renewal of interest. And so, we're seeing these names now, but no one heard of names like Paul Mogensen and Alan Uglow for forty years.

**“PROBABLY THE GREATEST
INFLUENCE ON ART IN THE 1970S AND
CONTINUING THROUGH TO TODAY,
BUT NOT STILL RECOGNISED FULLY,
WAS FEMINISM.”**

It wasn't interesting work at the time or it wasn't viewed as all that interesting. Along came Julian Schnabel, who tried to get Holly to show his work because she was the gallery. She was not interested. He went instead to Mary. And then after a year, he told her her gallery was really boring and she should get rid of all her artists. He offered to connect her with interesting artists and therein, something was born. Simultaneously, you had Helene Winer, who was the director of Artists Space, which at the time was the most prescient, informed alternative space, where the Pictures exhibition was mounted, who, in a very traumatic controversy, left her position in the non-profit world, joining up with Janelle Reiring, who was working for Leo Castelli, and they formed a gallery.

At the same time there was this woman named Annina Nosei who was married to John Weber. John Weber was the gallery that represented the minimalists. He showed Bob Ryman, Sol LeWitt and on and on. Annina was as much a scholar as anything, but she was a good crafty dealer. I would say that most of the artists who were “discovered” in the late 1970s, early 1980s

were “discovered” by Annina first. She was really good at identifying really interesting artists and she was really bad at maintaining relationships with them. So in 1980 you had the birth of a new market. Now, with that new market emerged a new generation of collectors. There emerged a new generation of collectors because there were things to collect.

**“IN 1980 YOU HAD THE BIRTH OF A
NEW MARKET. THERE EMERGED A NEW
GENERATION OF COLLECTORS BECAUSE
THERE WERE THINGS TO COLLECT.”**

Artists of the Pictures Generation were coming from what I wouldn't call an anti-market position, but they were not making things that looked like what the art market would value. I mean Sherrie Levine making photographs of photographs, for example; David Salle initially making very crude drawings on canvas. Nonetheless, they were working in object form. I remember years later during an interview, John Baldessari, whose students they all were, told me the highest value as an artist to his generation would be to be on the cover of *Artforum* magazine, whereas to this generation, the highest goal was to have a sold-out show. He could see the shift when they were in college before there was a market to support them just by what they were making.

I think all of them were informed by the Scull sale, which made a huge impact in 1973. It's kind of amazing to think now because to me, it's not a lot of time. I guess to a lot of people here, it is a lot of time that's passed. But up to the early 1980s in the United States, the view was that all great contemporary art was art made in the United States. This is the story that was told to us by MoMA, which created the canon of modern art, and we didn't know what was going on in Europe. There was Sperone Westwater Fischer gallery showing Richter, but there were maybe two shows and nobody noticed it and nobody bought anything.

M.G. And that's been part of the rehang, hasn't it? To sort of maybe acknowledge that there were artists elsewhere.

A.S. It's the moment that we've been expecting for the last thirty years and it's finally come this way. But then in 1981-82, there were some exhibitions that made us very aware of truly compelling artists in Europe. So then, you had this crossover. All of a sudden there was a world of objects being made by really interesting artists. A generation emerged. What tended to happen is that new

collectors collected contemporary art, and they would collect the art of the generation of artists that emerged at the time that they began collecting. Then, as the next generation of artists emerged, they would continue to collect the new; a few of them would start to look backwards in time. At a certain point, a New York collector would wake up and realise that a Jeff Koons cost more than a Richard Serra, and so they would go back maybe ten years, but they wouldn't go back really far.

**“IN THE 1970S, THE VALUE SYSTEM WAS
DEFINED BY CRITICS. IN THE 1980S, IT
WAS DEFINED BY DEALERS.”**

In the 1970s, the value system was defined by critics. In the 1980s, it was defined by dealers. It was always focussed on the new. The value was always placed in the new. The international market was mostly in the United States. In Italy, they could sell a young Italian artist if they showed in New York, just like in the 1960s Americans would collect pop art once it was bought in Europe. There was always this kind of self-loathing going on amongst collecting communities. Then, a market exploded and prices started to rise. In the early 1980s, auction houses had the policy of not selling a work of art that was less than ten years of age. That changed maybe around 1982-83, when they were retailing a Julian Schnabel plate painting, I believe, for \$15,000. There were more people who wanted them than they could get them. One showed up at auction, sold for around \$85,000, and therein began a secondary market for contemporary art.

M.G. And what sort of people were the collectors? Were they professionals? Was it old-moneyed New Yorkers?

A.S. It was all new money. Newly rich, not filthy rich.

M.G. So, it followed that boom in the finance industry.

A.S. Exactly. In the early 1980s, you had artists who were coming from an intellectual base who, as the market grew, created work that was bigger, brasher, bolder. I would say that value, throughout the 20th century was placed on the work of young artists, and most artists made their greatest works early in their careers. By the end of the 1980s, you had an entire generation of young artists who were dying of AIDS and that virility of youth was destroyed. You had a dramatic shift that took place first in the content of art. A big, bold

painting by Julian Schnabel or Anselm Kiefer, who were leading the market in the early 1980s, was looking very self-indulgent by the late 1980s, at which time the more imperfect, handmade, intimate, psychological objects of an artist like Bob Goyer, Charlie Ray or Félix González-Torres felt more relevant to what was going on. And again, it was the same collectors that came along.

By the late 1980s, as the market for contemporary art began to really accelerate—and by that, I mean the secondary market, and in the secondary market things didn't go to auction unless there was a bigger market to support them than the primary markets. But by 1987, there was a crash in the stock market. And that was, I think, the first time that the art market became aware of the link. The art market was kind of rising at a very steady but substantial rise. When the stock market crashed, the art market didn't follow suit. It did the opposite and shot up at a much higher trajectory. And I think it's because people with money were no longer comfortable putting it in the stock market but realised that they were doing a lot better with the art, which they weren't buying primarily for investment purposes.

**“ANYTIME THERE'S EXCESSIVE
SPECULATION IN THE ART MARKET, IT
WILL END IN A CRASH.”**

The way people collected was if fifty new artists emerged in a year that seemed interesting, they would buy fifty works and three would stick and that support all of that capital going into it.) So, you found a lot more speculation going on at the end of the 1980s by seasoned collectors who saw new people entering the market because they were learning that art was rising in value, which then ultimately led to a crash in the art market. Anytime there's excessive speculation in the art market, it will end in a crash.

And whenever things get tough in the art world or the art market or in the larger world, there tends to be a shift in taste. In times of bounty we see very expressionistic work, very pop-ish work; art that is easier to absorb. Not to say that it's necessarily superficial, but nonetheless easier to connect to. And then in times of hardship, art that's tougher to read, that's more resilient, that's more content driven and psychological tends to become what attracts the interests of the market curators and so on. I've seen this kind of cycle happen again and again and again. By the 1990s, you had a new generation of artists emerging who were suspicious of the art market. In their work, you would see values that ran counter to the art of the 1980s. A prototypical artist for that would be

somebody like Luc Tuymans, who made work which, at the time, was small in scale. I would say more than small, modest; of uncertain imagery, residing somewhere between representation and abstraction with a palette that was subtle, and it just represented a very different kind of sensibility.

And then, of course, a market grew for that. By the 2000s, the market became global. You had buyers from all parts of the world, especially from several areas of new wealth, collecting art. There'd been another art market crash in there, a mini crash, and the people who emerged to collect art thereafter tended to be much richer than their predecessors. There was more money that could go in, which resulted, I think, in a higher degree of connoisseurship and selectivity. What you found was that people would rather pay a lot more money for a great work by a desired artist, than look for value of a more medium level work by that artist. And so, you saw a kind of shift. It was no longer the name. It was the work of art that would sell itself. There was a shift from collecting the work of artists, to collecting artworks.

“BY THE 2000S, THE MARKET BECAME GLOBAL. YOU HAD BUYERS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY FROM SEVERAL AREAS OF NEW WEALTH, COLLECTING ART.”

And so new collectors, rather than starting with the new generation or always starting with a new generation of artists, would be collecting the work of mature artists and maybe artists who weren't alive, as well as younger artists. That created yet a totally different market.

And that's the market that we find ourselves in now, having accelerated in price and demand at an unprecedented extent. I would say that as the amount of money and the number of people looking to collect art, especially “masterworks”, by most validated artists at the top level increases and the number of artists they are interested in pursuing doesn't increase, the supply of available works decreases. And so, you see these huge spikes in pricing over the last number of years, which are really principally a function of supply and demand.

M.G. If there are just a few artists and no one is as interested in taking a punt on a younger artist of their own generation, what is the logical conclusion for the galleries that are serving?

A.S. I'm going to differ from what Kenny Schachter said yesterday. I think in the last few years—and it really is just like the last three years—there's been a dramatic shift in the market. The way I see it, a core of the primary market is highly threatened and likely to collapse or need to change substantially how it functions in order to survive. As there's more money coming into the market and more people seeking to buy art, they're investing less time in the actual search.

“THAT'S THE MARKET THAT WE FIND OURSELVES IN NOW, HAVING ACCELERATED IN PRICE AND DEMAND AT AN UNPRECEDENTED EXTENT.”

So, there are more and more collectors who are just buying at auction, or maybe auction and Larry Gagosian, or waiting until an artist gets to a certain level at auction where it's been validated. They are not going to galleries and developing relationships there. Initially, I think that came out of a belief, not particularly well rooted in reality, that something at auction was a real market, because you could see other people bidding—as we know the market can get manipulated at all different levels and through all different parties.

M.G. It does seem, on the face of it, more transparent because there are numbers, and people are comfortable with them.

A.S. Correct. What's happened most recently, I find, is that the auction market has become very indexable. We see certain artists not perform well at auction although they have very healthy primary markets; however, that's only known to the small, more limited group of people who buy in the primary market. If they don't perform well at auction, then there's a general perception that there's no value in the work. And so, in the last three years, there's been, at least in New York, a shocking drop in the amount of transacting taking place in what used to be a very healthy and broad primary market supported by healthy primary market galleries for decades. You now see galleries that used to have, let's say, 70 per cent of their artists sell on a regular basis, only sell 30 per cent. I'm making up the numbers, but my numbers aren't really very far off.

Yes, there are a number of galleries in this in the primary market at a certain kind of mature tier, like 303 Gallery that Kenny Schachter referred to yesterday, that are getting by in a very healthy way. There are several that are growing in a very healthy way. However, the vast majority are very highly challenged and

amongst them, galleries that were able to sustain themselves and the artists they support to a very healthy degree.

When you go back to Leo Castelli, he focussed on two artists: Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein. Every other artist in that gallery would complain that Leo never sold anything of theirs. There's the view now that almost everyone who showed there was a brilliant genius artist that was heavily collected—and they were collected, but not in the same way. Similarly, most primary market galleries are supported by one or two artists, maybe three. If a primary market gallery is being challenged by its ability to support a market that isn't being regularly sustained at auction through publishable numbers, then the likelihood that a larger, better capitalised gallery can come along and attract that artist is greatly increased, as we've seen. And if you lose the two, that's fatal to most primary market galleries.

“A CORE OF THE PRIMARY MARKET IS HIGHLY THREATENED AND LIKELY TO COLLAPSE OR NEED TO CHANGE SUBSTANTIALLY HOW IT FUNCTIONS IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.”

M.G. The primary market galleries are very resistant to publishing their own sales. Would it help if they could validate?

A.S. I think publishing is just one step. I think validating prices, I should say validating the ongoing health of a market is important.

M.G. Isn't one of the problems that prices are so high they're quite difficult to validate?

A.S. Well, it depends on the dealer and it depends on the artist. I mean, there are moments where there's a lot of money in the market, where dealers break from the patterns of the past. It used to be every year, every exhibition, a primary market gallery would raise prices 10-15 per cent, even when the secondary market was increasing fivefold. They'd still go up pretty conservatively. There would be a huge gap between primary market pricing and secondary market, which meant that galleries became far more controlling over how they placed the work so that they would decrease the possibility of work entering into the open market. But they didn't raise primary market prices to come anywhere near secondary market prices.

That changed ten or fifteen years ago. As primary market pricing came closer to secondary market pricing, it created vulnerabilities for many artists because there are certain price points that, up until that point, most collectors say, “why not?” Once it goes above a certain number, they will start considering their choices. So that can create destabilised markets, except for artists who are incredibly consistent, of which there are very few. It takes a lot of risk to make continual greatness. And sometimes, oftentimes, when an artist can be very consistent, it can also be kind of relatively flat as a kind of long-term engagement. At least that's my observation.

“NOW, WHAT YOU HAVE IS MORE MONEY, MORE PEOPLE IN A MARKET RIGHT NOW SEEKING THE WORK OF FEWER ARTISTS: A MUCH SMALLER SUPPLY. THEREFORE, PRICES DOUBLE, TRIPLE, QUINTUPLE AND MORE.”

So now what you have is more money, more people in a market right now seeking the work of fewer artists: a much smaller supply. Therefore, you see prices doubling, tripling, quintupling and more, which says as much about the value or the lack of value of the dollar as it does about the value of the art and about the excessive wealth of those people buying at those levels. While you have a very strong market for very top blue-chip things, you also have a threat of that market atrophying because there's not enough of a supply coming in to keep the market active. Then you have certain galleries functioning very well in the primary market, but very much controlling what trade goes on there. I would say that three of the strongest, most vital, most powerful galleries functioning in the primary market are operated by owners aged from eighty to ninety something and in all likelihood will not be in business, at least in the way that we know them, in five to eight years. Pace is being moved on to the second generation which may be able to sustain it, but not with the same degree of vitality for the artists that it represents. Gagosian, who has a succession plan, I think stands a better chance of surviving than most galleries.

M.G. Well, because it's always been a sort of business.

A.S. Exactly. They represent artists, but they don't function like a primary market. It's a secondary market gallery focussed on trade. The shift in the contemporary art market from primary to secondary was created by Larry Gagosian. It happened in the 1980s and it happened because artists didn't

trust Larry. I mean, he had a bad record of payments and so artists wouldn't be represented by him, so the primary market was closed to him. So, he had to go to the secondary market.

M.G. And he made big.

A.S. He did it well. He really did singlehandedly create that market. I mean, he woke up one day and saw you can buy a Willem de Kooning woman painting for more money than, but not dramatically more money than, let's say, a new Jasper Johns. And also, there were three people collecting art who could pay ten times that amount. He focussed on those three people. It was just a totally different psychology entering into it.

M.G. I'm sorry I interrupted your brilliant rundown of the galleries and where they are at. We've got used to the big galleries getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Is this going to keep happening, this widening gap between the best or the biggest, I should say?

**“THE SHIFT IN THE CONTEMPORARY
ART MARKET FROM PRIMARY TO
SECONDARY WAS CREATED BY LARRY
GAGOSIAN. IT HAPPENED IN THE 1980S.”**

A.S. Well, to me, the grimmest part of the contemporary art market is that until not that long ago, as a new generation of artists would emerge, a dealer would emerge who represented those artists. As those artists matured and their markets rose, so did the capacity of the dealer grow to raise the prices, to sell at higher levels, to more mature collectors. Everyone kind of rose up. Starting in the late 1980s, as Leo was aging, there began a practice of poaching artists which rarely took place prior to that. By the late 1980s, the market and the notion of representing artists became a kind of open field. In recent generations, we've seen two galleries have the capacity to continue to rise and grow and meet the needs of a collector above a certain price level. In generations younger than that, we have not seen dealers come along who either have the skill in relationships or the appetite to continue to rise in the market. Sometimes it's purely a matter of choice.

But the biggest challenge to the market now is that you simply don't have a lot of options. There were a number of primary market galleries functioning at a fairly high level who were “in a race”—to use the term, but it's an easy way to say it—ten years ago, to be viable, to rise up and become a more significant

gallery. And most—let's say three or four—that had that capacity simply didn't fulfil it. And so, there's even that much more challenge on primary markets. What I find interesting right now at this moment is that we do see an emergence of a lot of artists and a lot of different types of artists who are interesting, who are represented by a new generation of dealers who are much more in the spirit of, let's say, a Gavin Brown when he opened, meaning much more an artist spirit than a mercantile spirit.

**“STARTING IN THE LATE 1980S, AS LEO
[CASTELLI] WAS AGING, THERE BEGAN A
PRACTICE OF POACHING ARTISTS WHICH
RARELY TOOK PLACE PRIOR TO THAT.”**

M.G. And suddenly it's going back to the 1970s. You were talking about it. It's made me think that this seems to be what everyone was craving.

A.S. We'll see if that can sustain itself, if it can evolve. I've seen a lot of work by young artists that today is priced at a third or an eighth of what the equivalent emerging artists would have been ten years ago. There's a getting back to basics here that I think is coming from new dealers emerging who are responsible to their artists, but they're not looking to become mega-galleries, at least at this stage of their activity. They're much more creative environments. They're much more resourceful and able to function in multiple ways, representing a very wide range of artists who seem to be poised to benefit from not getting too much attention too fast.

M.G. And when you say they can function in multiple ways, are you talking about being part dealer, part advisor? Or do you mean they're using technology in different ways? Or all of the above?

A.S. All of the above. They're also creating slightly different models. You know, they're not moving with the neighbourhood where the core of the trade is. They become creative environments unto themselves. They have different value systems and different people who they would consider a significant collector to be buying their work. So, I think they're really starting from the ground up, which is healthy.

M.G. And are you seeing, when you advise collectors, their mindset changing as well? I mean, is there a move away from the sort of objects people have been buying for forty years?

A.S. Well, interestingly, the collectors who started off collecting the new and continued to collect each new generation, they're now in their sixties and seventies; the ones who have been voracious, they own 7,000 objects. They're saying, I just can't keep doing that. Like, what am I going to do with all of this? Plus, the price of entry, except for very, very, very young artists, just most recently was much higher than their predecessors.

“THE ACTUAL STYLE AND SPIRIT OF COLLECTING HAS CHANGED QUITE A BIT AMONGST EMERGING COLLECTORS.”

So there has been a shift in general or had been a shift in general from, let's say, taking a budget and buying fifty works spread across a wide range of the market to buying four works and buying much more blue-chip, for example. So, I think the actual style and spirit of collecting has changed quite a bit amongst emerging collectors. And I think just now I'm beginning to see signs of, as you mentioned, something of a return to the optionality of the late 1970s, early 1980s.

M.G. And when you look at Clare McAndrew's figures on the size of the market, it isn't really getting bigger. It is limited in size, isn't it? There's only so much.

A.S. Well, there are many markets, but the market that at least gets measured and published is a lot smaller than people realise. It really does just take two people to make a record for a high price. Sometimes we see like five people bidding and that was unprecedented; that's when you can see some mega-prices. But the market is rather small and select. And if you look at the auction market, the way guarantees have functioned...

M.G. You've talked about how the market is, if you like—I'm going to use the word—manipulated. You didn't say that, but you have talked about how the market can be managed and guarantees seem to be one way of keeping this limited number. I mean, how many buyers are there at the guaranteed end?

A.S. Let me say that being in an auction house, which for people who know me is the last place they would have seen me and the last place I would have seen myself—but circumstance put me there. And I found it really interesting.

M.G. We'd all have done the same.

A.S. And I found my way within it.

M.G. You did.

A.S. Which is sort of like focussing on the part that's not auction or the part that didn't exist before. Going back to your question, the assumption is that a guarantee is a route of manipulation. The way I see it today more often than not is that the demand for top lots is so great that what happens is you basically have a private auction taking place to get to the high guarantee. So, let's say you have Sotheby's and Christie's competing with one another for the same piece of property. They keep bidding each other up based upon what they believe their market can sustain. In some instances, the door is open for them to actually speak to potential buyers in advance to suss out what they're willing to pay for something. In some cases, it's not open. But maybe those conversations take place, nonetheless. I'm not saying in any specific way but it could happen.

“AUCTION IS OPERA. WITHOUT THAT EVENT, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE AN ART MARKET AT THE PRICES THAT WE HAVE.”

So, when you get to a very high price level or estimate and something sells on one bid and it seems manipulated because something's been pre-sold to that one person, more often than not, in my experience, having seen it from inside, the auction has already taken place. It's already gotten to that maximal amount. That thing that started at \$20 to \$30 million and then got to a guarantee of \$60 million wasn't a gamble. It wasn't that somebody got stitched up to pay that price, but it was understood that there was somebody looking for that kind of work who would be prepared to spend up to a certain amount.

M.G. And so then why have the auction? To make it public? I mean, I'm all in favour of public pricing.

A.S. Auction is opera. Without that event, you wouldn't have an art market at the prices that we have. Long before there was a focus on guarantees, there were probably fewer than 30 bidders in a room of 800 people. Today, there are probably fewer bidders than that.

M.G. So you're saying maybe 20 of them have done their bidding privately.

A.S. Yeah. These are public events and contemplation of art is a solitary activity. Decision making in the past about buying art has been principally something that happens behind closed doors. It's a world that craves public moments more and more. Auction was a wholesale business until the contemporary art market entered the auction world, and then it became a retail business.

M.G. I'm hearing a lot of people saying collectors are a lot more conscious about the environment. We've had some survey done that shows that clients are really thinking about sustainability. Are you hearing that from your clients?

A.S. No.

M.G. Perfect. See, that was a quick question.

**“THE [GALLERY] MODEL HAS TO BE
RETHOUGHT GREATLY. I THINK MOST
GALLERIES ARE NOT ORIENTED THAT WAY.”**

A.S. I think perhaps there's some very significant new money amongst very young people who perhaps have more concern about not just the environment, but about social issues and education, some of whom are probably not even collecting art and putting more money into philanthropy. So, I think there is amongst some wealthy more consciousness about a hope for a future but, well, a little bit, but not really.

M.G. Yeah. Twenty years down the line. You've talked about there being a crisis in the primary market and you've mentioned some of the innovative ways that are the green shoots for you. Essentially galleries just have to find another way of doing the same, not just try to model themselves on the old.

A.S. The model has to be rethought greatly. And I think most galleries are not oriented that way. Yes, a gallery really is about the person who owns it, who has a vision and a passion and a commitment. And if the gallery sustains itself over time, they do a very good job of working with artists, which is a very complex relationship, oftentimes parental, almost always deeply psychological. It's a population, at least other than, let's say, very new dealers who may enter with a very different way of looking at the market that's not, I think, that well equipped to rethink what it is.

Having said that, you see little things, which really aren't a rethinking, but a reshuffling. In New York there are galleries that have been forced out of Chelsea because of prices that have moved to Tribeca. When there were two galleries on Walker Street, it was dead. Now that there's six there, it's a little world. These galleries are often working in tandem with one another. That's created a kind of microclimate that I think has a better chance of sustaining itself because it will actually draw traffic, too. But we had the East Village in the 1980s, which was hugely successful for two years, focussed on micro-galleries. Then when five of those artists rose up into a more mature gallery system, that scene died. Lower East Side has been highly challenged; many galleries there have fallen. I think that sadly, unless the style of collecting or the economics of it or the nature of the practice changes substantially, in the next not so many years we will inevitably see many, many galleries challenged by that as well.

**“UNLESS THE STYLE OF COLLECTING
OR THE ECONOMICS OF IT OR THE
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GALLERIES CHALLENGED.”**

M.G. And when you say the nature of collecting, do you mean just continuing this trajectory of the big buying a few?

A.S. If there are more collectors emerging who are creating, who have a renewed faith in art that has not been validated by published numbers, but because they believe in it or they believe in the longevity and how things change over time. But right now, I don't see that happening. I see the opposite happening and people getting far more conservative. Occasionally, you'll see in an evening sale an artist introduced, for whom there's a knowledge that there is great demand that didn't exist six months ago, and then you'll see crazy prices. Up until a few years ago, that used to be the place where an artist who is ready to truly be sustained would be introduced. Then maybe fifteen years ago, any artist you saw who went from \$50,000 to \$800,000 in an evening sale was destined to die within five years of a market. More recently, I think we are seeing, at least to a meaningful extent, some artists introduced to evening auctions who were just at the beginning of a rise in their markets. That's a bit of a shift.

M.G. Yes. But do you think that's more sustainable or is that also destined to die?

A.S. I think that is case by case. I think that's mostly rooted in a sharp increase in the interest in and the collecting of the work of African American art. That's the hardest part of the contemporary market right now to gain access to because everyone wants it. But it's also that there are so many institutions that have a mandate to collect that work. Museums were not driving that part of the art market for a long time. So, you've got a much broader, a deeper market interested in that work. Therefore, to the extent that those are artists who continue to make work that remains interesting to a marketplace. I think you'll see a longer life in those markets.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND QUESTIONS (C/Q) FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: You've focussed for very understandable reasons on the American art world and the American market as the driver and the generator, and it's going to stay that way for a long time. I just wonder if you can maybe speculate or look ten, twenty years ahead and see how the global market might grow, how that real dependence on America might shift more broadly.

A.S. Well, it depends on what part of the market you're talking about. When I talk about the American market, from a dealer perspective or a trade perspective, it's an international market. The same people are buying in London as are buying in Los Angeles as are buying in Hong Kong. So, to a large extent, this is an international market; a truly international market, although still driven by American dollars.

If—and there are real challenges now to getting money out of China, but—if, for example, collecting were to increase and become multi-generational and deeply sustained in China, that could change the art market completely. It could change what's valued completely because the wealth there completely dwarfs the wealth in most of the rest of the world combined. So, a lot depends upon where the buyers come from.

Q2: Thank you, Allan, for this brief history of the American art market I would like to ask how you think the art market is going to be shaped by cryptocurrencies. Do you have any thoughts on this?

A.S. I'm too old to have an opinion. I apologise, but I don't have a viewpoint. I will say the legality of money is it is being watched more and more closely, whether these are trades at auction or through private galleries. Certainly in the United States, the attorney general and certain politicians are always eager to try to find problems with money and art. I think there'll always be a need to validate where the original source of the money is. So, if that becomes obscured through cryptocurrencies, then that could be challenged.

Q3: I was wondering, if you look at the current financial markets, what's your reflection on the art markets? We had a crash and then people bought a lot of art. What do you think is happening now?

A.S. Specifically with money in relation to the art market?

Q3: Yeah, or if people are going to buy into art more because they want the security of having artworks instead of stocks, like what happened before.

“ANY TIME THAT A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF MONEY GOES INTO ART AS INVESTMENT, IT'S DANGEROUS FOR THE ART MARKET.”

A.S. I think any time that a significant amount of money goes into art as investment, it's dangerous for the art market. There's a lot of wealth out there that believes in art, and that's not going away. What it believes in and where it sees sustained value may change. The extent to which that's meaningful to major purchasers can shift at times when the market's been challenged. The money that's come into the market—or, I should say, the collectors that have come in—have been much, much wealthier than their predecessors. So people who are really rich are becoming increasingly even that much richer. There's a lot of excess money when you see a Pablo Picasso sculpture go from \$40 million in value to \$140 million in value or thereabouts, maybe it's \$39 million to \$140 million. Those numbers are openly published and there's still somebody to spend that extra \$100 million. That talks more about desire than “value”. That's more because someone can pay it.

I had a really interesting experience years ago with S.I. Newhouse, who was the owner of Condé Nast and for a very long time was the most significant buyer in the art market. Larry Gagosian's secondary market business was built on S.I. Newhouse as a major client. He entered conversations with me

to possibly advise him on collecting the work of younger artists. So I went to his apartment and he had this fantastic Rauschenberg, which we were talking about, and he mentioned *Rebus* had come back up for sale, which is a painting I believe Bruno Bischofberger had bought back then for \$40 odd million. It was the highest price paid for a Rauschenberg and it's certainly a Rosetta Stone for Rauschenberg. Then as the value for art went down, at a certain point, the painting came back on the market.

It was widely known within the trade that the asking price was around \$24-25 million, but you could probably buy it for \$23 million. So, as we were talking about S.I. Newhouse's Rauschenberg, he said *Rebus* was back on the market. I told him I knew and he said it was \$32 million. Was it \$33 million that he said? I said that it could well be the price that he'd been quoted, but my understanding was that it could be bought for around \$22.5-23 million. And he said, "No, it's \$33 million." And then I repeated what I knew, and then I realised the third time I did it that he needed to believe that it was \$33 million, and it would have been less interesting to him if it was \$23 million. So, money and value in art can be relative, as well as the quantification of desire can be relative.

"I SEE COLLECTORS IN NEW YORK WHO DIDN'T KNOW THE NAME OF AN ARTIST FROM IRAN, LEBANON OR IRAQ FIVE YEARS AGO COLLECTING WORK FROM THOSE COUNTRIES. I SEE THAT INEVITABLY HAPPENING."

Q4: How can you take small regional markets like Middle Eastern contemporary, African contemporary or Latin American contemporary to graduate beyond being seen as niche markets? If they're only operating in their own environment, will they never graduate? Do they have to go to America?

A.S. Well, I would say two things. Number one, I think at this moment that the contemporary art market in general is challenged. I think it leaves a lot more space for niche galleries and niche markets. So I don't think that's necessarily a bad term in the way that it might have been in the past, certainly.

A lot of my work as an adviser has been focussed on looking at undervalued markets. Twenty years ago, we were collecting post-war Italian art when Americans were not looking at that material. To my eye, Lucio Fontana is as important to post-war art as Jackson Pollock, but a most valued *Fine di Dio*,

which would be the most valuable body of work by Fontana, was under a million dollars when the equivalent Pollock would have been maybe \$60-80 million. I curated a museum in Brazil, the Instituto Inhotim, so it brought me to look at art in Latin America, where I wouldn't otherwise have seen it and fall in love with a lot of it. And so, we were collecting that for collectors and we see a lot more mainstreaming of it. Tanya Barson, who curated, I think, one of the greatest retrospectives I've ever seen, is in the room. And this was from Mira Schendel. It got a huge amount of attention because it was curated so well. One could see the brilliance of it.

So, there has been a huge interest in the market for the work of African American artists. There has been a slower but quite recently rapidly ascending interest in the work of contemporary African artists and there should and will inevitably be an increased interest—I already see signs of it—in the work of Middle Eastern artists and perhaps linking contemporary African with contemporary Middle Eastern. As you actually do have some imprecise borders between those cultures, I think it is one natural route. I've seen it. I see collectors in New York who didn't know the name of an artist from Iran or Lebanon or Iraq five years ago collecting work from those countries. So I see that inevitably happening. I think as the new models for institutions are being developed outside of the United States and Western Europe, we will inevitably see a lot more or should be seeing intermixing of contemporary art from cultures that we might not have been as familiar with. I think that's the future or part of the future.

Q5: I was curious to hear your thoughts actually on how the influences of the art world have been shaping the art world and the markets. I'm thinking of curators, critics, museum people and how that's changed to collectors being more influential. How is that shaping the art market now and the art world at large? Where do you see that going and how that might look in the future?

M.G. Very good question, thank you. I think Kenny Schachter mentioned yesterday that at the moment collectors seem to be calling the shots. I know you have quite strong opinions on critics and journalists.

A.S. I was a writer for twenty plus years. Critics don't usually have much impact on the art market. When I started off, the chief critic of *The New York Times* was Hilton Kramer, who hated most contemporary art. He wrote a positive review of the first exhibition of Susan Rothenberg in 1976-77, when she showed her horse paintings, which at the time were the most desired works

of contemporary art. His review came out, I think, the Friday before the show closed. One painting was sold prior to that and then the show sold out after that. Roberta Smith sometimes can sell a show. I don't think most critics have an impact on what collectors think.

There is more journalism that is opinion driven and provides inside information delivered in very entertaining ways. That's interesting to collectors, but I don't think it influences them. I think curators, for the most part, or more often than not, are put in the uncomfortable position of having to raise funds for their own shows in ways that was not how it worked in the past. More and more, institutions are focussing their programme on shows that can be funded, which tends to mean artists that are collected by their patrons. The space for curators to actually have both the physical space and the curatorial time to really play and to lead the way is greatly reduced from what it had been. There were many more project spaces in many museums in the past. There are a few museums that have always had as their mandate to be ahead of the curve, and there still are museums that way.

**“THE MARKET AND THE PEOPLE WHO
HOLD POWER IN THE MARKET ARE THE
GREATEST INFLUENCE ON THE MARKET,
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SURROUND IT.”**

But I think, sadly, that the market and the people who hold power in the market are the greatest influence on the market, rather than the professions that surround it. Once there were schools of curatorial studies that came into creation, it also then created a parallel world of curators who existed more in a theoretical realm than a practical realm. There's a surprisingly small percentage of people who came out of those programmes who have become curators of mainstream museums; many of them exist in a world that's kind of related or parallel to the academic world.

When I was a writer, I had to support myself from my work. That dictated to a large extent where I wrote, how much I wrote. I woke up one day and realised that the system was skewed. A friend of mine had said that when he started writing journalism in the 1950s, *Esquire* magazine paid a dollar a word to a journalist; when I was writing in the 1980s and 1990s, *Esquire* was still paying on average dollar a word. The cost of living went up I couldn't even begin to guess how much from the 1950s to the 1990s, and the wage scale did not really

change for the art writer. And as we know, most journalistic vehicles are deeply threatened. So the opportunities become even narrower, or the craftiness required to sustain oneself is even greater. I came to a conclusion which can be an overgeneralisation, but I came to think that the world didn't value as much what it didn't pay for. And that, if you're practicing in those areas, you have to be deeply, profoundly committed to it and get your satisfaction from your work.

When I started writing full time, I was writing more for general publications than art publications because an art publication paid six hundred dollars for a three-thousand-word piece. And that was never going to make it. Plus, I became interested in how the market impacted, how we perceived art. At that time, the market wasn't really written about except by financial journalists, not by art writers. So, I had written a piece for I can't remember what publication at the time. I mean, I'd been writing for several years, but then I wrote a piece that was critical of an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum.

The Guggenheim used to have a young artist show every other year that was funded by Exxon Corporation. And then, in the tenth year, rather than have a new show of emerging artists, they had a kind of review of the ten years of the previous shows. What they didn't say was that this was the last year that Exxon was going to fund them. They gave them funding for ten years. And so, it was an exhibition masquerading as something that it wasn't. I referred to it as the first retrospective of corporate funding and Roberta Smith, when she reviewed the show, quoted that line in her review. In the next opening that I went to, I had fifty people come running up to me to congratulate me on being in Roberta's column. None of these people had ever acknowledged anything I'd written before that. I think that speaks a little bit of the power of the press, at least within the value system of the art world itself, sadly.

M.G. Thank you very much. You've made me feel a bit better than when you said we were in crisis. But thank you all for your brilliant questions. Thank you very much, for actually talking about the crisis, but also offering some real green shoots for everyone's future.

Joost Bosland

is one of the thirteen owners of Stevenson, a gallery with spaces in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and an office in Amsterdam. He has been with the gallery since a three-month internship in 2005. Stevenson opened in 2003, and currently represents 31 artists and employs 34 people. In the absence of local institutions dedicated to contemporary art, from 2005 to 2015 the gallery was instrumental in bringing international artists to South Africa, often for the first time, including El Anatsui, Njideka Akunyili-Crosby, Rineke Dijkstra, Olafur Eliasson, and Walid Raad.

Matt Carey-Williams

started his career in 1997 working for Sotheby's London as a Junior Cataloguer, and left in 2005 having spent four years working in Sotheby's New York HQ, as a Senior Vice President. He then moved to the world of the art galleries and worked at Gagosian in New York, Haunch of Venison in London (2005-2012), White Cube and, later, Phillips in London. In 2018 joined Victoria Miro as Senior Director of Sales. His principal concerns have been to marry the interests of artists with those of collectors and institutions around the world.

Greg Hilty

began his curatorial career in 1983 at the avant-garde arts centre Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, moving to London's Hayward Gallery where he served as Senior Curator. He was Director of Arts for London Arts and Director of Visual Arts and Literature for the Arts Council England's London office, from 1999–2004. From 2005-8 he worked in partnership with the University of the Arts London, developing artistic initiatives across creative disciplines and industries. Since 2008 Hilty is Curatorial Director of Lisson Gallery, working with artists to develop opportunities across all platforms, broadening the programme within a wider global framework.

Andrew Goldstein

is the Editor-in-Chief of Artnet News, the world's most-read news publication covering the art world and the art market. A career cultural journalist who has spent the past decade at the vanguard of online art publishing, Andrew was previously the chief digital content officer at Artspace | Phaidon and the editor of Artinfo. Andrew has written extensively about art and culture, for the New York Times, New York magazine, Rolling Stone, Spin, Portfolio, Man of the World, the (pre-Trump) New York Observer, the New York Post, and other publications.

Rethinking Business Models for Galleries

SPEAKER

Joost Bosland, Matt Carey-Williams & Greg Hilty

MODERATOR

Andrew Goldstein



Rethinking Business Models for Galleries

Andrew Goldstein (A.G.): I'm Andrew Goldstein. I'm the editor in chief of Artnet News and host of *The Art Angle* podcast, and I'm delighted to be with you here today to talk about this fascinating concept. Now, as we all know, more than ever, after two days of fascinating conversations, running an art gallery is a very funny business.

Despite the reassuring solidity of the gallery, the brand name by the door, the priestly white walls that are hung with eye-wateringly expensive artworks and the artist roster filled with famous names, even a successful gallery is actually a fairly threadbare enterprise when it comes down to the fundamentals. If they're lucky, the dealers may have been able to squirrel away some inventory by the artists they work with so that they have a stake in their careers, even if they were to move on from the gallery. They may have been able to buy one or two of the spaces that they use, giving them some real estate equity.

**“BY AND LARGE, MOST OF THE ASSETS
THE GALLERY HAS ARE ACTUALLY
RELATIONSHIPS.”**

But by and large, most of the assets the gallery has are actually relationships, specifically the relationships with the artists they represent, the collectors they cater to and the various art professionals that they work with to make this happen. So, interestingly enough, most of these relationships were actually established by the founder of the gallery originally. So, this aging gallery model, which consists, generally speaking, of representing artists and then bending heaven and earth to bring their artworks together with collectors in a physical space to make magic happen is faced with incredible new emerging opportunities that are, perversely, the flipside of threats.

So, one of these is globalism, which has been spreading the art market into far corners of the planet and expanding it more than anybody's ever dreamed of. At the same time, this is forcing dealers to strap on their rucksack like

the travelling salesman of yore and go on this forced march in search of this windfall. You also have emerging digital opportunities that are incredibly hard to figure out. There's a giant risk in betting on the wrong opportunity, especially if you invest a significant amount of money into it. And then there's also the fact that there is a new generation of buyers who is becoming keen on collecting art through pop culture, which is becoming permeated with this idea of art as the ultimate luxury object. But at the same time, they demand to be catered to in new and different ways.

So, complicating matters further, this strange new vista is coming into focus at a time when the founders of these galleries, who have built them up and led them through decades of unprecedented market growth, are reaching their retirement age. It's as if they have guided their vessels up the rivers to the mouth of the sea. And it's now necessary to invent a new kind of gallery to brave the vast, uncharted waters ahead.

So, today, to talk about this challenge and perhaps put forth some ideas on how to meet it, I'm joined by the representatives of three distinguished galleries, each of which, interestingly, occupies a different kind of niche of the art market. So here we have Matt Carey-Williams, who is the senior director of sales at Victoria Miro, which was founded in 1985 and today works with 42 artists, including Yayoi Kusama and Nijdeka Akunyili Crosby, operating out of a massive HQ on Wharf Road in London, with another space in Mayfair and one in Venice. Greg Hilty is the curatorial director of Lisson Gallery, which was founded by a 21-year-old Nicholas Logsdail in 1967 and represents 63 artists and estates, including Anish Kapoor and Ai Weiwei, across four galleries (two in London, one in New York and one in Shanghai). And Joost Bosland is the director of Stevenson Gallery, which was founded by Michael Stevenson in Cape Town in 2003 and represents 31 artists, including Zanele Muholi and Paulo Nazareth, with spaces in Cape Town and Johannesburg and an office in Amsterdam.

So, this is a very interesting spread of dealers here. The idea of this talk is to be a little bit of a focus group to talk about some of the ideas that have been raised in the previous panels we've had these past two days and try to really see if we can come up with an action plan or some kind of new sightlines into untangling these knots. So as a way of kicking things off, why don't we play a little game where, if you can pretend that you're at a cocktail party, how would you describe what makes your gallery distinct? And where would it fit in the food chain between the emerging gallery and the mega-galleries, the T-Rex echelon at the top?

Matt Carey-Williams (M.C-W.): Well, I'd be drunk at that cocktail party, so you probably wouldn't want to talk to me. We're an emergent gallery, a gallery that has emerged that's trying its hardest to emerge again. And I think that for a gallery like ours, Victoria Miro in London, which has been around for 35 years and run by Victoria from day one, which she still does today, that sort of passion, that philosophy, if you like, of re-emerging is a very important strategy for the gallery. We want to look after our artists and look after our relationships with our artists and the collectors that have been extremely close to the gallery for many, many years. But we also very much have our eye on the new and what's out there and the opportunities that come with that. So, it's emerging, re-emerging. It's like a rebirthing. I am the rebirthing of Victoria Miro. I put the -ing on the end of that word.

**“THAT SORT OF PASSION, THAT
PHILOSOPHY OF RE-EMERGING IS
A VERY IMPORTANT STRATEGY FOR
THE GALLERY.”**

A.G. I think we all know that Victoria Miro is not actually an emerging gallery.

M.C-W. No, no, no. But that is what we desire to focus on, much as these wonderful collectives of emerging galleries in L.A., for example, that have got everyone's attention—and so they should. Some of them are extremely interesting and show fantastic young new artists that are having a lot to say about what it means to live in 2020. We'd like to be very much on that sort of wave, and we'd like very much to focus our energies curatorially, transactionally, aesthetically, artistically, etcetera, on that way forward. That's not to say that you don't want to maintain and manage what you've spent 35 years building. You can't do that. But at the same time, you must keep your eye on the new. It's like a fashion house. That's what they do very well. Dior talks about big white dresses from the 1950s—I should know. And then they want to talk about the new, and then they want to talk about tomorrow. Tomorrow's always on today's agenda and it should never, ever not be.

A.G. Very interesting. Greg, what about you?

Greg Hilty (G.H.) Well, I probably wouldn't be at the cocktail party. I'd be more likely to have dinner with an artist. My colleagues would be there, and I feel very much like that. But I don't want to repeat him. So, I guess I'll give a slightly different angle. Lisson Gallery began as a start-up when Nicholas Lisson was twenty-three. He had no investment in the gallery other than the £5000

insurance money he once got when he was knocked off his motorbike and knocked his teeth out, which he put back into the gallery. So that's the level. Otherwise, it's been building artists, moving forward, constantly reinventing different generations. It's interesting that the gallery is seen in a historic light, sometimes called an institution. It's kind of flattering, and it's kind of true. We have an archive; we have historical work. We have a history

But really, in Nicholas's mind, it always has been there to reinvent with different generations. The 1970s was the conceptual minimal artist and the United States. The 1980s was very much the decade of the British sculptors. The 1990s was more media artists. And things changed, things keep moving. In the eleven years I've been at the gallery, we've seen what Allan talked about earlier: the globalisation really of the market, both economically and culturally, so that you can't look at the rest of the world—let's say not the west—as secondary in market terms. Maybe sometimes it still is, but it's one world, and you look to bring artists together. So, we've been very much focussing on that.

But I think the one thing that I'd add to what Matt said is I think galleries are much less monolithic and much more fluid than people sometimes give them credit for.

**“GALLERIES ARE MUCH LESS
MONOLITHIC AND MUCH MORE FLUID
THAN PEOPLE SOMETIMES GIVE THEM
CREDIT FOR.”**

They may look like conventional white cubes, but they're actually not. They're very different spaces; we have five different places. What remains key is the founder's mentality (I've got a good friend who's written a book with that title). And, there's a time when any business that's started by a charismatic founder can fail. It gets too big. They get tired. They try to hand things down; they sometimes sell. There've been several cases that are well enough known of people coming back into a business. That's one way of doing it. I think one thing that Nicholas wanted to do was to maintain the founder's mentality, to maintain the ethos, which is about rediscovery. It's about always trying to be, not different for the sake of it, but to push to the new and not let stasis set in. And there are many ways of doing that. You've got to always be looking, always be opening, always be reinventing. You've got to be careful with money. You've got to put money where it needs to be put, but not where it doesn't. And there's a temptation sometimes to overinvest or overextend. So that's the mentality that I think distinguishes us. It's not necessarily that it places us in a

hierarchy between an emerging gallery and a mega-gallery, but it's a position we choose to be in in terms of being able to look for the new and yet play at the highest level.

A.G. So just before we get to Joost, I want to ask how big the staffs are. How big is the staff of Victoria Miro?

M.C-W. We have a neat symmetry. So, we have as many people working at the gallery as there are artists. So, we have 42 artists and 42 staff, including Victoria.

A.G. Greg, what about you?

G.H. We now have actually two spaces in New York, two in London, one in Shanghai and about 80 staff.

A.G. Okay. Joost?

Joost Bosland (J.B.): Let me start with that last question. I think we have a very similar symmetry to what Matt mentioned. I think about 34 people full time at the gallery and 31 artists. I do think that probably gives us the highest staff to turnover ratio of any gallery I'm familiar with, because we're a much, much smaller gallery than my colleagues here. To give you an idea, we've been in the main gallery sector at Art Basel for now maybe four years, and I have to pinch myself every time I get to walk into that hallowed space with an actual name badge. So, we are at a slightly different point in our development.

If we're at the cocktail party, chances are you're asking me about the region the gallery is from. We're from Africa. We just heard from Allan that that's one of the few bright spots in the art market today, and hearing that from someone like him certainly was a good start to my day. I'll probably try and pivot the conversation really, really quickly to our actual gallery model where we don't have the founder's mentality problem in a way, because very early on, when the gallery was eight years old, the founder sold most of the equity to a number of key team members. And we're now owned by thirteen people. No one owns more than 12.5 per cent. So, it really feels like this weird collective endeavour that I think is much closer to a small law firm maybe than to most galleries we're familiar with. And that's something I'm much more comfortable talking about than this sort of politics of regional art and its place in the global marketplace, which I have opinions about but am a bit reticent to express them.

A.G. But I definitely want to get to your unique kind of organisational structure. But before that, both Lisson and Victoria Miro have deep holdings of inventory

that they've built up over the years and also own their flagship spaces in London, renting the other ones. Joost your gallery does not have inventory and does not own its properties. And in fact, when we were talking before this panel, you told me that your business is often on the knife's edge, that the difference between a good year versus a bad year can be a couple of sales. What is it that you require to keep your gallery sustainable?

J.B. It's hard not to get philosophical with that question. It's almost something like grace. I think often when we feel on a knife's edge, that one big sale that will get us through to the next quarter does materialise. When people ask me how the gallery is doing, I always say we paid all of our salaries on time this month again, which is something we've done since the very start and we're very, very proud of. And I think that's a measure of success that's quite close to our heart. We do everything else that all other galleries do. We do art fairs. We travel endlessly. We are trying to figure out what this whole digital thing is. We're trying to be nice to millennials. We're doing all those things that we spoke about yesterday. But ultimately, it's grace.

“IT’S NOT JUST THE PEOPLE WHO ARE EXHAUSTED OF FAIRS, BUT ACTUALLY THE VALUE OF THAT HAS RUN OUT. YOU DON’T NEED TO ALWAYS BE THERE.”

A.G. We're very lucky that we don't have any mega-galleries on the stage there because we can talk about them behind their backs.

M.C-W. What is a mega-gallery? What is that? When do you become mega? I'm like asking for a friend.

A.G. I would say when you get to the echelon where you have unlimited resources and you're able to start diversifying, you're able to start building into other areas. You're just a little bit of a conglomerate more than a boutique business. But I think we'll get to them. Believe me. But, you guys have really thriving businesses that you both said have gotten easier as time has gone on, which is something that is the mark of a successful business. Now, as there are all these uncertainties in the global economic and political landscape, what do you need to do in order to maintain your sustainability? Do you need to grow the galleries? Does it need to be a continually expanding line-up of art fairs, spaces, artists and staff?

G.H. No. Really, I don't think so. There has been a period of considerable growth. I think partly in response to this globalism where suddenly there

is this fair in Hong Kong, there're fairs all over the place. And you feel that you know that there's a market, you know that there's money and interest in the art that you have, and you want to reach it. I think that it's not just the people who are exhausted, but actually the value of that has run out. You don't need to always be there. You've established relationships. You can keep going back. You can go to a fair one year and then not for three. With respect to the fair organisers, they know that, too. And that kind of works out. What we need to keep doing, obviously, is business. And I think grace does come into it quite a lot. Things seem to work out. We generate business for years ahead. So, there are things like large scale commissions, for instance, or long-time relationships with people, so that you have a sense that there's movement forward. But fundamentally, it has to be the frame that's come up often, the artist relationships. Those must be healthy. They're always vulnerable, though; there's scarcely a morning that I don't wake up thinking something could happen, quite frankly, because something could. But, you know, that's fine. That's bracing. It's a cold shower. And then you get on and carry on building the relationships and doing what you can for your artists, which is the basis of our business.

A.G. Do you have any star artists on your roster whose departure would have an existential impact on the gallery?

M.C-W. Every gallery has that.

A.G. Every gallery?

M.C-W. Every single gallery.

G.H. Every creative industry has that.

M.C-W. The answer to the question is three words: sell more art. That's what you need to do, to be better than you were before. The question is: how do you do that? What do you do? Who do you sell it to? For a primary space, the implications of what you're selling and how you're selling it are significantly more nuanced than in a secondary market space, which then in itself becomes even more diluted when it becomes a public forum like an auction. I spent my formative years drinking heavily at auction houses and I still do. And I was taught from a very early age that your last sale is the first sale that you forget. And the next sale is the sale that begins at the end of the last auction. So, you're constantly trying to make more and more and more. So, for a primary gallery to succeed, it's what artists you're selling, who you're selling. Do you need more artists? Do you need to build up the roster? Do you need to shape the roster down? All of these questions are a very sort of perfunctory, pithy

way of looking at it. But I think that what you do need to do is constantly reshape your brand, which is mediated through your artists. And how that affects the gallery growing depends upon your ability to shift it.

A.G. And what would you say are the chief challenges facing your business? What is the thing that keeps you up at night, aside from the departure of the star artists? What is the meteorite heading in your direction?

**“WHAT YOU DO NEED TO DO IS
CONSTANTLY RESHAPE YOUR BRAND,
WHICH IS MEDIATED THROUGH YOUR
ARTISTS.”**

G.H. Meteorites is number one. So, this is maybe for later in the conversation, but, absolutely, the things you think about daily are the daily things: the next sale, the next show, that kind of stuff. But I think we can't lose sight of challenges to globalisation, retrenchment, international borders, national customs areas, challenges, frankly, to freedom of expression, etc. Those things are real threats and they may not be meteorites that are going to hit tomorrow, but they could hit the day after tomorrow or in a month or a week. And I think the growth of the art world in the past ten to twenty years has been accounted for by open borders, by globalism, by money, by people and goods moving freely. And if those stop, then we're really threatened and culture is threatened too. So sorry, that's a little bit of a more abstract, but I think it's still a pressing concern.

A.G. I hear art fairs when you say that. When I think of the art market in a global aspect, I think about art fairs. And one thing that we've seen is that art fairs are a little bit like fossil fuel. They've rocketed the business into this incredible new dimension, but at the same time, we're starting to realise that they are polluting the environment in ways that are maybe not entirely discernible as of yet. They're also polluting the actual environment in ways that we're still coming to grips with. So how have the fairs helped your galleries expand? And how have these fairs started to, if at all, have any adverse effects on your business?

M.C-W. Fairs have expanded the art market immeasurably, exponentially in the last forty years. I think it was Georgina Adam who said to me once that in 1972-3 there were three art fairs. Now, there were three last week. We didn't do any of them but the market has changed beyond measure because of the art fair phenomenon. So, the positives of the art fair are that it has broadened

the horizons and the number of people that participate in the market. They've made it much easier to be in the art market, to be a collector, to be buying something that hangs above your fireplace, if that's what you want to do. You don't have to traipse up and down Chelsea pretending to be a collector, because a lot of collectors don't care about being a collector. They just want nice things on the wall. And so, you can go to Basel or even go to Miami and have a fun time, get exceptionally drunk and buy something that you instantly regret the next day and then go home. But you won't tell your friends that.

**“THE POSITIVES OF THE ART FAIR
ARE THAT IT HAS BROADENED
THE HORIZONS AND THE
NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT
PARTICIPATE IN THE MARKET.”**

There is that sort of dynamic with art fairs where they've really just made it possible in many ways for you to come in, fly in on the Stevenson Gallery private jet, obviously, and you set yourself up, you do your thing. You bring that little bit of Cape Town to Basel, or to whichever other fair it is. You sell the hell out of your artists and then you drift away again to the next one. Now, whether or not that experience, whether that way of absorbing art is the right or wrong way, it is the way that a lot of people absorb art commercially. They want to buy art. Look, if you want to see the best things in the world, go to the National Gallery, yeah? You don't go to an art fair to see the best things in the world. And if you think you are, well, you probably spent a lot of money on some things that you shouldn't have. But I do think that there's a space for art fairs and there has been and it's grown, as I say, exponentially, because of the desire of collectors and individuals to be a part of this world that we like to call ourselves, and art fairs are a very, very important part of that experience.

J.B. I don't think I would have sat on this panel if art fairs hadn't existed, if the gallery hadn't opened at the beginning of what turned out to be this big art fair boom. I think Matt and Greg probably would have because a gallery in New York and a gallery in London is going to do just fine without this sort of international movement of goods and people. But I think for a gallery like ourselves, like The Third Line—Sunny Rahbar is in the audience somewhere—I think having opened at a time where we can pay a significant chunk of money, but a manageable chunk of money, and be within a stone's throw of Victoria Miro or Lisson's booth has given us enormous access.

And speaking of the places I know best, a number of galleries have opened in Cape Town and Johannesburg. There was one gallery really in Cape Town doing international fairs ten years ago. There are now maybe seven or eight, which might account for some of those galleries that have been closing on the Lower East Side and somewhere else, because these galleries have just been spreading more. So, for us, it's been a real blessing. That doesn't mean that every year we don't think how we can do maybe a fair less this year, how we can do them smarter, what their value really is. Besides us being physically close, I think the real key to art fairs—and that's where the big fairs are disproportionately important—is they make people trust us.

**“I THINK THE REAL KEY TO ART FAIRS—
AND THAT'S WHERE THE BIG FAIRS ARE
DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPORTANT—IS
THEY MAKE PEOPLE TRUST US.”**

We don't do Art Basel necessarily for the sales we make that one week: they barely cover our costs, or maybe on a good year they more than cover our costs. But hotels are expensive in Basel. Why do we do it? So, when I sit here, I can say we're an Art Basel gallery and that changes the interaction you guys are having with me. It changes the interaction a new collector might have with me when they meet me at a cocktail party. It gives them the trust that, if they spend money with us, they'll get the art, that it's insured, that some vetting has been done; that this weird painting from Zimbabwe they're buying is actually worth buying and there's some sort of backup. So, it's almost like a better business bureau for galleries. And I think that's one thing, one value that art fairs are offering that we don't speak about very often.

G.H. The practical benefits of the actual sales or transactions that happen at fairs are obviously that that's where they happen. That's how they are realised. So, I completely agree with what my colleagues have said. I think there is also a symbolism. It's about a bit of Cape Town or a bit of London appearing in Hong Kong or Mexico City. That's you saying to your market that you care about them. You're turning up at that event, which usually means a lot to the city. The collectors and cultural institutions also invest in those moments. And so, it's a time to cement or build new relationships.

I must say I think that's actually true these days of galleries, because of the old model of, say, Lisson Gallery starting in London and people only seeing Lisson in London and then occasional fairs. And that's what it was about. It was about a UK or European audience. Very frankly, our footfall in London is

not that great. Footfall in Chelsea in New York is much bigger; in Shanghai it's busy, too, because we're in a very busy place; in a way that doesn't matter. It's more the symbolism of saying this is us, this is our headquarters, this is our history, saying we've been in New York for fifty years and although we are a London Gallery, we've done a huge amount of business with New York collectors. We've represented New York artists. We're here. We couldn't do that twenty years ago or even ten years ago. But now it's much easier to do and it's symbolically really important.

**“FAIRS HAVE A SYMBOLISM. IT'S ABOUT
YOU SAYING TO YOUR MARKET THAT
YOU CARE ABOUT THEM.”**

A.G. So this is very interesting because the topic is the evolving gallery model. And clearly, we are not ready to evolve beyond the art fairs even. Matt, you said that you make 30 per cent of your sales through the physical gallery; 30 per cent through the art fairs; and 30 per cent through other means. If you were to hypothetically slice out that 30 per cent that you make through the art fair and then cut back on all your real estate costs by diminishing your gallery operation, it doesn't seem like there's any way to cut yourself out of the art fairs for the foreseeable future.

M.C-W. No. The reality is that most mid-level galleries make a significant chunk of their profitability out of art fairs. And there is this wind of change that's comes along from artists with art fairs. If you asked an artist fifteen years ago to make something for Basel, they'd just laugh at you and say no. Because the idea of being shown at a large art fair in the middle of a tent in London was obscene to a lot of artists. So, they didn't like it. But now I think a lot of artists understand that art fairs are very much part of the reality of the market. And they are artists. They make things. They put a price on it. We sell it for them. They make their money and that's how they live. So, there is that dynamic that has been closed off by it.

But for a lot of galleries, art fairs are intrinsic to their business. And if you took the art fairs away from them, a lot of them could very well close down. What we can't do, what the three of us gallerists are not prepared to do and wouldn't do is subjugate the spaces that we offer to our artists for the programme. When you're putting on a show from one of your artists in your gallery, working on it internally is a completely different experience with completely different expectations on the show, both as a show, as an experience, but also commercially and in financial terms for your business, than you would have

when you're thinking about an art fair.

When I go to Hong Kong, I'm not going to show the same material that I would show if I went to Turin. I'd like to see a Hong Kong fair stand in Turin; I actually wonder how many people would lose their minds over art that could actually look like that. And if I took just white pictures to Hong Kong, probably no one would ever talk to me again. So, I think it's a sort of horses for courses mentality, whereas there's only one course at the exhibition programme and that's dictated by the artist. And we believe in them, we support them. That's very much it; the fabric of our landscape, physically, is theirs for the six or eight weeks that they have to show.

“WHAT THE THREE OF US GALLERISTS ARE NOT PREPARED TO DO AND WOULDN'T DO IS SUBJUGATE THE SPACES THAT WE OFFER TO OUR ARTISTS FOR THE PROGRAMME.”

G.H. That's entirely true. And I agree that the value of a space apart from the symbolic value is the relationship that it can give an artist to make something, to bring new work out and to work very closely with them. I just want to look in terms of how that plays out. I think there's a little more fluidity between the different platforms, in which you might include close collaborations with museums. So, the museum makes the running, but if you're working with an artist on a museum show, you have a key role in making the best of it. The work in a show in one of our spaces in London might well sell in China or the United States, so it rolls out. It plays out through sending out the pdfs, through videos, through talks that happen, so it has a wider spread. It's not just focussed on that particular geographical moment. And similarly, if you think about art fairs, we do take works and sell them, but often we take artists and they'll do talks, they'll maybe do special projects and they'll try. There are opportunities within art fairs to have a richer presentation of an artist than just the sort of clichéd transactional fair.

A.G. So now I think we've established a baseline of the existing practice and I think it's time to break into some more speculative terrain. One last thing about the art fair, though, is that when people go to an art fair, they expect to encounter the principal. This is something that happens sometimes even at Marion Goodman Gallery, where you've got a 92-year-old founder of the gallery who pretty clearly is not going to be there. But people still are like, where's Marion?

M.C-W. She's always there, though. Marion is always at the art fairs.

A.G. Are you kidding?

M.C-W. Holding court, absolutely. Unless they have a Marion art fair example which they roll out at art fairs while real Marion is actually in the gallery.

A.G. Okay. Let's make this even more speculative. Art galleries are not designed from the beginning to evolve beyond their founder. This is not something that is baked into the DNA of the gallery. It's not something that is really something that we've seen a lot over time. Aside from the Castellis, we've got a couple of very established practices and then you've got other galleries that are handing the reins down from generation to generation. In a situation where there isn't that clear heir like Alex Logsdail at Lisson Gallery, what is the rationale in handing down a gallery? What is the rationale of a gallery existing beyond the founder?

“IT'S NOT JUST PERPETUATING THE SAME THING, BUT IT'S GIVING ONE PARTICULAR MODEL AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE IT FORWARD.”

G.H. Well, so Lisson Gallery does have an heir; it has another Logsdail who's executive director and very much making the running, focussing on New York to make it very clearly a New York gallery, which is really important. And that's what we need to bring there rather than sort of parachuting in. But at the same time, we operate across all territories as one gallery. It's not a franchise. That means all kinds of things. It means there's a name recognition. It means that there's a sense of passing on. It also means something new. Alex is not the same person as his father, and he has very different values. He's got different interests. It's a different world and he's a totally different generation. So, he sees something new and is building something on the edifice that his father created.

So, I think it's not just perpetuating the same thing, but it's giving one particular model an opportunity to take it forward. There is a big staff and there are a number of people: I'm a company director, along with Alex and Nicholas; we have senior directors who have significant responsibility and we hopefully have a very empowered and active team. So, we're doing this in a very confident way, taking the ethos and the history of the gallery forward into quite new territory, not just perpetuating, but into something new.

A.G. And what about at Victoria Miro Gallery, if she were to someday want to retire or step back a little bit from the operation, is there an infrastructure that is being built that could move on into the future in a way of a traditional company?

M.C-W. I think that our gallery is the same as a number of other galleries—Allan touched on it briefly—where you’ve got principals who are in their mid-70s. And the question is whether or not it is going to be handed down to a family member who takes that role on and is supported in the same way as the current principal has been or maybe not. That can look a variety of ways. It can look say, for example, like the Acquavella family, where clearly Bill will hand the gallery down to his three children. And they will, I’m sure, be involved in the gallery, the three of them, in running it for the for the future.

“THE KEY IS TO CEMENT THAT FAMILY PART OF THE CONVERSATION WITH A BUSINESS PART OF THE CONVERSATION, TO UNIFY THOSE TWO TOGETHER.”

Whether the gallery will be handed down to Oliver, her son, and what that looks like is a conversation for Oliver and Victoria to have. But what is clear is that there is a unit of individuals at my gallery, much like there is at Acquavella, at White Cube, at other galleries, where that idea of the future is already being discussed. And so, the key is to cement that family part of the conversation with a business part of the conversation, to unify those two together. That means instead of having, as Greg just said, a broad stream of directors who will do lots of different things, actually have a unit of close partners that are thinking about the future of the business. The worst thing you can do to your business model is die, right? That’s the absolute worst thing you could do, if you want to have a legacy and a heritage and to continue to make that cultural contribution that you’ve made to your city and to this world that we live in, although it sounds a bit too much to say. And I think that it is actually incredibly clever what Gagosian Gallery has done with that small group of partners, which probably is about 709 people that sit around the biggest Judd table in the world I’ve ever seen and make grand decisions about the 906 galleries they have all over the world.

So, Victoria did not come this year in the art fair in Miami. She wasn’t feeling so great, so she stayed at home. Yes, lots of people were asking about her, but you’d still do business. But every gallery is always inextricably linked to the personality of the person who founded it and whose name is above the door.

No matter how long you’ve worked for them or who you are, what you do and how valued your contribution to the gallery is, when you talk about Victoria Miro Gallery, you’re thinking of Victoria Miro, not thinking of me.

“EVERY GALLERY IS ALWAYS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THE PERSONALITY OF THE PERSON WHO FOUNDED IT AND WHOSE NAME IS ABOVE THE DOOR.”

A.G. Just like Christian Dior or something like that has a residual cachet from the founder.

M.C-W. Whereas if you think about Sotheby’s, you are not thinking about James Sotheby or whatever Mr. Christie’s name was, or Philip, whoever he was; you are not thinking about them. But actually, they want you to think about them because the auction houses want you to have that lovely heritage. The number of times Sotheby’s would demand you tell everybody you’re 250 years old. How very dare you, I’m not telling anybody my age! But it’s that heritage and that tradition that you want. And ironically the galleries that have that are like, “Oh, no, no, no. We’re brand new.”

G.H. The Stevenson model is really interesting as deliberately being not that.

J.B. Yeah.

M.C-W. So, they don’t have the problem with someone dying unless, of course, on the private jet, it goes horribly wrong and they all die.

A.G. You should have somebody on the ground at all times. But you actually had the gallery passed on from the founder, as you said before.

J.B. It started with six partners and then slowly but surely grew to the current thirteen.

A.G. So that’s a really resilient kind of organisational structure. What future planning are you doing within the structure? Are you looking at a ten-year window or a twenty-year window?

J.B. I don’t think we do much future planning. I think if you told us three years ago, there’d be thirteen of us in 2020, we wouldn’t have necessarily expected it. I think it’s very much responding to current team members, their capability, their network, the value they’re adding. We’re now at a point where all the equity is allocated. So, any change from here will have to be internal. I just

want to sort of throw a slight spanner in the works. I think we've so far been talking about handing over existing business models as effectively as possible in order to continue doing exactly the same thing that we've all been doing, which I think maybe is a little bit unfair to people in the audience who saw the title of this talk, Rethinking Business Models for Galleries.

A.G. We're getting to that.

J.B. I think what we need to do more than anything else, like we need to do with digital, is just experiment. I think we're one very small experiment. We still have a white cube space. We still sell artists. We still take 50 per cent. I think we need to see way more experiments in how these galleries can function. Someone asked yesterday whether we need to become media houses. I wonder whether we need to function more like agents, or what else we should do. I don't know. I don't have answers at all. But I think we need to think way, way, way further than just how to effectively hand over or make these existing business models survive.

**“WE NEED TO SEE WAY MORE
EXPERIMENTS IN HOW GALLERIES
CAN FUNCTION.”**

A.G. Well, I think it's really instructive to look at what these mega-galleries are doing because they're, in fact, investing a lot of R&D into diversifying their businesses and trying out new ways of operating. If you look at Hauser & Wirth, they're basically becoming the Starwood of this new lifestyle empire where they're opening hotels, they've got restaurants in their galleries all over the place, they've got this new art centre in Menorca, the Spanish island, that is essentially a luxurious perk for artists to go on retreats there. They are starting to see art as a little bit more of a service company rather than a commercial company, in a sense; as this connecting ethos that binds together this lifestyle business. And I wonder if there's any kind of application for that. Is there anything that you find would be useful in what would Hauser & Wirth is trying to develop over here?

G.H. You know, good for them. They are doing some good things and great that the business model is growing. They do fantastic projects. They have fantastic art. It's not a model, I wouldn't say, to replicate, because it's theirs, because they've done it, it's come from their history, their culture. Stepping a little bit away from that, I remember in the mid-1990s in London when Tate Galleries was planning to turn into Tate Modern. There were two worries: one

was that there was no audience for contemporary art in London at that time at all. Everybody sat around, the people from public galleries met every couple of months at Tate and it was desperate. The critics hated it. The collectors weren't buying. So that's changed. Things can change in twenty years. And then there was a real fear among other galleries and the institutions of a kind of monopoly when Tate Modern was about to launch.

I think it's really interesting that what's happened is exactly the opposite. Tate Modern has exceeded all expectations in terms of audience, in terms of a certain expanded business model for a museum. But the Whitechapel is thriving. The Serpentine is thriving. The Royal Academy is thriving. They've stepped up. It's raised the bar and it's built the economy. It's built opportunities. And those other previously distinguished institutions have decided what's right for them. The ICA is interesting with Stefan Kalmár. It's in a way gone very back to a very sort of transgressive model that it had when I started working there in the early 1980s. So, these challenges are challenges, but they make anybody worth their salt in a business rise to them. And I think that's where we are in relation to these apparently threatening larger galleries. They do some great things, they do pioneer certain things and they do a great service to their artists. And we can all learn as well as pioneering our own work.

M.C-W. I mean, I don't think Victoria Miro gallery is going to open up a campsite in Tenby Island anytime soon. However, that being said, I'm sure would be a lot of fun. What Hauser & Wirth, the Death Star of the art market right now, has done is find ways to synergise your experience as a collector in other areas where you wouldn't necessarily immediately put two and two together. So, they've got places where you can eat, places where you can sleep, places where you can hang out with like-minded people.

And that's attached onto this roster of a hundred and thirty odd artists. Does Mark Bradford care about the hotel in Scotland? No. You'd have to ask Mark that. What Mark cares about is having a great show in Saville Row in London during Frieze and giving you ten pictures a year for your art fairs. But what he really cares about is making sure that he can get that show at MoMA or get that show at the Tate Modern or what have you. So, the conversation about looking after the artist is not always attached to the business. And I think in this instance, it's actually not with that example. And I don't work at Hauser. I have many friends who have worked and who work there. And I think that their plan is just finding ways of making more knuckles on the finger of the art world so that there's a lot more things joining up, so that you can get them from Suite 302 near Balmoral to Saville Row to buy one of those Mark Bradfords, which are a lot more expensive than the suite.

But I think that what they're doing is they're creating an experience universe that's predicated upon their brand as a gallery and then seeing it in these different spaces. I have a cottage in Wiltshire in England, which is a stone's throw away from this enormous place they have in Bruton in Somerset, which is really fantastic. The number of people that go to that space that have never been to a gallery before! The mind boggles that they could attract you in like that. But they're not going to look at the art; they're going to have a nice lunch because it's in the middle of the countryside. And there's nothing wrong with that, because if you then meet that point where you are interfacing with the art, that at the end of the day is the bull's eye in that equation. But you have to have the wherewithal, and more importantly, you have to have the pockets to be able to develop this landscape of opportunity, which is what they've done. And they do it very well.

**“THE NAME OF THE GAME IS
DIVERSIFICATION HERE. THAT’S THE
REAL KIND OF KEY FOR EVOLVING
THIS EXISTING GALLERY MODEL INTO
SOMETHING NEW.”**

A.G. I think the name of the game is diversification here. That's the real kind of key for evolving this existing gallery model into something new. And you said the word “experiences”, which is the way Pace is trying to evolve and grow into something a little bit avant garde with PaceX. What's interesting is that Lisson and Victoria Miro have artists who would be perfectly primed to do some kind of PaceX-style experience. PaceX, as everybody knows, is pretty much built around the idea that you have these next generation artists like Studio Drift and teamLab who are creating these immersive installations that people could potentially, line up to pay tickets for or that can be monetized in different ways.

Now, Matt, you work with Yayoi Kusama and, Greg, you work with Anish Kapoor, whose cloud gate in Chicago is this kind of pilgrimage site for selfie takers around the world. Either of these artists could potentially be made into this kind of experience economy. Would you be interested?

G.H. They do, and they are.

A.G. But within the confines of your gallery?

G.H. It's quite a complicated, multidimensional thing. On that, specifically, yes, but we work with other people. Ai Weiwei, the example you mentioned,

had a touring exhibition across South America. It was organised by Marcello Dantas, who is an impresario. He's precisely a curator and a kind of cultural entrepreneur. A million people saw his work in South America thanks to that. He had a huge exhibition at Oca in San Paolo. We introduced them and we followed that show every step of the way and worked very closely with it. We helped with financing the production of works. You know, we were intimately involved with it. Our feeling is that it's not our business to take money from ticket sales. We could do, but we just choose not to. We would rather work with partners whose business is that, especially in territories that we're not intimate with. So, I guess that's the short answer to your question: we are part of those economies. They are certainly growing for the right people. Similarly, we work with public commissioners, we often work with agents and we have an invaluable role.

**“OUR FEELING IS THAT IT’S NOT OUR
BUSINESS TO TAKE MONEY FROM
TICKET SALES. WE COULD DO, BUT WE
JUST CHOOSE NOT TO.”**

I think one of both opportunities and challenges at the current time is that there's such an expanded creative, cultural and visual economy. You've got museum shows, you've got commissions, and there are many specialists in those areas. We've seen as the rise of the art market; many people who are art advisers and agents of different kinds; people focus on public art and so on. Often, they will go directly to an artist and that's fine. Artists can choose whether or not to work directly with them. We often find that an artist will want to involve us because they know us, because we have the whole view, because we have the history. The gallery is a really weird model: it's not just a gallery, but it's the agent, it's the promoter, it's the producer, it's the distributor. It's often the shop. That doesn't really happen in most other creative industries. And so, there are always going to be people who are, in a way, specialists in those areas who will try to take a bit of it. And by and large, we're quite comfortable with that, because if they're good at it and they can add and we can be part of it and help, then it expands for everybody.

A.G. And Matt, what about you? Are there any applications you could imagine?

M.C-W. Well, I mean, the digital space is bigger than space! Right? So digital space is an area that every gallery is engaging with, and we are engaging with it in a very, very palpable way. So, to give you an example, digital provides you with two ways of experiencing art. It can be a replacement to the usual way

of looking at art: walking into a gallery, going up to the picture, having a look, feeling the brush strokes, walking out the gallery, and commenting on what a terrible show it was.

Digital can provide you with a different way of looking, where the artwork is designed to be looked at digitally. That's one way of doing it. The other way of doing digital or enacting on that scope is to try as hard as possible to replicate the original experience. Both of these opportunities have real resonance in the market right now because you can sell art digitally. We all sell things via jpegs all the time. I've got clients in Asia. I sell a lot of my clients works that they never see until they arrive on their doorstep. And that's been happening the world over to all galleries and auction houses. We're already digesting work that way. The next step is to then start openly transacting in that space without there ever being any need to physically show the object, which is kind of crazy. I was there in 1999 at Sotheby's listening to Dede Brooks saying how Mr Rothschild had said he would spend \$100,000 on a work of art online. And then the whole Sotheby's dotcom tanked. And then now, of course, it's this huge thing and people are spending millions.

**“DIGITAL CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH A
DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING, WHERE
THE ARTWORK IS DESIGNED TO BE
LOOKED AT DIGITALLY.”**

We're already beginning to instagrammatise ourselves—there is a word!—but it is the only thing that sells. And apps that really focus on sex are very successful right now. But do we want to *grindrize* or *tinderize* the art market? I'm not sure we do, but a lot of people are on those sites and they're very hungry for the action that those sites give them. So, in a sense, to try to grab that enthusiasm and sort of layer it onto the art world is another way of thinking digitally about what we can do.

What we're interested in at our gallery is all of that. But what we're really interested in right now is finding a way that you can walk into our office in Hong Kong or our office in New York—they're not galleries, they're offices—put on a VR headset and walk around our show in London and choose what work you want. And to be able to buy it as if you were in the room. Now, that technology is technology that we have invested time, energy and money in, and we will use that technology, I hope, in real time spaces like art fairs and exhibitions where we'll have a chance to be able to synergise those two. What comes out of that is another way of buying. It isn't an alternative. We're

not selling experiences in that way because of the resistance that Greg just outlined. Most artists would be horrified that we work with at the idea of them making money off of tickets. It's also quite complicated to do that. But for us, our challenge is to find other ways for people to be in a gallery and buy a drawing, buy a painting, buy a sculpture.

**“DO WE WANT TO GRINDRISE OR
TINDERIZE THE ART MARKET? I'M NOT
SURE WE DO, BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE
ON THOSE SITES.”**

A.G. Now, one thing I was talking to Joost about last night that I want to throw out there is this idea that has kind of been circulating on the fringes of a lot of art market conversations about why there is no LVMH of the art market. Why has there never been some organisation that has taken advantage of massive scale to acquire or somehow collaborate with different galleries up and down the food chain to avoid this often bemoaned situation where we have a crisis of these smaller galleries that are doing the spade work of bringing up emerging artists and are struggling? Why aren't there more situations where you see a pipeline that is built that would create some kind of renewables feeding tube for big gallery organisations?

M.C-W. Well, if you ask Mr Arnault that, he'll probably tell you he's doing it already. He's got his own museum. He's probably a big benefactor to many galleries, he certainly is to the auction houses. You might say that the auction houses actually function in that space already. The correlation between the auction house and the gallery has already shifted immeasurably since I started my career in 1996. It used to be auction or gallery. Now everybody is everybody's client. So, they're all in the same space, doing the same thing. And the auction houses have been extremely successful at fostering that nexus between all these other disparate areas of the business landscape and make it easy for a collector to come along and do one-stop shopping.

But your question is about the sort of heritage: who's the McQueen to the Gucci? Right? I don't know. We aren't looking for a McQueen. We're not looking to be a Gucci. We're just happy where we are, but we want to be better at where we are. And I think the business model for a lot of galleries is not to grow, to be bigger, to try and create a lineage, whether it's a literal, lateral or linear lineage. It is not to be like some comet, have a trail behind you and be out there and be successful. I think a lot of galleries just want to survive first. Secondly, they want to consolidate; they want their artists to be worth more

money than they were last year; and for the sales team to sell one more than they did last year. And that business model works perfectly.

The best business model allows you to keep some of the material for yourself. Those rainy-day opportunities; thank God Peter Doig was impossible to sell in 1992. That's all I'll say. So, you have those moments where you're able to, if you've got to do it and do it properly, put your hand on your heart and say, "Alright, I'll buy the pictures", to keep the artists happy to move forward. That's something you can't deny you need.

A.G. Joost, you're in the position of being a gallery that is closer to the ground level, that is working with artists that are emerging in your region. What appeals to you about this concept of some kind of more networked structure of all of galleries?

**“WHAT HAPPENS QUITE OFTEN NOW
IS PEOPLE MIGHT POACH SALES STAFF,
NOT JUST ARTISTS.”**

J.B. I'm not sure it appeals to me. I think it's an interesting thought experiment. And I think specifically what we were discussing last night is what if Hauser, instead of opening a hotel, bought a gallery somewhere but kept a brand? Because I think what happens quite often now is people might poach sales staff, not just artists, maybe two or three of the best artists and the rest of the gallery closes down. Is there a universe possible where bigger galleries buy smaller ones but keep the brand?

M.C-W. That already happens.

J.B. It happens a little bit; I can think of one or two.

M.C-W. I think some larger galleries have bought smaller galleries, kept the principal of the gallery, who becomes an employee of the bigger one, bought all the stock and then got rid of all their costs.

J.B. But they get rid of the brand usually.

M.C-W. Yes.

J.B. And I guess the discussion is whether it is possible to maintain the brand and maybe over time hire a different artistic director for that brand, so you have niche galleries. Because I think there is a space for niche galleries. We know it. We're doing—knock on wood—just okay. But we don't know if we'll be doing okay next year. Is there room for growth that isn't just expanding

an existing brand indefinitely? And we have to credit Sunny, by the way, for starting this conversation yesterday. Is it possible to really change the way we work? Because it kind of feels like we've got Kazaa, but we haven't figured out yet that that streaming is coming.

**“IS THERE ROOM FOR GROWTH THAT
ISN'T JUST EXPANDING AN EXISTING
BRAND INDEFINITELY?”**

A.G. What do you think, Greg?

G.H. Just on that particular issue of different brands, we've spoken some time ago of actually splitting the brand, though we haven't pursued it. There have been artists within the gallery who've wanted us to continue to do things in exactly the same way and not introduce changes. And there are plenty of galleries who do that and they do quite well, but then they do end. You could imagine a young artist brand or something that is different. We decided not to do that, mainly because while sometimes it's confusing and there's some people who come to our fair and ask us why a certain artist is next to another artist, in general, with the collectors and with the artists, the senior figures are still those that are alive and, frankly, moving forward. They're changing, they're artists who are evolving. Contrary to what people might sometimes think, it's true they are evolving and we're trying to show that development and they like to be in the context of younger, developing and emerging artists. So, while you could, within the model of the company and its history, split into a kind of younger and older brand, we very consciously chose to keep the strength of a single brand.

A.G. So speaking of this LVMH kind of universe, how comfortable are you with this brand arena? How comfortable are you with having your artists work with brands or facilitating this? Is this something that is part of your outlook of management?

G.H. Do you mean with fashion brands?

A.G. With fashion brands or luxury brands.

G.H. It just doesn't happen very often. It's rarely a genuine collaboration in my experience.

M.C-W. I would buy an Ai Weiwei handbag for my son.

G.H. With the finger?

M.C-W. Absolutely with the finger. Absolutely. I mean, Kusama has famously done many collaborations in the past. Those are things that the artist does independently from the gallery. Do I think that's a good thing or a bad thing? I don't think it. It's a thing and good for them if they do it. There are lots of rich ladies that want to have one of each of them. So, it's Murakami on Monday, Kusama on Tuesdays and whatever the rest the days are. It's good for the artist's brand. Remember, a gallery brand is one thing, but what does it mean to be Gagosian? If that were a verb what would it be, to gagosian? What would that sum up to you?

“THE CORE MODEL OF A GALLERY REPRESENTING AN ARTIST IN A PRIMARY WAY IS VERY STRONG, VERY DURABLE AND VERY FLEXIBLE, AND THAT THAT CAN FLOW IN MANY DIRECTIONS.”

So when you're thinking about the brand, the brand is the accumulation of lots of other artists' brand. So, our artist, Kusama, has a huge global brand. People queue in the snow for three hours to come inside to see her mirror rooms and her pumpkins. That's fantastic. They get hot chocolate when they come in, by the way. And part of that is because of the efflorescence of her brand with these other areas that she's worked in. But, when we took her on in 1997, we couldn't give a pumpkin sculpture away. So, it's about commitment to the artist, and then all of a sudden, as the artist grows and becomes stronger and stronger, other brands will want to come in.

The question, I suppose, to come back to the beginning is where we as galleries fit in to that. There's a lot going on there. And do we want to be more animated in that space, more constructive in that space and, ultimately, I guess, be more profitable in that space? The answer, I think, for our gallery is we just want to sell the art and we just want to manage the artist's relationship to collectors and institutions through their objects. That's what we can do. And how you can do more of that is where the business model is going to be more effective. If you stop and if you have the money to build a fabulous hotel in Menorca, then bully for you. But most people can't.

G.H. I'd like to ask Joost this, because I think his challenge to the world is going to be different in ten years. The art world is going to be different. What are we doing to make that happen? I think that what I've been trying to say is that the core model of a gallery representing an artist in a primary way is

very strong, very durable and very flexible, and that that can flow in many directions. That's not to say we should be complacent, and it needn't always be the same. But Joost, you've mentioned your different structure, which is really fascinating. Do you see other avenues for innovation that you're pursuing or developing that you're able to share?

J.B. I certainly don't see them. I think I partly wanted to be on this panel to hear some of them, which we haven't necessarily done. But I think we've such a great space; a gallery is a dream. If you have a soccer team, you had better make sure there are eleven guys on the pitch on Saturday to play the match. There are constraints that we just don't have. If you think of what Konrad Fischer was doing when he first opened, he sort of reimagined the gallery: I think he invented the invitation card. We now all take that for granted, but that was invented by someone.

“A GALLERY IS A DREAM.”

And I think we are in an industry where we can do whatever we want. And I think it's a little bit boring, frankly, to see most people, very much including ourselves, trying to just copy what other people have been doing. And I don't think there is as much experimentation happening as I think there needs to be. I don't think there is the sort of collective R&D. I'm not seeing it. We're doing that in a very small way, but I think there's so many other things that are possibly being tried that maybe we don't hear about yet because they're happening in a small gallery in Kiev, and I really think those sorts of ideas need to be shared. I think we did some of that yesterday, we did some of it today, and Talking Galleries is uniquely positioned to do more of that. However, we've only scratched the surface of what the next ten or twenty years might look like.

A.G. One thing that I might mention is that it may not be easy for existing galleries to evolve. I think that there are a lot of opportunities that are rising up in the future that existing galleries might prevent themselves from exploiting. I was in Taipei Dang Dai last week and I went to this booth by a Japanese gallery, and they were mobbed by all these young collectors who were buying these paintings on the wall that seem a little bit Alex Katzy-like cartoonish illustrational paintings. I asked what the deal was with this artist, and I was told he was the hottest street artist. I asked what kind of street art he made, and apparently, he doesn't really do graffiti or anything on the actual street. He does brand collaborations. It's come to this point where doing brand collaboration somehow, puts you on this plateau of something I think of as

high street art, where it's really a lower cultural capital buy-in. It could have a fairly high actual capital buy-in, but it's a lower cultural capital threshold, which means that it's much more accessible to a broader audience. That's the absolute opposite of the kind of art that the traditional art gallery has been conditioned to sell.

So, I think when it comes to evolution, it might be very slow to be able to really even ascertain what these opportunities are, because there are so many. There's a lot of entrenched interests that will push against this innovation from within. So, it's something that seems pretty ripe for disruption. The thing is, can you disrupt it from within? And that's the kind of thing that I think we're seeing Pace trying to do with PaceX. I think we're also seeing Gagosian trying to do this with Gagosian Art Advisory, which is essentially a way of creating some kind of separate business to work with managing estates, which sounds to me like a pretty clear way of plugging into the auction business.

M.C-W. Gagosian will eventually have auctions one day. It's a natural conclusion to a business model. If you have 250 artists and the secondary market is healthy for all of them, why not do your own auctions? Just to have everybody come to 24th Street, lay out 300 shows and give them all a glass of champagne. Get Simon de Pury to come along, and he'll do the auction. That is actually something that you can think about. It sounds ridiculous, but it's not ridiculous at all. I think Christie's once did an analysis of an evening sale, and Larry Gagosian had got provenance of 60 per cent of the sale. So, that's it. It's interesting, but there's no reason why Gagosian couldn't participate in that top space which the evening sales in New York City occupy.

QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Georgina Adam: Joost, you talked about experimentation. Can you be a little bit more precise about what sort of experimentation you were looking at within your gallery model?

J.B. In our gallery model, it was the decision to radically change the ownership structure, which some other galleries have done. But it's not happening a lot. And I find when I speak about it at these cocktail parties that we started the panel with, people are very curious, the same way that I would be very curious if I heard of something that I might not have even thought about before. And in a way, I'm starting to wonder if we're not the wrong panel for this question, because you're asking four middle-aged white guys dressed in blue, the youngest of whom has been in business for fifteen years, what the

future holds. I don't necessarily think we're going to tell you that. I think there's probably people in the audience that might have a much better sense of what the future holds. Can we do Q&A the other way around?

A.G. That's a good thing. Does anybody have a statement question?

Q1: Hello. Thank you for this excellent talk. I asked this question yesterday, but to some other people. Now I'll ask you the question: what do you think about the sharing economy? What will be the effect of this? It's going to be very disruptive in almost all areas, what about in the art market?

A.G. I think that's a great question.

M.C-W. You're asking an art dealer about sharing! Is that like stuff being "shared"?

Q1: Yeah.

A.G. I was thinking about this question from the audience yesterday. You think of Rent the runway as an incredible success for the sharing economy. However, there, the core of their business is actually dry cleaning. They have one of the biggest dry-cleaning operations in the world. You can't dry clean artworks. Artworks are not really lending themselves to this kind of sharing because you'll break them. They're very valuable.

J.B. And I disagree. I think it was Tim Schneider yesterday who pointed out that there is sharing happening. And actually, there probably was a sharing economy and in art commerce long before it was anywhere else because you could walk around New York going to galleries for free in a way that you couldn't necessarily listen to music for free since you had to buy the album. So, we are sharing; going to museums is sharing. I am repeating an answer from yesterday since you repeated the question. I think sharing is happening. We just need to convince more people to actually finance that sharing and buy the art to enable us to keep going because artists are kind of awesome. And if you have extra money you can finance them. I think one of the biggest threats, by the way—and as sort of committed, you know, social justice warriors and Marxists on this panel, we might not say it out loud—is the rich no longer getting richer. The art world would have a real problem, but that's a tangent.

Q1: No what I mean is the Spotify of art markets, something like that. Sharing is not renting. I don't mean renting art. I mean, with new technology, these things are all developing somewhere in Silicon Valley; there will be some new technologies to share art in different ways.

G.H. I think it'll have to be shareable artwork, so more to do with video.

Q1: It'll have to do with the right to share art, so screening the art piece on a wall or somewhere else. With new technologies, there will be some parallel art market for popular use like the Spotify of art market. And you will hear this world very soon, actually.

M.C-W. There's a little business in London called Sedition, where you buy an image that you download to put on your iPhone. So, if you really want a Tracy Emin neon on your iPhone, you can buy it for £30 and download it to your phone. Tracey's loving that, right? So, at the end of the day, there are ways of doing it. My question is when you share from the original to something that's potentially absorbed by hundreds of thousands of people. Sometimes, as Allan said, buying art is a deeply personal and often solitary experience that you share very little of with people. And when it's on your wall in your home, it's you and your family, and that's it. And in a way, art is geared to that way of selling material. We're not selling something like a Lady Gaga song that you want to get heard by millions of different people every week on all sorts of platforms, whether it's Spotify, radio, etcetera; it's object-based. It's the object bit that gets in the way of that experience bit. And that's the struggle between the two. Where can you make money out of experiences when you're selling 3D things?

**“BUYING ART IS A DEEPLY
PERSONAL AND OFTEN SOLITARY
EXPERIENCE THAT YOU SHARE VERY
LITTLE OF WITH PEOPLE.”**

G.H. What could happen with a single object is having shares in a single work, which is being discussed a bit in terms of blockchain technology. Some of that's happened. It's not really an area that I'm that informed of. That's a quick answer, I am sure that there are people who can speak extensively on this.

M.C-W. That's a murky business. There's a Basquiat out there right now that has 175 owners with 360% of the object. And the person who organised them is hiding somewhere in the jungle.

G.H. It abstracts the value and encourages speculation.

M.C-W. It's a very complex space.

A.G. I actually think that there is an opportunity for something that is not exactly the sharing economy, but that goes back to Joost's idea of the vulnerability of the art market to, a shift between this incredible wealth gap

between the rich and the poor. If that were to start to level out, what you'd probably want to start seeing is a lot more mass art that has a lower buy-in. This would be something like some incredible immersive art experience that is on the level of some masterwork of cinema or something. You would have some people who'd buy in, collectors who'd buy in as producers and who'd have a share of this thing. Then they could tour it around and people would be able to pay tickets.

**“THE CORE IDEA OF SOMEBODY
WORKING CLOSELY WITH AN ARTIST
HAS STRENGTH AND I THINK IT WILL
EVOLVE HUGELY.”**

That could potentially be some kind of scenario where this would happen. It's just it's not the existing art market. The existing art market is painting and sculpture, and it's shown in little cubicles built in art fairs around the world. This is really where it's staggering how early in the evolution of art that we're going to be seeing over the next decades we're in. We're still doing the same thing that we've been doing for hundreds of years. Essentially, the only thing that we are trying to figure out now is how to evolve this gallery model that we exist in so that it can get over a couple of bumps in the road: transition from founder to the team, getting into the Internet space... These are like tiny little steps into the future.

G.H. Andrew, I know what you're saying; that has been the burden of the conversation. I don't see it as desperately as that. I think that the model can exist. It can also transform in many other ways but the core idea of somebody working closely with an artist has strength and I think it will evolve hugely. And it's another discussion that we haven't had, quite frankly. But I don't think it's just a question of clinging onto this fifty-year-old model because it's going to evolve in lots of ways.

M.C-W. The greatest threat to human beings is human beings. So, the greatest to galleries are other galleries, to be honest with you. What you don't want to hear is your artists come in on a Tuesday morning say they had a fabulous time at this party and met this man called Evan Beard. That gets alarm bells ringing. I'm jesting, obviously, but what you don't want is the art market to just become six galleries, twenty smaller galleries and then the rest. The texture of the art world is dependent upon the one-, two-, three-man bands that are all over the world, whether it's in Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Sydney or wherever it is, that texture is important to us all. But we live in a real world where we already have the six mega-galleries and they get more and more mega as the weeks go on.

Q2: So, two thoughts or ideas on that. First of all, we don't give those past fifty years enough credit. I was fortunate enough to, at some point in my life, work for one of the persons who were the founders, inceptors of what then became Art Cologne. And so, what he told me is they started with shower curtains. They had shower curtains to separate little semi-booths in a concert hall because there were not really that many of them, and they had no clue what they were doing. They propped up artworks, at that point predominantly expressionist art, on chairs separated by shower curtains. And nobody thought it would work, that anyone would ever buy art that way. They thought it was a terrible idea because you needed a salon, and it needed to look beautiful. That was only fifty to seventy years ago. So we've come a very long way from shower curtains to what we have now. And we've come from driving around showing art to people to sending faxes, to sending emails, to getting around to the idea of art on the Internet.

“THE ONLY THING THAT YOU SHOULD EVER LEND IS ART THAT WILL START REALLY EXPENSIVE AND END UP BEING WORTHLESS.”

So, while we say the model in itself might not have changed all that much, I think we keep forgetting how much it has changed. That guy I used to work for kept asking how large the image on the Internet was. He was then in his seventies, and I had to explain it depends on the device you look at it on, because he was used to Ektachromes, which have a good, decent size of about an A5. I had to explain it can be two metres by a metre or it can be tiny. For him it was unfathomable that his client might choose the size to look at the Picasso that he might buy.

The other thing which I know exists both in the New York public library and also in the public library in Berlin is borrowing art. It's framed or it's small sculptures and they're made out of something that is durable enough to survive that. In Berlin, you go, pay a small fee and check out a framed artwork, and you're responsible for it. It's yours for about a year, and you hang it up on your wall. I think that is maybe the closest we can get with the sharing economy, because you can now rent beds, you can rent beautifully designed furniture for three months, six months, ten months. And yeah, it's not the highest quality. Obviously, you don't get to rent an original Kusama pumpkin, but you can rent decent prints and photographs and smaller sculptures for your home and you can even extend them. We all know libraries don't really make all that much

money, but maybe it's an attempt in a direction that's maybe even interesting for galleries at some point.

M.C-W. The lending thing is interesting because that's been mooted around a lot. The automotive industry is an example of an industry where lending is very, very successful. The reason why people borrow cars rather than buy them is because they depreciate massively. So, by extension, I think the only thing that you should ever lend is art that will start really expensive and end up being worthless. And then I think it's a perfect strategy for lending art.

“WHAT WE DO AS GALLERIES IS, ULTIMATELY, WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN A BUYER AND OUR ARTIST.”

Q2: Or you need art that gets better by using it. The beautiful pieces Axel Vervoordt sometimes sells are better because they've been touched a hundred times. So maybe artists just need to factor that in that it's going to go through a million hands and then look really nice and have a good patina.

M.C-W. He's got a great idea. He can make a pair of underpants.

A.G. We've got questions over here.

Q3: Thank you for this panel discussion, it was really interesting. I just want to ask about this kind of niche that you're talking about. I come from a cultural centre background, so I always like this kind of vision of having music, theatre, a gallery, philosophical debate and a bit of everything. When introducing new regional artists for markets that are not very known, such as maybe the Baltics, Eastern Europe or the Caucasus, whatever that may be, do you think that maybe to introduce these artists and these cultures you could use that model in a gallery, meaning giving them an all-encompassing experience, which is again, a bit closer to millennials? So, doing like a show with artists, but then also having one day of independent cinema from that region and then one day of maybe a pop-up restaurant with food from the region. It would be thinking a bit more like a cultural centre of the broader offer that you could have to introduce these new cultures and artists, as something that could maybe help understand the bigger picture.

M.C-W. I'm going to go back to the point of how many people we employ at the beginning. That's a great idea. But I don't know you'd want a chef at Lisson Gallery. Do you want someone who does songs? Is that the role of the art gallery? It is a very good question; I don't mean to decry it.

But what we do as gallerists is, ultimately, look for an exchange between a buyer and our artist and the journey that we allow, that we help the artists create. If that involves sitting down to a nice dinner or lunch in a pop-up restaurant, that's massive amounts of expenditure, massive amounts of commitment on the part of a gallery where you already have forty-one very stressed-out people. I'm the one who's not stressed out because I'm here in Barcelona eating fabulous food and talking to you guys. But I think that there has to come a point where we go off into a different space. I don't know how much that works, but to work with those institutions, to work with those people in that way is a more meaningful synergy, I think.

A.G. I love the idea of hybridising art with other things, because I think one thing that you're seeing from younger generations is that the distinctions between different kinds of creative formats are a little bit more fluid than they may have been in the past, where a painter was painter, a sculptor was a sculptor, or a fashion designer was a fashion designer, etcetera, etcetera. I think that that –has created incredibly nourishing and important artworks. But there is also an audience out there that would be engaged if there was something that was a little bit for us, a little bit for them, something that kind of connected these two things together.

The idea of building up approachable experiences around artworks is really important. I think that's the next level. You look at something like Newfields, which is a very controversial museum in America. They've gone from being in really tremendous economic straits to now being really successful by emphasising food tastings paired with art, having a park that is filled with these very populist light sculptures and things like that. It's become this huge community draw that it never was before, when it was a traditional art museum. Now, these are very different things and they serve very different purposes, but this idea of being open to the hybridity is very appealing.

Laura Pando Martínez

has over 15 years' experience in the production of international live music events. She was the Sustainability Manager at Festival Republic from 2011 to 2015 where her main focus was to embed sustainable practice and systems into Latitude, Electric Picnic, Reading and Leeds festivals. Laura's expertise lays in organisational change, staff, contractors and audience's engagement, carbon reduction strategies (including sustainable travel and energy and waste management). She achieved important carbon reductions and largely improved the company's environmental performance across the board. Since 2016, Laura is Managing Director at Julie's Bicycle, the leading organisation in the implementation of sustainable measures in the cultural and creative sector in the United Kingdom, working with institutions such as the Arts Council England, Royal Museums Greenwich, London Philharmonic Orchestra, the BRIT Awards and the National Theater.

Llucilà Homs

is a cultural consultant, curator and art dealer. After being a gallerist for 18 years, he founded Talking Galleries in 2011 in Barcelona. From 2011 to 2015 he was Director for the Promotion of Cultural Affairs at the Barcelona City Council (ICUB) and Director of La Virreina Centre de la Imatge. He co-founded LOOP Barcelona Fair and Festival in 2003, and was Managing Partner of La Fàbrica Barcelona (2009-2011). In 2016 he took over as Director of Talking Galleries and he combines this role with others, such as co-Director of the cultural management company Hänsel* i Gretel* and his weekly column on art market which is published by the Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia.

Going Green: Can Galleries Contribute to Climate Change?

SPEAKER

Laura Pando Martínez

INTERVIEWED BY

Llucilà Homs



Going Green: Can Galleries Contribute to Climate Change?

This is the transcript of the interview with Laura Pando Martínez, Managing Director of Julie's Bicycle by Lluçia Homs, Director of Talking Galleries, held on January 6, 2020, in London.

Lluçia Homs (L.H.): Laura, you accepted the invitation to talk about this topic but decided not to fly to Barcelona because of sustainability reasons. This is why we are recording this interview here in London to be shown at the symposium in Barcelona in two weeks' time. Your willingness not to fly to Barcelona is in itself a statement. Laura, please tell us about your company, what it does and how it interacts with the cultural companies it works for.

Laura Pando (L.P.): Julie's bicycle is a bit of a strange name that we have as an organisation. It's a charity that has been working for the last thirteen years supporting the culture and arts sector in becoming more sustainable, in greening their practice. Above all, and it's quite relevant to what you were saying, we share and empower others in furthering that practice. We've been working with different parts of the sector: with some galleries, obviously, but also museums, theatres and music. Music was in fact the beginning of our work.

L.H.: Why are you not flying to Barcelona for the Symposium?

L.P.: It's a policy that we have here at Julie's Bicycle, really. We receive loads of invitations and are very grateful to be thought of as people worth having in a panel and in a discussion. We love being part of those discussions, because part of our mission, in fact, is to advocate for the role of culture in climate change. And actually, we see that as a cultural challenge rather than a scientific or technological challenge, because all of those certainties are already there, but the cultural shift still has to happen. Part of that cultural shift is our behaviours, and we want to also express that through the way we conduct ourselves. Obviously, we do travel, sometimes we do fly, but we try

to be very careful about what those occasions are, and make sure that the opportunity will actually bring further opportunities to do impactful work.

L.H.: Without wanting to generate any controversy, what do you think are the reasons that motivated those gallery owners we identified as being sensitive to this issue to not participate in the panel? Does no one want to give lessons on such a sensitive issue, or do they still consider their practices on sustainability not radical enough?

L.P.: I think it is a combination of things, but mainly a lack of confidence, perhaps, in the practice that they are developing being good and robust enough to be shared. Another factor is this feeling that we all share as individuals, as organisations, as societies, of exposing ourselves to criticism whenever we talk about something that has been so politicised, so polarised. Obviously, becoming more sustainable or greening our practice is not something that you can do overnight; it is so huge, so wicked, so complex, that it is impossible to actually tackle this whole challenge in a month or in a year, as much as we would love to. So it takes time, it's a process. It's a journey that we all go on, and this basically needs to be acknowledged. By next year, galleries hopefully will have acknowledged it and will then be happy to share with you what they have achieved or have not achieved but attempted. It would be an acknowledgement that it is a journey.

**“OUR MISSION IS TO ADVOCATE FOR
THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN CLIMATE
CHANGE.”**

Even if it is a very small action that you put in place, I think it is important to share it. We don't have time to reinvent what those actions might be, how they might work. Scientists are very clear in their predictions. The body of work is telling us that we have a tiny window to really curve this massive global problem of climate change and all of the environmental and biodiversity crises that we are facing. We have a little more than ten years to do so. So basically, we don't have time to work in isolation. We need to break it up; we need to share what works but also what doesn't work, because it might be a way of avoiding someone spending a year doing something that is not going to yield any results.

L.H.: In 2014 I attended a meeting of Film Commissioners here in London. We were presented with a document, a kind of film industry protocol, on

being “greener” when filming. What makes the art industry so different that it is a few years behind? Paradoxically, this is a sector that has a very critical eye on contemporaneity.

L.P.: I wish I had the answer to that. I don't, but going back to the conversation that we had just before this interview, I'm guessing it's maybe because of that lack of cohesion as a sector that you don't find those moments to collaborate further in these areas. This is actually where Talking Galleries was created in terms of actually having a forum for these other conversations that might not happen within the gallery itself or within those fairs that you organise. I don't know; it is something I'm asking you.

On the other hand, galleries, like many other more commercial sectors such as music, are facing challenges in a different way to, for instance, museums, which tend to be publicly funded. I think what commercial companies find and what commercial galleries will probably find is probably a lot more tension with how the budgets and resources are deployed. There has been this misconception that sustainability was going to cost money rather than save money.

**“THERE HAS BEEN THIS
MISCONCEPTION THAT SUSTAINABILITY
WAS GOING TO COST MONEY RATHER
THAN SAVE MONEY.”**

In some instances that is not true because a good management of your resources, which is a sustainable management of your resources, will yield some savings. We've seen proof of that, but on some occasions it will require you to take tougher decisions about the budget when it comes to different modes of transport, and it might be a little bit more expensive. It's a matter of actually seeing it as a whole to be able to make those decisions and reinvest in one area what you are saving in another. That means having an overarching sustainability strategy that will enable you to actually see the whole picture.

L.H.: What do you think are the key elements that will define, in the very near future, the practices of gallery owners in relation to this issue? Flying by plane, transport of works of art by air, non-ecological packaging, works of art made of non-ecological materials... Which of them are specific to this sector and which are general to the business sector?

L.P.: Obviously, there is some very specific characteristics to galleries, but I think what we need to concentrate on instead is, first of all, what the big areas are that we all need to tackle, and secondly, identify what our roles are within those areas. We must establish what is within our control to change and influence, and what is completely beyond our control. In those areas where we don't have any control, we just have to perhaps lobby our governments and MPs, and do something a little bigger, more political.

When it comes to environmental sustainability, there are obviously areas that we know—energy, water, resources in terms of materials and waste, or travelling, which is a big one very specifically in this particular sector—but also other areas that have perhaps been overlooked, such as biodiversity and what we could do as organisations with art venues and art buildings to support that biodiversity in art spaces. Food is a big one we tend not to think about, but most galleries will have some sort of cafe or restaurant space.

“GREENING OUR PRACTICES IS NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN REALLY DO OVERNIGHT. IT TAKES TIME, IT’S A JOURNEY.”

It is about mapping out all those areas of influence and actually thinking about them. What is it I can do about my energy? In terms of building-based galleries, it will be about how efficient your building is, what the materials of that building are, whether it uses mainly electricity or it uses gas. There is a technological transition to be made in that sense: all buildings will have to go towards electrification in the next ten years, and that means changing certain infrastructure when the time comes. Where does my energy come from? Is it 100% renewable? That's a decision you could make tomorrow and put in place overnight which will have a massive impact. The same applies to food, transport and water. There will be an element of infrastructure and an element of behaviour in all of these things. And there are certainly things that can be done about reducing the impact of transport.

L.H.: Art fairs are here an issue in themselves...

L.P.: Yeah, basically it's a hard one. Travel is a difficult one to grapple with. Obviously, when travelling, choosing train over plane where possible is going to be a good choice to reduce those emissions. But then there is a conversation to be had about flying. Flying at the moment is not very sustainable, which is

the area that at the moment we cannot really control. But in a very globalised sector like galleries, where you have to connect, it has to happen.

I think the first step is actually to know it, to be aware of it, to measure it. Once you know what that figure looks like in terms of the carbon footprint arising from your travelling, it's to make a decision on whether you would like to do something else about it apart from knowing it and communicating it, which I think is basic. But also deciding whether you want to perhaps compensate for some of that impact.

L.H.: In what ways?

L.P.: There are many ways it could be done. It doesn't have to be just what the market decides a ton of carbon is worth. You can decide to give that ton of carbon a value, because at the moment what the carbon is valued on is probably very cheap, if you think of the actual consequences that are being lived and experienced by all sorts of beings, including human beings, all around the world. So you can choose a project that you're close to in your community that is doing something about the environment and invest in it.

“GIVE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR A YEAR A VALUE AND PUT IT STRAIGHT INTO THE BUDGET FOR THE NEXT YEAR TO MAKE IT SMALLER.”

It could be, for example, working with people that may have been displaced because of a combination of different disasters, including climate disaster. Or it might be that you just want to invest it in furthering and bettering your environmental strategy for the next year. You can give your carbon footprint for a year a value and put it straight into the budget for the next year to make your footprint smaller.

L.H.: Sotheby's has made a drastic decision, insofar as it will no longer print all of the thousands of luxurious catalogues, which are outdated the day after the sale, and which were sent all over the world. The other auction houses will probably follow suit. Is this decision radical enough?

L.P.: All decisions and all stances like that are very important. It might seem small to some people; it might seem incredibly radical and difficult to others. I think it's great that they made that decision, and more people should do things like this. It will be very interesting to see what comes out of it. We were discussing earlier whether they are going to do something different, what they are going to do on the back of this, but bringing it back to the role of the arts and culture in general and their impact on people's lives, I think we shouldn't underestimate what our actions actually mean to society and how they quickly create a butterfly effect where others get inspired. It might be out of pure competition, a feeling of healthy competition, or it might just be genuine inspiration, becoming a wake-up call.

“IT MIGHT SEEM SMALL TO SOME PEOPLE; IT MIGHT SEEM INCREDIBLY RADICAL AND DIFFICULT TO OTHERS.”

This morning I was reading about the Golden Globes having a 100 per cent vegan venue, which is a bold move that was celebrated by artists. We see these kinds of statements more and more from organisations, from companies within arts and culture, and I think we need more of those. We need more brave moments like these, until they stop being moments and they just become the norm.

L.H.: I do not know of any artist or collector who has decided to work with or buy from a particular gallery because of its sensitivity towards the environment. Do you? Do you think this will change in the near future? Do you think this will be a differential factor in our industry?

L.P.: I don't know of any within the galleries sector, but I know there are artists who are trying, with their presence, with their platforms, with their level of influence, to leverage that influence. Whenever they go to different venues, they put forward a “green rider”, which is basically a set of requirements and requests from the artist to the venue. I am talking more from a musician's perspective, but I think this can be applied to artists within the art sector and the galleries, where you can actually make some recommendations to the galleries where you are going to be exhibiting your work, and say you would really like these galleries to be aligned with these principles and tick these boxes, because these are the minimum boxes for you, in a way.

Actually, exploring the potential communication opportunities that may come out of actions like that can be very powerful. When a gallery and an artist

decide to influence one another, telling that story can also be very powerful. So yeah, I think it is definitely something that can happen. In the last year or so, public perception of the importance of climate has gone over the roof, as it should. And I hope it stays that way. I think that if galleries and artists want to play a relevant role, they will have to play a really strong part, because everything we do matters, whether it's big or small, and we have to do it together.

Jal Hamad

studied Physics at UAM and later graduated in Audiovisual Communication at the UEM. At age 24, he started up a digital agency specialized in the luxury industry, working in the last 20 years for clients such as LVMH, Inditex, Audemars Piguet, Hermès and L'Oréal. In 2011, he co-founded Sabrina Amrani Gallery in Madrid, bringing in his expertise in the digital world to the venture. The gallery represents artists across East and West, paying special attention to new voices emerging in the Global South, and has a strong digital presence. In January 2019, the gallery inaugurated a 600 sqm second space in Madrid.

Sofie Van de Velde

is the Founder and Director at Gallery Sofie Van de Velde. Located in two areas in Antwerp, the gallery stands for entrepreneurship in art. Through the participation in art fairs and exhibitions, the gallery focuses on representing artists in a strong international network. Together with the artist, strategies are defined to bring the body of work to a new level. Moving away from a conventional competition-minded gallery model, Sofie Van de Velde's philosophy is one of collaboration and shared opportunities and networks. Sofie is Vice president of BUP, society of Belgian contemporary art galleries, and member of FEAGA, Federation of European Art Galleries Associations.

Alexander Forbes

currently serves as Director of Corporate Development & Market Intelligence at Artsy, the leading global marketplace for discovering and collecting art. He works cross-functionally across the Artsy organization to advise on company strategy and key internal initiatives, and grow the company through partnerships and acquisitions. Previously, he was the Executive Editor of Artsy Editorial, which he grew to become the most-read art publication online. Before joining Artsy, Alexander served as the European Market Editor while based in Berlin for Artnet News, and as the Bureau Chief for Louise Blouin Media in German-speaking Europe.

New Online Trends for Galleries to Implement in 2020

SPEAKER

Jal Hamad & Sofie Van de Velde

MODERATOR

Alexander Forbes

In partnership with Artsy



NEW ONLINE TRENDS FOR GALLERIES

Jal Hamad Sabrina Amrani
Sofie Van de Velde Gallery Sofie Van de Velde

moderated by Alexander Forbes Artsy



New Online Trends for Galleries to Implement in 2020

Alexander Forbes (A.F.): I'm really excited to share with you the results from our *Artsy Gallery Insights: 2020* report. We'll then sit down and talk a little bit about the online strategies that Jal Hamad from Sabrina Amrani gallery and Sofie Van de Velde from her eponymous gallery have developed. We'll then take questions from the audience.

I am Alexander Forbes. I'm the director of Corporate Development and Market Intelligence at Artsy. I joined Artsy about five years ago to build our editorial platform and now focus on driving strategic partnerships and providing market intelligence across our business to drive key initiatives forward. A little bit about Artsy: Artsy is the largest global marketplace for art online. We have over 4,000 partners, including galleries, art fairs, auction houses and institutions from over 100 countries to help them reach our global audience and collectors. We have over 1.7 million users from 190 countries. They buy thousands of artworks from our partners every month. We really believe that building a vibrant online ecosystem is key to helping the art market continue to grow, support more galleries and support more artists in the world. The basic core theme of what we do and why we're so excited to be here today is providing small and mid-sized galleries with the best online resources possible, the best digital marketplace to help bridge a digital divide that could develop between those mega-galleries that have immense resources to build out really ambitious platforms—although we partner with them as well—and the rest of the galleries. Whether art galleries partner with Artsy or not, we do offer many educational resources to help you manage your digital presence and other kinds of marketing channels.

First, I'll tell you a little about the *Artsy Gallery Insights: 2020* report. We started publishing this report about three years ago and a lot has changed in the time since. I think that a shift is taking place from galleries and the art market at large asking whether anybody will really buy art online of a meaningful value to really asking how quickly it will accelerate and just how much of the market will go online over time. As we heard from Olivia and Elena

yesterday, we see many major galleries invest in unbelievably sophisticated online sales presences that are really bespoke to their individual strategies and have broken artist records in the process. We now see collectors routinely buying six and seven figure works on online platforms like Artsy and through evening sales, something that was somewhat unthinkable just a few years ago.

“ONE OF THE KEY FINDINGS THAT WE FOUND THIS YEAR IS THAT GALLERIES ARE EVER MORE CONFIDENT IN THEIR ONLINE STRATEGIES.”

For this year’s survey, we had about a thousand responses from different art businesses, from the smallest galleries up to some of the bigger galleries. These businesses are from 75 different countries, so a really wide geographical scope. We’ll dig into a few different kinds of nuanced differences in the responses from different regions. One of the key findings that we found this year is that galleries are ever more confident in their online strategies. We saw a 37 per cent increase in gallery confidence year over year from 2018. Interestingly, partnering with an online platform was one of the core drivers the galleries cited in increasing their confidence in their presence to make sales online.

Another interesting thing that we noticed is that galleries are hiring new kinds of positions, as we saw a number of new titles like Head of E-commerce or Digital Sales Manager, or even managers for specific art platforms like Artsy. More galleries on average partner with online art marketplaces as well. We saw a 15 per cent year-over-year jump in the number who have a subscription to any number of the marketplaces. Our team were also happy to say that our subscriber growth beat that figure. Another interesting development in the market is that art businesses remain divided on whether they should display their prices online. Now, I think as you heard me harp on about a little bit yesterday, this was one of the key elements that would drive more sales, according to the findings of the online art collector report we put out over the summer. Artworks published with their prices public on Artsy are between two and six times more likely to sell than those without. And so, it’s a roadblock stopping collectors.

Nonetheless, 58 per cent of galleries hide their prices on some or all of the works that they publish online, and there’s a little bit of a lack of consensus on why. I thought it was interesting that both the galleries that post all of their

prices online and those that post none of their prices online cited driving more sales as their reason for doing so, revealing a little bit of a lack of cohesion in the conclusions they arrived at. We do hear from galleries that failing to post a price online may lead to a conversation with a collector, but when we talk to our collectors, one of the things we hear, particularly from very experienced collectors with high budgets, is that when a price isn’t public, they may just not inquire at all. It’s a really simple thing that we can do to hopefully increase sales and bring in new buyers and establish collectors.

“FOR VERY EXPERIENCED COLLECTORS WITH HIGH BUDGETS, WHEN A PRICE ISN’T PUBLIC, THEY MAY JUST NOT INQUIRE AT ALL.”

Art fairs, unsurprisingly, were the largest source of investment for galleries in 2019; we’ve heard a lot about art fairs over the past couple of days. We found that galleries invest on average \$43,000 per year in fairs. Obviously, the mega-galleries are spending several times that much in a single fair. But to a smaller gallery, that’s a really substantial investment. The galleries that are deriving most revenue from fairs were the ones that are really taking a multi-channel approach. I think that’s something we’ll dig into in the panel and how you leverage different marketing channels to support everything you’re doing in your business, whether it’s an art fair booth, a show etc. Another interesting thing we found is that while galleries spent the most on fairs, they derive the most revenue from their email marketing. That’s a little bit different than what you might have read in a report like the *Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report*. I think one of the potential hypotheses is that galleries were saying where they derived the actual sale from. As we know and heard from a number of the galleries who we’ve spoken to so far, many of the sales that happened at fairs are taking place via pdfs being sent out to a collector who may not be there. So that is, in effect, an email sale, in a sense.

We also saw different drivers across markets. So, art fairs were the largest source of sales for galleries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe, as Joost Bosland mentioned in the last panel. This could be due to galleries trying to dig up new client bases in major art world hubs that might not be present in their local community. In Latin America, galleries cited events from outside of fair booths and other fair opportunities as their largest drivers of sales, and galleries in Asia, Oceania and North America follow the trend of email marketing leading their sales efforts. We also saw several distinct marketing

trends across digital channels and regions. So, email was most commonly cited as a way of connecting with existing clients. Again, for galleries that have an existing client base, it's obviously a way of sending out information on the works that are available, shows that are coming up etc. In the panel we're going to talk a little bit about how you might go about segmenting your email audience so you're not just blasting out the same press release to everybody on your list, making that a little bit more tailored to where they're at in their collecting journey and what artists they're interested in. For example, newer businesses cited events as one of their key drivers. Again, this is a way for them to build up that email list, that client base that they need to grow their business long term.

“WHILE GALLERIES SPENT THE MOST ON FAIRS, THEY DERIVE THE MOST REVENUE FROM THEIR EMAIL MARKETING.”

Social media, interestingly, was the most used tactic, but also the least invested in. It could be that people are deriving a lot of value or just getting millennials on their staff to run all their social media channels, I'm not quite sure. But it's just another kind of interesting dichotomy we found in the data. In our *Online Art Collector Report*—and this maybe follows—we found that a much smaller percentage of people are actually buying on social media platforms like Instagram than you may think. For most people, it is a discovery pathway. About 66 per cent of our collectors said that they are following new artists on a platform like Instagram, keeping up with what's going on in their studios. They might then email the gallery or not to inquire on a work, but they're not necessarily transacting directly on the platform. Online art platforms and events were also tied as the second most used marketing tactic by art businesses, and fairs were the third greatest source of sales for 2019 respondents. Again, even among mature art businesses—your more established galleries—only 16 per cent cited fairs as their greatest source of artwork sales. So, we'll see.

We're now going to dig into specific strategies from these two galleries. So, thank you both for joining us. I'll give a brief introduction and we'll dive right in. I know we want to keep the presentation moving. I'll also say that I think we've heard a lot over the past couple of days at a high level, whether it's what millennials are looking for in the market, how major galleries are building out their platforms, and then these new models that were just discussed. We're going to try to get a little in the weeds on specific marketing tactics. So, I

apologise if you do not run a gallery, but we will try to be a little bit specific and have you walk out with something that's kind of actionable for your next day in the office.

Joining me today, I'm very happy to have Sofie Van de Velde, who is the prolific founder and director of two galleries and one project space: Gallery Sofie Van de Velde, PLUS-ONE Gallery and the project space The Wunderwall. All these galleries have fostered a new collaborative model that I'm interested to hear more about, specifically as we look at marketing tactics, but also the future models that galleries can embrace. She's also the vice president of BUP, the Society of Belgian Contemporary Art Galleries. We also have Jal Hamad, who started his career in digital agencies focused on the luxury industry—maybe some key insights to share there—working for clients like LVMH, Hermès and L'Oréal. In 2011, he co-founded Sabrina Amrani Gallery in Madrid, bringing that expertise in the digital world to the gallery. Thank you both for joining us.

“SOCIAL MEDIA, INTERESTINGLY, WAS THE MOST USED TACTIC, BUT ALSO THE LEAST INVESTED IN.”

Sofie, I'll start with you. I think we want to hear a little bit about how both of you think about your digital marketing strategies in particular. As I mentioned, your two galleries follow this collaborative model, and pulling on the last conversation before lunch, I wondered if you could touch on how that's changed how you operate, both internally and then in terms of looking to reach collectors outside.

Sofie Van de Velde (S.VdV.): Thank you for this question. These past days, we heard a lot of suggestions from bigger galleries; we are just a small gallery. There are only eight staff, which is small. I have an art market background from my father, who had a gallery for 45 years, so I was there during everything Allan spoke about this morning: the 1980s, the crisis... I followed everything and saw everything. And I decided very early not to go into the business. Why? Because I thought it was a business with a lot of competitive fighting, which I don't like at all. So, I decided to go my own way. So, I did independent research for political organisations. I was a therapist for a long, long time. At the time, nobody knew, but at weekends I flew all over the world to auctions and I built up the exhibitions because my father was afraid of flying. I loved my world, a social world. Then ten years ago, my father became ill and asked me to come back to the art world, which I did. Because of the knowledge I built up in social

and political backgrounds, I had been promoted to head of 300 doctors. And what was my strength? My strength was networking, being open-minded, collaborating and so on. So, I was convinced that I would do the same in arts and went back to the art market.

“WE HAVE A SPECIAL MODEL. IN THE BEGINNING, WE DECIDED TO HAVE TWO GALLERIES AND ONE RECEPTION AREA. BUT TWO YEARS AGO, WE DECIDED TO BECOME ONE COMPANY.”

I helped my father a long time, by the way. He had the gallery in the 1970s, 1980s. We worked with Jeff Koons and with lots of big artists. And at that moment, he had the biggest gallery in Belgium, was still very involved in our work on Duchamp and had huge knowledge. But this was secondary market; this was selling and buying, selling and buying. This did not make me happy because I was used to working with people. So eight years ago, I decided to open my own gallery. We have a special model: we have been renting, by now for almost four years, 500m² in a new area in Antwerp, which is a small city. We divided the space in three and asked another gallerist, Jason Poirier from PLUS-ONE Gallery, to join us. His father and my father collaborated for forty years, and he had the same feeling. He wanted to do it totally differently. He had the background in marketing; I in social work. We decided he would have a gallery in one part, I would have one in the other. In the middle, we had the reception area. From this moment, everybody who visits our gallery has the possibility to see three exhibitions. Now, for example, we have an exhibition from Charlotte Posenenske, whose work is often well known by visitors; Jason is showing an emerging artist; and the middle area, the reception, we give away to artists who have no gallery at all. Most of them are very young because we're going to art schools and we scout them there.

If we go back to what Joe Kennedy said yesterday morning, I think that's how we reach millennials, how we reach different kinds of target groups. In the beginning, we decided to have two galleries and one reception area. But two years ago, we decided to become one company. The company is called Sharing Art, and we share our back office, which means we share all our staff, all our costs, and all our income comes into one company, but we are two brands: Sofie Van de Velde and PLUS-ONE. This is because we each have totally different backgrounds and serve a totally different audience.

We became one group because at the beginning, when we were separate, my clients would ask me whether it was alright for them to buy something from the other gallery. So now, we have our own artists, we have our online presence, we have everything; we are two brands but our back office is one. We also collaborate with more than twenty galleries all over the world. I'm saying this because it affects the way we communicate in different ways and hit very specific targets. He knows a lot about marketing. We have millennial staff, which is very interesting because we have a lot of discussions on how to evolve new groups in our gallery. We have, of course, our own artists, and I'm also specialised in the secondary market in which I collaborate with Artsy, for example.

“FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, WE'VE BEEN REALLY RELIANT ON SOCIAL MEDIA, SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION, OUR OWN WEBSITE AND THIRD-PARTY PLATFORMS TOO.”

A.F. So maybe you're that the germination point of this LVMH conglomerate that Andrew Goldstein posited, the two-brand strategy that unified business operation. Jal, having worked for LVMH in the marketing sphere, I'm curious what led you to decide to go into this crazy business path and also what you brought from that experience to Amrani gallery.

Jal Hamad (J.H.): At first, I didn't know it was going to be such a difficult business. That's why I went into it. But my experience in the digital world has been key in gallery operations. In fact, from the very beginning, we've been really reliant on social media, search engine optimisation, our own website and third-party platforms too. For social media, we use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, but also Weibo and WeChat. Actually, the most interesting thing I think to share today is that we've found that instant messaging apps are becoming a very big trend, especially in certain markets, in particular Asia, where collectors like to get the information through WhatsApp, Telegram, Kakao, Line or other instant messaging apps.

A.F. It's something we've heard a lot of, too. Galleries really find taking that collector onto WhatsApp or something where it's a little bit more instantaneous connection has positive effects.

J.H. And it's actually them asking for that. It's during a fair or whatever else they request that we contact them via instant messaging instead of mail.

A.F. Yeah. And we found that the more that you can do to accelerate the conversation, whether it's through e-commerce functionality or through apps—we've seen a 52 per cent year over year increase in commercial activity on our app—the better. People are on their phones and want access to art in the back of their Uber or wherever.

**“IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO BRING THE
REAL WORLD INTO THE DIGITAL WORLD
AND VICE VERSA.”**

S.VdV. Yeah. In our gallery we like to communicate as much as possible. Yesterday, Joe Kennedy said it's very important during the weekend. So, we are open six days a week. But during the weekend, nobody can open their computer. We want to talk with everybody because as Joe said yesterday, everybody who takes some time to come into our gallery takes time to come and see the three exhibitions. So, we have to take time to lead them around. There are texts, there are lots of books, but we are there to be in touch with them, to speak about everything. So, it's really necessary, and the same applies to online communication. We have the policy that we react in under six hours to every email. And that's something I learned, for example, from Artsy, because you give reflections on how things are going. Of course, we are also on Instagram and altogether we reach, I think, between 50,000 and 70,000 people a day. But we are just a small gallery—Joe Kennedy's Unit gallery has half a million, which is impressive. We have a long way to go.

A.F. It's totally true. And I think that probably a core driver of some of those new positions that I mentioned in the presentation is getting a little bit more focussed on how we treat the online space the same way that you would a gallery. If somebody walked into your gallery, into your fair booth, you'd probably not let him stand there for a week or two before saying hi. And so, we really think that the goal is to treat online space in a similar way, with a similar level of seriousness.

J.H. I think it's very important to bring the real world into the digital world and vice versa. That's the way. For us at least, it has worked.

A.F. Looking specifically at emails, since that was where we saw the most galleries deriving the most revenue from, can you two talk a little bit about what your email strategy looks like? And to the extent that you do, how do you segment your collector basis? On what basis do you do that? And how do you talk to different groups in a slightly different way?

S.VdV. Yeah, for us, as I said, transparency is very difficult. We communicate about prices. For example, if there is a client who wants to have prices from an artist, we send them a private view, in which they can see which works are available, which works aren't available anymore. And if somebody else on the other side of the world buys the work, you immediately see a red dot to show it isn't available anymore. So, we want to have an open way of communicating.

A.F. Is that via your inventory management?

S.VdV. Yeah. We're working with Artlogic for that, which is very handy, but also the back office. It takes a lot of energy, and we are a small gallery, established eight years ago. At the beginning, there's still time to do those things, so we're still learning. We still add value like that, but also our reaction time is very short. We try to be in contact and for example, for the gallery's fifth anniversary, I did research about a hundred people who supported our gallery, and we asked an artist to make a big chocolate. It was a sculpture. You could describe it as a little bit like a Marcel Broodthaers. You could decide to eat the chocolate or to keep the artwork. And so, we sent everybody a certificate and they could come. This was a new way to tell them we appreciate what they are doing because it's not so easy if they come to your gallery—a small gallery, I insist. And so, it is a very good place to see who our target group is, which target groups we have and try to communicate very specifically with them.

A.F. And how does it look for you guys, Jal? Do you find it is one-to-one communication that makes the most difference? Or do you get a lot of response off of more mass mailings that you send out?

J.H. We do a lot of targeting emails. I mean, we send the specific emails to specific collectors or people who are interested in different artists. So, we get a new bunch of works by this specific artist, we try to segment and to send the emails in a very targeted way. We are also now beginning to explore the idea of sending weekly or monthly emails with curated content and showing available works but, usually, email, as shown in the report, is one on one. That's, I think, the most lucrative.

A.F. And do either of you create content that is editorially driven or videos about your artists? And if so, how has that affected sales?

J.H. So we actually launched a viewing room three weeks ago. That requires building a lot of content that you have to prepare for the viewing room. So yes, we are focussing a lot on trying to build context around our artists.

A.F. And what does that process look like? If you're a gallery that hasn't really thought about yourself as a content creator, how would you suggest thinking about that storytelling around your artist?

**“BEING TRANSPARENT IS NOT
COMMUNICATING EVERYTHING BUT
BEING OPEN ABOUT YOUR STRATEGY.”**

J.H. Actually, we have an in-house journalist who is also taking care of social media. So, I think it is important to incorporate into your business some kind of profile that would take care of these things. We also have a developer for our own website, who is building the viewing rooms and taking care of the search engine optimisation, updating the website and looking for different ways to improve and to get the most out of it.

A.F. That's fascinating. Those are the kinds of jobs and resources that you would think only the mega-galleries have.

J.H. Well, maybe it's because of my digital background that we already incorporated that into the gallery. But I think most of these profiles are doing several jobs at a time. So now they are not simply developing. Well, the developer is simply developing. But most of us in the small infrastructure, we do many, many things. We just don't have a position and that's it. We do lots of stuff.

A.F. Sofie, have you found that your shared model of the back-office infrastructure has allowed you to do things, whether it's kind of the roles that you have within the gallery or marketing strategies, that you may not otherwise have been able to invest in if you were going it on your own?

S.VdV. Yes, sure, because we share all the costs. We go very, very far in those things. For example, we have a van in the gallery and all the artists can use it. Other galleries use it. Because of our knowledge, museums often ask us

if we can send somebody to their museum because they need some extra people. We want to be very open. It's a way of transparency. We think it's very necessary here and now. Maybe it's naive. Maybe I won't be here anymore in five years. But until now, we see it works. It works because a lot of people visit us: we had an opening last weekend, and 1,500 visitors came to the gallery. Another strength is we invited other galleries in this new neighbourhood. So, at this moment, we are with four galleries there, but there is nothing else there, only galleries. So, people come there. They have to. It's not in the centre. So, they have to come if they want to see the gallery.

**“IN THIRD-PARTY PLATFORMS, WE
FOUND THAT THE LOW-END RANGE OF
PRICES WORKS VERY WELL FOR US IF WE
MAKE THEM VISIBLE.”**

We also communicate a lot online. So, we have Instagram, we do a lot of Skypes. We call a lot. We send small movies about our artists if a new work comes in. We make movies and we have somebody in the team who is really specialised in those things. But I think at the end, we all control everything because it's necessary. It still stays our branding, and the artists still recognise themselves in what we are saying about them. And the only thing I will say is that, contrary to what some believe, being transparent is not communicating everything, but being open about your strategy, about pricing, about those things people have to know if they want to buy something.

A.F. You mentioned pricing. I'm curious to hear from both of you what your take is on the findings around pricing and what your approach is around that. Is it something where you have put the majority or all of your prices public online or do you hold them back?

J.H. In our case, we don't hold them back at all. If anybody comes into the gallery and asks for a price, we don't just hide it. We, of course, give it. But for example, in third-party platforms, we found that the low-end range of prices works very well for us if we make them visible, but for the higher end, prices might be intimidating for some users. So, we prefer to not show them. And if we get an inquiry, then we can offer a pdf with a broad range of works with different prices, so we avoid that intimidation.

A.F. What you find is the breakpoint in that price?

J.H. Between \$5,000 and \$8,000.

A.F. Sofie?

S.VdV. We show them, yeah. So, the reception area is the area in which you can find young talents. So, the prices are maximum €2,500. And for us, it's important that the threshold is low. So that's why we show prices. But at this moment, for example, in our exhibition, we have a work for €40,000. People can see it as well. So, everything is there. We have texts, we have books, we have all the information they need if they want to know.

A.F. Yeah, it was actually a really surprising finding for me. I hear that, as well, it makes sense to show a range of prices. But to hear from a lot of people that are spending upwards of six figures on art a year that they really care about that was still interesting to me. But I think it is specific to the gallery, to the programme etc. Particularly if your artists have a wide range of works, it's not so set.

J.H. Yeah, some artists have works from \$500 up to \$250,000. It's a broad range and it depends on every artist. I think every gallery has a different policy because every gallery has a different personality. It shows in and also reflects on their pricing policy.

**“EVERY GALLERY HAS A DIFFERENT
POLICY BECAUSE EVERY GALLERY HAS A
DIFFERENT PERSONALITY.”**

A.F. Since both of you started relatively recently, I'd like to know how you go about building up your email list or your social media following. I'm sure you're still trying to do that every day. What have you found that's worked the best in order to build your audience, particularly of collectors?

J.H. For us, social media was very important. We put a lot of effort in the very early years into social media. The gallery was very young and not well known. So, it was a very easy way to gain a little visibility for a very small investment.

A.F. And is that Instagram or have you found that different platforms serve different purposes?

J.H. Well, Instagram is pretty new. But yeah, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.

A.F. Do you see that certain platforms convert better than others?

J.H. Absolutely. Instagram converts a lot more than any other. Actually, we sold a work through Instagram last week, and we consistently do it; not every week, but it's a good source of inquiries too.

**“INSTAGRAM CONVERTS A LOT MORE
THAN ANY OTHER.”**

A.F. Particularly relative to investment, it sounds like. Sofie, how about you?

S.VdV. We reach younger collectors by Instagram most of the time, and sometimes there are real conversations between us. And of course, there are sales; every week we have sales, smaller sales. And then, of course, like I said, for the secondary market it depends.

To be honest, the secondary market is just a way to support the primary market, our artists. When we were starting out eight years ago, if I was at the client's place, and for example, there was a Picasso and they asked me what I thought, I would take it on; now that I'm primary market, I don't react to it. It is very strange because if you have the knowledge, you can't help it. But we only do it if, for example, they invest again in younger primary market artists, because that's our goal. For secondary markets, most of the time we can communicate via Artsy, but also personal emails because we hold all the narratives in our back office. If we speak at art fairs, then we write everything down. So afterwards we can see who's interested, who's searching for what. And this even gives us the possibility to reflect all the time on who our clients are, how many new clients we have, how we can support them and how we can reach new clients.

Big galleries invest a lot in this. But I think for small galleries, it's important to invest as well, because we really have to think totally differently. I really believe what Allan said today, and I believe it was a pessimistic way to see the art world. But I think we have to try things. And once again, maybe I'm naive. And then it is what it is. But until now, I see it's working.

A.F. Yeah, I agree it's interesting to see the biggest galleries building out their own CRM platforms, inventory management, all of that. Understandably, they have data risk if they're selling \$100-million paintings. But it is also pretty incredible to see the quality of the software that's available to galleries today.

I'm curious to what extent like using a CRM platform has unlocked that ability to track your collectors in a more nuanced way, as you mentioned. But switching gears a little bit to art fairs, as it's been a topic of conversation throughout the symposium so far. Are either of you switching your art fair strategy at all? And to the extent that you're doing fewer fairs, where are you reinvesting both the time and financial resources?

**“ALL THAT INVESTMENT THAT WE'D
BEEN PUTTING INTO THE FAIRS, WE
MOVED IT TO THE ONLINE WORLD. IT
WAS A VERY WISE MOVE.”**

J.H. Well, we used to do ten fairs a year then eleven. So, it was really exhausting physically and financially. We decided to cut down on fairs a little bit and do the ones that work better for us. And all that investment that we'd been putting into the fairs, we moved it to the online world, actually. I think it was a very wise move, because fairs, as is also shown in the report, don't always give the return that you expect, and the digital world gives a lot higher returns for a smaller investment.

A.F. So is that where the budget for your developer, for example, came from?

J.H. Well, we already had the developer on the side because of, as I said, my background, my previous job. I think that we put those resources into building content or social media advertisements.

A.F. Can you talk a little about your social media advertising strategy?

J.H. Well, we don't really have a strategy as such. When we see that a post is doing well, we invest a little money on it to gain broader visibility. Well, that's the strategy.

A.F. More eyeballs. And Sofie, for fairs?

S.VdV. Um, yeah. Last year we did seven art fairs. We have a totally new staff because a bigger gallery took some staff away from us. So that's part of the deal. But we're doing well, I think. So, we want to invest in our staff; it's really, really important. And so, we're doing three art fairs. We're going to do Art Cape Town this year, but we don't just suddenly decide to do an art fair on a whim. We're always rethinking, reflecting; we are going because we

have some collectors there. One of our main collectors is responsible for the VIP programme, and we want to collaborate with galleries there. So, we are there not only to sell, but we have always a process or some goals to achieve. Regarding Instagram, we do have a strategy. Of course, we know what we want to communicate and when we want to communicate. We reflect on everything; we see if the content is strong enough. At the beginning, I posted cheesy things and I had to learn a lot about it. Together, with the team, we learn more.

J.H. And sometimes that works too.

S.VdV. Cheesy things? Yeah, for sure. But not all the time I'm afraid.

J.H. No, no.

S.VdV. So, we had to learn about it as well.

J.H. Not all the time everything works. We have to evolve and try different things.

S.VdV. Trial and error.

A.F. Yeah, I think we've heard a lot about experimentation over the last couple of days, and I think that the more that we experiment as an industry and get comfortable with maybe some of those experiments not going so well and learning from them, the more we can push ahead. And just before we jump to the Q&A, if you were a gallery sitting in the audience trying to think about how to grow your business, particularly in the digital realm and in 2020, what would your best piece of advice be?

J.H. I would say invest in social media. For us both social media and having our own website were very important. And we are now exploring the idea of building an e-commerce platform on our own website. It's a bit more of an investment, but I think it's important. For a young gallery, I'd say maybe social media, email marketing.

S.VdV. I think take some time to let it grow because it's not there from one moment to the next. So, I think that's very important. And be yourself. I mean, be the gallery you want to be, also on Internet or via your emails, newsletters and those things. You can learn from each other, but I think be yourself. That's

very strong. And we always use hashtags. We always use #sharingart and #sharingarthusiasm; not all the time, but if we do collaborations, for example, because we see a lot of people are going to use that as well.

J.H. Also third-party platforms like Artsy, Artland or Ocula. There are many and that can also give you a broader visibility for a pretty affordable investment.

A.F. Right. Thank you both so much. We'll go to a couple of questions from the audience.

QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: I'd like to comment on what Jal Hamad said. You do WeChat and Weibo strategy for the Chinese market. Because I write about art and also have my own WeChat platform and live in London, I often get approached by Western galleries saying they want to set up a WeChat account. And that often is smaller or medium-sized galleries, not mega-galleries like Gagosian or Zwirner—they already have a very strong in-house team to do their WeChat strategy. But also, what I said to them is I don't think it's really worth spending a lot of time working on WeChat because of the way WeChat and Weibo work, you're very likely to have a very limited audience. It really depends on your circle of friends.

And then I realised that, actually, in the Chinese market, we don't really have these third-party sites. We have artnet and Artsy but it is more editorial. Artnet is taking advertisements, but Artsy is very focussed on editorial. Smaller galleries investing in setting up a WeChat account on their own often may get about twenty followers, and each post may get twenty res, which is not going to reach any audience. It just came to my mind that, instead of that, Artsy could expand that territory, becoming a third-party platform in China to host the smaller galleries to expand their visibility, because I really think Artsy and artnet are uniquely placed in the Chinese market to deliver on content and are really trusted by collectors and art enthusiasts.

A.F. Yeah, absolutely. It's a great question. China is really important to us in our long-term strategy. I think now we really do see ourselves as a global marketplace and want to serve galleries and collectors in every country. We have many partners in China already and I was actually courted developing

our WeChat platform. I think you'll see us continue to grow that platform in the coming year and from there on out. Clearly, there are certain logistical challenges to hosting a website in China that can be transactable, but they are actually getting less and less difficult to overcome. So, it's a market we take really seriously. It's a market that we see some of our biggest collectors already coming from, particularly keen in the auction space. I think we have a collector in Shanghai who's bought upwards of forty or fifty works on Artsy through our auction platform. So, I think it's something you'll certainly see us do more of in the future, as it is a key area for the market.

Q1: Because at the moment, artnet is taking advertisements so the galleries pay an amount for the feature and also have this space as a poster on the feature, which I think really works. But Artsy is very editorially driven and doesn't have advertisements. But I think you are also in a very good position to be very commercialised in that sense and then host galleries' pages. I think that will work for galleries better than setting up their own platform.

A.F. Now, I have a lot of respect for what artnet has done. And they were very early going into China and setting up also a mini programme for their galleries. I think it's a great platform. We are starting to post more commercial content on the web WeChat. We've launched collections on the website as well to bring together slightly more curated, smaller groups of artworks. You'll see us do more and more of that in China in 2020.

Georgia Adam (G.A.): This is a question for Jal. I'm just interested in when you were with LVMH or advising LVMH if their pricing transparency policy was the same as in the art market. How does it work?

J.H. Actually, I worked for them building digital content.

G.A. So, you didn't go into their pricing?

J.H. No, I was not advising unfortunately.

A.F. I think it is an interesting parallel, though, when you look at some of the major fashion houses, and they really leveraged their brand website as pure brand expression, what they're about. It's much more about that inspiration, the storytelling, the narrative around the brand. But they're also all present on all the fashion marketplaces like Net-à-Porter or whatever. And I'm pretty sure that Net-à-Porter always has a price listed next to it. When you think

about pricing online, as a gallery, you might think of having different policies in different places that suit the platform, that suit the audience there. Something that we think about a lot is really understanding what people's expectations are when they come to Artsy, for example. They might come to read our editorial, but if they're in the marketplace and want to buy something, how do we allow that to be as easy as possible for them?

**“THE GREAT THING IS WE COLLABORATE
A LOT IN A DIFFERENT WAY. IT DEPENDS
ON HOW THE MATCH IS AND WHAT THE
OTHER GALLERY IS LIKE.”**

S.VdV. Yeah, I don't know how it is, but in Belgium you have to have a pricelist in your gallery all the time. I think it's the same all over Europe, isn't it?

G.A. In America as well but they don't.

S.VdV. But it has to be there.

A.F. It's hidden under many boxes and somebody'll pull it up if they have to.

Q2: I would like to know what kind of strategies you use for finding new artists. It's for both of you.

S.VdV. What I forgot to say, which is very important, we collaborate with more than twenty or twenty-five galleries all over the world, also larger galleries. So, we did things with Hauser & Wirth. We share an artist with Victoria Miro. And so, we always have established artists, and we also have younger artists. So, we're working very well with Carlos Ishikawa, for example. But the great thing is we collaborate a lot in a different way. It depends on how the match is and what the other gallery is like. So, we listen; we go into art schools; we go to panels. We are really into the world because we are only in Antwerp, it's a small dot, really small dot on the map. So, we have to be everywhere. And we listen to our artists as well, because they are good advisers. We have some collectors that will tell us you have to look at this work. And then it takes us a long time before we decide to collaborate, because we see the work and we look online. We go and visit them. We have contacts. And it's a little bit like a marriage. You don't marry every day. So, we have to see how it goes. And also, we are open for feedback from other galleries, because we believe in those things.

J.H. So, yeah. In our case, we travel a lot to fairs, biennials and all kinds of events. And that's the way we get in touch with new artists, mainly, more than, researching the Internet. We research in the Internet once we've already got in touch with some artist that we're interested in. But it's mainly biennials, art fairs. Before opening the art fair, once we've installed our booth, we do a tour around the fair and we might find something interesting. We also find new artists when travelling to a museum show with one of our artists, for example. In the same museum, there are other group shows or solo shows, and we also get in touch with artists in that way.

S.VdV. Sometimes we check with other galleries. We might have an artist we would like to introduce to the US, for example, and ask another gallery for their opinion, whether they think it would be right for the market and which gallery would be best for them. So, there are a lot of galleries we are very open with. So collaborating is not only selling and buying, it's sending each other some works too. I think that's also necessary.

For over a decade, **Mai Eldib** has played an instrumental role in providing a platform for promoting Modern and Contemporary Arab and Iranian Art, and is presently the Head of Sale for Sotheby's bi-annual 20th Century Art / Middle East auction. Mai has pioneered record-breaking sales of a number of Egyptian Modernist artists. Her current projects include initiating an archive that compiles primary documents on the Egyptian art scene from 1910 through to 1980 and contextualising these, together with a collective of fellow female art enthusiasts.

Vilma Jurkute has spent the last decade developing creative industries across New York, Chicago, London and Dubai. She joined Alserkal in 2011 and in her time with the organisation, she has been instrumental in its evolution and responsible for overseeing Alserkal Avenue's physical expansion in 2015 as well as the inauguration of Concrete in 2017. Vilma has been the driving force behind Alserkal's non-profit activities in the arts, which were formalised under Alserkal Arts Foundation in 2019, affirming the organisation's commitment to the development of arts and culture in the region.

Sunny Rahbar is of Iranian origin and was raised in Dubai, UAE. She graduated with a BA from New York's Parsons School of Design, in 2000, and worked at the Guggenheim Museum, before moving to London, where she worked at Sotheby's on the contemporary decorative art sale. In 2005, she co-founded The Third Line in Dubai—a contemporary art gallery focused on building an internationally recognized platform for artists relevant to the Middle East region. Rahbar and her partners also expanded into non-commercial endeavors, art advisory programming as well as publications, having produced several artist books to date.

Till Fellrath is, together with Sam Bardaouil, Co-Founder of Art Reoriented, a multidisciplinary curatorial platform, launched in New York and Munich in 2009. As an internationally recognized independent curator his curatorial practice is equally rooted in the field of modernist studies, as well as global contemporary artistic practices. Fellrath and Bardaouil have collaborated as a duo over the last ten years, engaging with a wide range of institutional models worldwide.

The Market for Middle Eastern Art

SPEAKER

Mai Eldib, Vilma Jurkute & Sunny Rahbar

MODERATOR

Till Fellrath

In partnership with Alserkal





The Market for Middle Eastern Art

Till Fellrath (T.F.): Thank you so much for staying with us. We'll do our very best to put some energy in the room and make sure you feel like the best was saved for last. We're very happy to talk a little bit about the Middle Eastern art market today. I think the title is already inherently a little bit problematic because it comes, first of all, with this toponym, Middle East.

Many of us who have very strong connections to the region or work in the region don't often quite know what that actually means. On the other hand, it is a very handy categorisation when it comes to the market or when it comes to aggregating certain areas and talk about them as if they were monolithic. So, there was a boom in Chinese art fifteen to twenty years ago and then came Middle Eastern art. But really, the Middle East is a very, very complex and complicated region. And insofar as we are talking about the Middle East, I would like to very cautiously actually mention that we will be talking about two very specific models in Dubai. We will also speak with Mai, who is based in Cairo and works a bit more across the region. I believe Cairo is actually technically not really the Middle East. Or is it the Middle East? It's definitely Africa.

“THE TERM MIDDLE EASTERN ART CAN BE A VERY HANDY CATEGORISATION WHEN IT COMES TO THE MARKET.”

Mai Eldib (M.E.): Definitely in Africa and the Middle East.

T.F. So it's a bit of everything. Anyway, without much further ado, I would just like to introduce this panel, in which we will tell you a little bit about the region and the market that we've all been part of for many, many years. In fact, many of us have worked together over the last ten years on many different projects.

First of all, we have with us here Sunny Rahbar, who is the founder and also director of The Third Line Gallery. The gallery was founded by her and Claudia Cellini in Dubai in 2005. So, this was really very, very early. It was actually fifteen years ago, at a time when people didn't really think of Dubai and art in one sentence or in the same context. That was even before there was an art fair. So, you were really a true pioneer. We really look forward to hearing a little bit from you later about that, how the gallery evolved and what your view of the whole market is.

Secondly, we have with us Mai Eldib. She joined Sotheby's in 2008, and she's become a very close friend. Besides being very successful in the auction world, especially in securing modern Arab art, she's also very well connected to the whole collectors' scene, and she helped us enormously in putting together our exhibition on surrealism in Egypt, opening many doors and helping us actually find the material, which is often very, very hidden. In this particular case, it would be wonderful if you later on tell us a bit more about your role, and maybe talk a bit more about the modern art aspect of the "Middle Eastern art market".

And finally, we have with us Vilma Jurkute, who joined Alserkal in 2011 and is now its director. Alserkal is a very interesting model, which is quite unique anywhere, but is also very specific to Dubai. It is a creative district or area. It's quite hard to describe. I think you'll tell us a little bit more of how you would like to name it, but it is really a creative hub and a creative hotspot in the city of Dubai. It expanded quite massively in 2017. This is now the area where pretty much all or most of the galleries are housed in Dubai, but also many other creative companies and different organisations, some cool eateries, the great, amazing cinema Akil and more. It's really one of the places to be. Finally, in 2019, under Vilma's directorship, a non-profit foundation was also formed, which is supporting all the non-profit activities that Alserkal is currently doing. It's a very eclectic model, and we look forward to hearing from you a little bit about how an institution plays a role in a city that is maybe not characterised by very traditional museums and institutions as we know them in many European cities. So, thank you so much. I would like to first ask Sunny to tell us a little bit about the story of The Third Line gallery.

Sunny Rahbar (S.R.): Thank you, Till, for the introduction, to my co-panellists and to Talking Galleries, which is a wonderful event. It's really great to be here and hear all of the ideas and I'm happy that we're at the end, because I

felt I had to change my presentation a few times to fit. But I'll just try to be brief and tell a brief history of The Third Line and how we started and why.

I'm from Iran, but I grew up in Dubai. My parents moved to Dubai in 1980, when I was three. The idea was to go back to Iran but that never happened. As a result, we ended up staying in Dubai, and I grew up there. At that time, if you grew up in Dubai, you'd go away; if you went to university, you'd have to go away. So, I ended up leaving when I was sixteen. I went to London first, and then I went to New York. I'd basically just discovered that I wanted to work in the arts and ended up in New York going to an art school, which was how I started.

“I DECIDED THAT THIS WOULD BE MY LIFE'S MISSION: TO CREATE A PLATFORM WHERE ARTISTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CAN BE REPRESENTED SO THE WORLD CAN COME TO KNOW OF THEM.”

When I graduated, after doing a few stints in different places, I did an internship at the Guggenheim. I worked in London at Sotheby's on a sale. I worked at an artist-run space. I did a lot of things. I wasn't sure exactly where I wanted to be in the art world, but I knew I wanted to be part of it. I was a little bit reluctant to move back to Dubai when I graduated because I thought, "What am I going to do in Dubai?" There was not really an art scene. There weren't really any galleries and or institutions or anything. When my mother called me and asked me to go back, I refused and decided to stay. Eventually, I kind of had to go back after 9/11. I was in New York in 2001, and it was a real moment where it was actually safer to be in the Middle East somehow. I had just finished working with Eyestorm. If you remember, Eyestorm was an online platform for art which opened a physical space. I was part of the team that went out there to set that up. It was an interesting model and I think that's kind of coming back, but that's another story. Anyway, I finished working with them and my mom insisted that I should return and I conceded. So, in 2001, I went back to Dubai and realised there was an opportunity because Dubai was booming and, within the region, Dubai was really an island of peace and stability. There was an airport and you could get in and out. It was the beginning of, let's say, the boom.

So, at that time, I started to look around and see what I could do. I was interested in the artists that were from the region because I was from the region, and from my time in London and New York—I was also in Paris for a year—I realised that there was very little representation of Middle Eastern artists or none at all. I was wondering why. So, I started to meet artists here and there, and when I came back to Dubai, I decided that this would be my life's mission. I didn't know exactly what it would be, but to create a platform, a space where artists from the Middle East can be represented so the world can come to know of them. At the time, I'd started to do some shows independently where I was curating different spaces, literally anything I could find: hotel lobbies, warehouses, shops, anything. I took whoever I could find to sponsor it. I was working with the artists that I knew, some of whom were living in Dubai at the time. That was the beginning.

In 2005, I met Claudia Cellini, my business partner, and Omar Gobash. We had a conversation and Claudia asked what I would do if I could do anything in Dubai. I said how difficult moving around and doing shows here and there was and how nobody was really buying art, but that I would like to maybe get a space and do something in the space. She said, "Like a gallery?" I wasn't sure. I explained I just meant a permanent space where we could do shows and really expand. So, she suggested doing it together, which made me think she was mad. But I liked it, because it made me notice it was a possibility although there was really nothing happening.

**“THE TRADITIONAL CENTRES OF THE
ART WORLD IN THE MIDDLE EAST—
BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, CAIRO, TEHRAN—
WERE AT THAT MOMENT, AND SADLY
STILL TODAY, NOT ACCESSIBLE PLACES.
DUBAI SEEMED LIKE THE PERFECT
PLACE.”**

There were people buying art, but they were buying art when they were leaving Dubai and going to the other art centres like London or New York. They would buy western art, but also maybe Orientalist art. For me, this was the moment in terms of the contemporary art. There were modern Arab and Iranian artists, but the traditional centres of the art world in the Middle East—Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Tehran—were at that moment, and sadly still today, not accessible places. Dubai seemed like the perfect place to actually do this.

We opened in 2005. We managed to get some money together but we didn't have that much. We wanted to get the biggest space for the least amount of rent, so we opened in the industrial district of Dubai, which is called Al Quoz, which is where we still are and where Alserkal is.



The Third Line (2005 - 2015)

This was our first space. It was a warehouse; we cladded the front and it was great. This is a great picture from the side where you see the ACs. Anyway, this was the first base. I wasn't only interested in working with artists that were from the Middle East living in the Middle East. I was also interested in working with artists who were from the Middle East living in the diaspora. So that was the focus of the programme, the reason being that I was interested to see in a hundred years from now what will happen and what it will be like. And I'm still curious, although I probably won't be alive then. We turn fifteen in April and so much has changed in this time; I can't believe it. This feels like a long time ago and it was only 2015. So, we started to do shows. We had a small project space upstairs and a larger space downstairs. We realised very quickly that we couldn't just do shows and sell art because there wasn't a buying public, there wasn't an audience. So, to start, we had to do other things.

So, basically, we were very, very active. It was a dynamic space, a lot of programming: we did artist talks; we showed films mostly centred around the Arab world; we had a book club reading books by Arab writers in English and in Arabic, and then got together and talked about what's lost in translation.

So, we're really trying to cultivate it. In a way, we were really acting somehow like an institution because there were no institutions at the time: there were no museums, there were no foundations. It was really a quiet but really busy moment for us.

**“WE WERE REALLY ACTING
SOMEHOW LIKE AN INSTITUTION
BECAUSE THERE WERE NO
INSTITUTIONS AT THE TIME.”**

And so, we started to meet artists. Here and there we met other artists through artists we knew. This is Sahand Hesamiyan. He is an Iranian sculptor based in Tehran. This is one of our last shows in this space. This is Ala Ebtekar. He's an Iranian artist based in San Francisco; a second generation Iranian American. This is Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Lebanese husband and wife filmmakers, and we represent their practice as artists. They are based between Beirut and Paris. So, as you can see, slowly, the programme was developing.

We now represent 27 artists. This was the other thing that we were doing: we were representing artists where the practice didn't really exist. We followed the western model that I had learnt from my time away, but I also realised very quickly that that model doesn't necessarily fit within the geographical context that we were in. So, we had to sort of make up a few things as we went along. Basically, as we continued to build the programme and cultivate the audiences, we started to actually sell art, which is great because we were a commercial gallery. We wanted to be a non-profit, but we couldn't because there was no way of being a non-profit in Dubai at that time, I don't think there is still.

Vilma Jurkute (V.J.): Now there is.

S.R. Oh, now there is. Too late.

V.J. Hence the foundation.

S.R. So, we basically had to become a commercial gallery. It was fine because even at the time there was no licence for a commercial gallery in Dubai. Now there is; a lot has changed. There was no real infrastructure. We couldn't find framers, for instance. There were framers, but they were not framing art and

they didn't know how to handle art. There were no shippers. There were no handlers. We did a lot at that point.

The height of the boom in Dubai was 2007. Everything sort of exploded; everyone was in Dubai. It was like a gold rush. People were looking at Dubai, people were coming and people were investing in real estate and all the things that you could do. The auction houses quickly realised that there was something to do, and so they entered the market as well. There were a few auctions that Christie's and Sotheby's started to do around contemporary art.

M.E. So our first sale was in 2007 in London, and it was a Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish sale.

**“WE FOLLOWED THE WESTERN MODEL
THAT I HAD LEARNT FROM MY TIME
AWAY. I REALISED VERY QUICKLY THAT
THAT MODEL DOESN'T NECESSARILY FIT
WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT
THAT WE WERE IN.”**

S.R. Exactly.

M.E. Christie's had done one also in Dubai.

S.R. Yeah. So then, people suddenly noticed you could buy and sell art. This was this real moment that crystallised everything, because then that same year, the Gulf Art Fair started, which is now called Art Dubai. But it was the beginning of this real market developing.

This is Farhad Moshiri. This is also in our old space. This is Hassan Hajjaj's show. We used to do a lot in that old space. We always had people around. We also had dinners. So, basically, in 2007 everything started: the fair, Christie's, Sotheby's... People were buying art. It was like this mad frenzy. It was really intense because we'd gone from not selling art, but just trying to kind of stay relevant and in business, to everyone wanting to buy works. I think this was the time when some of our artists started to get recognised.

M.E. Poached?

S.R. No, not yet—that was later. But the market was really crazy. One of our artists, Farhad Moshiri, who you saw here, had a piece sold at an auction in Dubai for a million dollars. At the time, the most expensive piece I had by him was \$20,000. So, it was a real spike. It was really a scary moment as well, because I feel like this market developed suddenly and there still wasn't much elsewhere. There were a few other galleries that had opened, and they opened near us. Suddenly, Al Quoz, an industrial district, became the sort Chelsea or the Soho of Dubai. That's when Alserkal comes in. They had these spaces right opposite where we were, and they were renting them to galleries that came in. So eventually, all the galleries were in Alserkal, and we were just across the street. And then we decided we didn't want to be by ourselves, so in 2016 we moved to Alserkal Avenue.



The Third Line in Alserkal Avenue (January 2016 – Present)

This is our new space from the outside. Our first show was with Monir Farmanfarmaian, who just passed away last year in April aged 96. She was an artist that I discovered when she was 81. I discovered her through a colleague and friend, Rose Issa, who was working with her in London. She went on to do very well, became very well-known and had many exhibitions in museums.

It was also an interesting time, because when the art fair started, quite a lot of curators and art journalists, people like yourselves, started to come over. These people were also seeking out what was happening and wanted to find

out who the Arab or Iranian artists were. Some artists were discovered that way: Hans Ulrich Obrist discovered Monir's work on one of his visits and interviewed her in Dubai at the art fair. That started her journey, which was really basically a rediscovery, since she had always been an artist. However, she'd gone through a period where moving between Iran and New York, she had been forgotten. So that was her story.

We were ten years old when we moved and we wanted to expand. So, we moved into a much bigger space. My artists don't like it, but we also responded to the things that we needed. Now, we have an upstairs space, an AV room, we've just opened a small shop as well, although we're not that big.

**“A LOT OF PEOPLE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT WE WERE DOING, AND DIDN'T
REALLY KNOW ABOUT ARAB OR MIDDLE
EASTERN ART.”**

We work with Sophia Al-Maria, a Qatari-American artist; Rana Begum; Fouad Elkoury, a very important Lebanese photographer based in Beirut and Paris; as well as Youssef Nabil and Slavs and Tatars. So, in the new space we just continued with our programming. Now Dubai is a very different place: there are independent cinemas, there are many more galleries, there are foundations, there are a few institutions. But we still stayed focussed on our ethos, which is to still do artist talks when an artist is in town, host events, have opportunities for people to meet the artist, but also for collectors to come together.

In 2008, we realised that being in Dubai was not enough, because the market was growing, but it was not big enough. We also wanted our artists to be known outside of the Middle East. So, we realised that art fairs would be the way to go forward. We started to apply to fairs, and our strategy was that we would only do the best or the top fairs because, if we were going to do it, we might as well go big or go home. We kept applying although we always got rejected, because a lot of people didn't understand what we were doing, and didn't really know about Arab or Middle Eastern art. In the Middle East, people were coming around, but in the Western world, people were still not sure what to think of it.

So, when we got into Frieze London, it was 2008 and it was a real moment. We went with Farhad Moshiri, an Iranian artist, and we had four paintings. We had no idea what was going to happen. We didn't know if people were going

to understand or not, but Farhad is our most known artist, so we went with him and it was very successful.

We've continued to do fairs. We do Frieze London/ New York, Art Basel Hong Kong and Basel in Basel when we get in. Last year we did get in, and we took Farah Al Qasimi, a young Emirati artist that we work with.

We also have a shop at the gallery, which we call The Library. But it's a shop. You can come in and buy print series, limited edition prints, books, magazines. We publish books on our artists too. We also work with furniture designers and other designers also from the Middle East. We're trying to not just do visual arts, but also show what else there is in the region. So, I can get into that later.

**“90 PER CENT OF OUR COLLECTORS WERE
LOCALLY OR REGIONALLY BASED: SAUDI
ARABIA, IRAN, BAHRAIN, QATAR, LEBANON.
NOW, MOST OF OUR COLLECTORS ARE
ACTUALLY OUTSIDE OF THE REGION.”**

T.F. Super. Thank you so much. That was really interesting. You were saying that you felt the UAE was not big enough and you felt there was a need to do art fairs. Since we're sitting here also in a conference that is looking a little bit at the market behind all the Middle Eastern region, can you perhaps tell the audience a little bit about where your collectors are from, where they are based?

S.R. When we first started, obviously, all of our collectors were in the region, because we were only in the region. We didn't do fairs. We didn't do that much social media. It was before Instagram; we had Facebook. So, we found that Iranian collectors would buy Iranian art; Arab collectors would buy Arab art. We also then had collectors that were in the diaspora. So, they were, again, Arab Middle Eastern collectors who mostly lived in Europe. I would say at that point about 90 per cent of our collectors were locally or regionally based: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon. When we started to do the fairs and we started to go out some more, we had more collectors from Europe mostly and later America.

And now it's quite the opposite. Now, most of our collectors are actually outside of the region, which is an interesting moment as well. Not to say that

there are no collectors in the area, there are; but some of it also depends on the artists. Some of our more established artists are being shown outside of the region, and therefore, they have collectors outside the region, which is what we also wanted; not for them just to sell outside, but also to have platforms to show.

T.F. You have quite an interesting roster of artists. We know a lot of them personally, and we've worked with you and with many of your artists, actually. What I find quite interesting is that some artists that you represent, like Raja Khalid, for example, actually had a presence internationally. They're mostly based in Paris, as you said; they have an international gallery in France, for example. And then in a sense, you reconnected them to the region, because you became their representative in Dubai, in the region. And so, can you maybe tell us a little bit about whether a Middle Eastern artist has to be based internationally to be successful? Can they be based in the region? Can they be based in Dubai? Or how do you see this?

S.R. I think it's important. Interestingly, when we first opened, there was a little bit of a backlash from our own community. People thought we were pigeonholing artists by geography by having a Middle Eastern art gallery. I just thought we were just responding to a particular moment in time. Our programme is expanding as we speak. But at that moment, that was necessary. And you're right, a lot of the artists were not based there. For example, Youssef Nabil, an Egyptian artist, was based between Paris and New York. There were people that knew his work and were buying his work, but he didn't have anyone in the Middle East representing him because there was no one. So, you're right. Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige were finally able to come back home, or closer to home. In Beirut, there was and there still is Sfeir Semler gallery, but she also opened about the same time we opened, and she was originally and still is in Germany. So, there was this interesting moment where artists felt like they were going back.

And it wasn't just the audiences in the West that weren't looking at their work. It was also the audiences back home. I felt that we didn't even know who our artists were, so how could we possibly know what went wrong? There was this moment with the modernists in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and then there was nothing. But then there were artists because people had gone to art schools and had left because of whatever revolutions or wars, or had left to study abroad and never gone back. They were kind of lost in the West and not known in the East, so I think we responded to really that.

T.F. I think that's a great transition actually to our next panellist. I think there's nothing wrong with having a focus. I find this word "pigeonholing" a bit silly sometimes. I think you need to have a clear profile as a gallery also. And even when you say you have Middle Eastern artists, whatever that means; Abbas Akhavan is Canadian; Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige are French. At the end of the day, it depends on what you mean. So it's really quite interesting when it comes to that, because I think when you talk about an artist and you lump them by ethnicity or something like that, it does not at all actually explain their cultural background or origin. They might live somewhere else or be second or third generation; they might have been born in France, for instance.

S.R. Exactly, I was a little bit disappointed by that because I just thought I'm Iranian, I was born in America, I grew up in Dubai.

"IT WASN'T JUST THE AUDIENCES IN THE WEST THAT WEREN'T LOOKING AT THEIR WORK. IT WAS ALSO THE AUDIENCES BACK HOME."

T.F. And you don't speak Arabic.

S.R. I understand Arabic. I should speak Arabic, but I speak better French. But the thing is it doesn't matter. I can remember being look down on at Home Works, which is a great intellectual forum that takes place in Beirut, similar to Talking Galleries. That was the early days and I just didn't get it. Meanwhile, those same artists wanted representation in the west, and this was a way that they were able to do it. So, it was an interesting one. But yeah, I agree with you. I think they just want to be known as artists, not Arab artists or Iranian artists. And I agree with that: they are just artists. And we weren't saying you should like this because this is an Iranian artist, but it just happened to be that we were in the Middle East.

T.F. And we don't even need to go into the complexities of the diversity of the cities and the cultures and whatever. I was also there in 2007 when the Gulf Fair opened up. I was running a museum in New York at the time, and we wanted to actually build a bridge. I can remember this sort of sense of gold rush and trying to find partners and building up programmes.

S.R. I think that's where we met.

T.F. Yeah, that's where we met, actually. Absolutely. And I think the problem with that was that everybody suddenly realised that there is art in the Middle East. The story was very seductive: you have the desert and the fantasy of the camels, and then there's art, and it sort of doesn't go together. How do we go about it? So, they got an enormous amount of international press coverage. I think there was an incredible number of international collectors that were curious about that new kid on the block, in a sense.

But I think it also overshadowed a little bit the fact that there has been art all over, and that goes for the UAE in particular. The pavilion we did in Venice this year was an artist, mostly a poet, who had been around for a long, long time. There's been a cultural production for a very long time, even before there was an art fair that perhaps took the limelight and put the Middle East on the global art tourism map. But other than that, there have been artists in production all along, and not just in Dubai. Dubai is, if anything, the latecomer compared to other cities. Mai, your passion is modern art and you are from Egypt, and I think Cairo was a hotspot.

"SOME PEOPLE FORGET THAT IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY, A LOT OF MIDDLE EASTERN ARTISTS WERE ACTUALLY ALSO PRODUCING ART."

M.E. I think everyone, like you say, tends to forget that the Middle East has been producing art forever.

T.F. Like anywhere else in the world, really.

M.E. Yeah. If we talk about specifically art and architecture, the Middle East has been producing art for over two millennia. But some people forget that in the 19th and early 20th century, a lot of Middle Eastern artists were actually also producing art. And actually, that's sort of our focus in the Modern and Contemporary Arab and Iranian sales at Sotheby's. We focus a lot on these forgotten modernists and these lost modernists. We started our auctions in 2007 in London. We sort of had a lapse and we relaunched again in London in 2016. London has been serving as the key platform for us in terms of sales, simply because London is London. It's one of the biggest art cities in the world, but it's also a very neutral city. You can't compete. You don't have this rivalry, friendly rivalry, between other countries. So, it's a great position to be in and we host two auctions a year: one in October and one in April.

Our focus, again, is definitely on modernist art. I remember there was a discussion this morning about not including works painted in the last ten years. We usually aim to never include something that's super contemporary because there are, as we said, a lot of forgotten modernists, for example, Fahrelnissa Zeid who is a Turkish artist. But she's not only Turkish: she was born in Turkey, married to an Iraqi royal and then lived in exile in Jordan. So, you could consider, in fact, that she belongs to all three countries. And we were very lucky to include with a wonderful piece by Fahrelnissa Zeid called *Towards the sky*, which was actually in an American corporate collection in the Midwest. It was sort of lost and forgotten there, and one of the things that we love to do in a sale is to find these lost treasures and to bring them back home. This sold for a record of \$1.3 million. But actually, unlike a lot of the modernists that we end up selling, this found a western collector who is very keen on it and ended up getting it. So sometimes you get these like lovely surprises and such.



So, 77 per cent of the value of the lots that we're trying to sell is in the modern art. I know our numbers in the general contemporary stream don't seem that large, but what we don't have is a lot of million-dollar artists. We have a lot of sweet-spot artists, which are in the \$100,000-\$200,000 range with the capacity to grow if they're given a more institutional focus and more of a push from the museum community. I think that's one of the gaps that we're seeing

that is starting to be filled right now in the UAE, its art market and ecosystem, through the museums that are being built, whether it be Louvre Abu Dhabi or the Guggenheim, which are so necessary to highlight these forgotten modernists.

**“A LOT OF THESE MODERNIST
ARTWORKS END UP BEING IN EUROPE
BECAUSE THEY WERE BOUGHT EARLY ON
BY WESTERN COLLECTORS.”**

For example, Mahmoud Sabri was also an Iraqi modernist who ended up living in exile in Prague and was educated in Moscow. One of his works, which was in London, not the Middle East, we sold for \$1.1 million, close to \$1.2 million, which was a record for the artist. And it's always a delight to find these gems. A lot of these modernist artworks are actually not in the Middle East. Many end up in Europe because they were bought early on by western collectors who saw these works and really liked them while they were living in the Middle East and then brought them back to Germany, London or Paris. We end up finding them and then consigning them, and they manage to find a way to go back home to the Middle East, which is also a wonderful story. So, 60 to 65 per cent is usually the modernists, which are from Iran, Egypt and Iraq, the old and the historic collecting and art producing countries, because Dubai, as Sunny said, was very late on to the scene.

**Sotheby's
Middle East Sales**

Fall – Spring Seasons in London

Sale Date	October 2019	April 2019
Lot Count	83 Lots	85 Lots
Low Estimate	\$2,849,322	\$2,681,581
High Estimate	\$3,923,444	\$3,772,688
Aggregate Sales	\$3,250,566	\$4,473,615

Our April 2019 auction was led by Iraqi Modernist Mahmoud Sabri's rare, monumental masterpiece *The Death of a Child* (1963) sold for double its pre-sale estimate at \$1,152,687.

T.F. It's a very small city historically.

S.R. But it's very, very young. It's still not a production centre.

M.E. Definitely. And this is just some of the statistics. This is the buy heat distribution. We're definitely looking at, again, Egypt, Iraq and Iran as the main art-producing countries early on. We talk about promoting the forgotten modernists, as with your show at the Centre Pompidou about the Egyptian surrealists, which really translates for the artist and auction market. So, once they are in a museum show in the west, it's a bigger stamp of approval and you'll see their prices increase two-fold or three-fold. We've also seen that happen with Egyptian modernist Inji Aflatoun, who was included at the Venice Biennale when it was curated by Okwui Enwezor. After that, you had a huge collecting base, which was non-Arab, because there's this recognition and there's this affinity that you can also recognise.

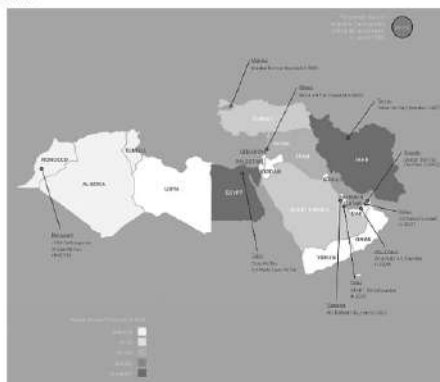
Why Modern Art?

The MENA auction market remains heavily focused on modern Iranian, Iraqi and Egyptian artists accounted for 77% of total sales

Artist Distribution Heatmap by sold lots 2018

(map shows the full auction market share in 2018 for Sotheby's, Christie's, Bonhams and Tehran Auction sales of modern and contemporary Middle Eastern and North African art).

Source: <https://arttactic.com/products/mena-2018/>



S.R. Validation.

M.E. Exactly. It is validation as much as it's something you struggle with. You need western validation; it's very difficult for me to come and bring a catalogue and tell you to buy Inji Aflatoun because she's the most important feminist artist in the Middle East, the only one that spent time in jail, etc. If you can't connect with her, if you haven't seen her work, if she hasn't been to Venice, why would you buy her work? So that is also our role.

T.F. I think it's not just only the validation. I think that's certainly very important, and a lot of collectors seem to be gravitating more and more towards these kinds of checkmarks or token labels as reassurance. But you actually have a very hard time trying to see a lot of these modernist artists. If I wanted to go and see a piece by Inji Aflatoun or Fouad Kamel, for example, where would I go? Which museum could I go to? In the Middle East there is also a lack of institutions, but internationally, they are not collected in other museums. From the surrealism show, what is super exciting...

“INTERNATIONALLY, MODERNIST MIDDLE EASTERN ARTISTS ARE NOT COLLECTED IN MUSEUMS.”

M.E. You got the K20.

T.F. Yeah, the Kunstsammlung Düsseldorf I think bought three star pieces from the show. They bought a wonderful piece by Greek Egyptian master Antoine Malliarakis, aka Mayo, as well as a Fouad Kamel and a third piece by Kamal Al Tilmisani. So, I think this is a really rare coincidence. Before the show, nobody knew that there was a very strong manifestation of surrealism in Egypt; now these three pieces are actually hanging in the Kunstsammlung in Düsseldorf, amongst all the other great surrealist artists in their collection, and not really for ethnic focus, but simply to complete the story of surrealism. The encyclopaedia of surrealism has asked us to contribute now too, and I think that is also necessary. You actually complete the story in the sense that you're able to see them. So, beyond validation, I think it's also an issue of access in many cases.

M.E. It's definitely that. I was just in New York in July and I was at the Metropolitan, and they had just bought a work by Abdel Hadi Al Gazzar, who was probably one of the most important Egyptian modernists from the 1950s. Claire Davies, who's the current curator for the Middle East at the Met, hung it right there amongst the European modern masters. And it's not communicated or anything. It is just simply part of Middle Eastern art history that is forgotten, and we have to work hard at showcasing it.

I think auction, as much as people dislike it, really does help, because we have Sotheby's as a platform. We have a mega-act. We have access to everyone. And through our website, through our exhibition space in London, everyone's able to access and see those artworks. It becomes more accessible than, for

example, going to Cairo, Tehran or Beirut. We're in London, we're showing these artists, our catalogues are going to everyone and it's on the website. So, it does really offer great marketing for these artists and a great platform.

But besides that, something that we've done and talked about as a sale is trying as much as possible to create niche sections where we're trying to highlight these even more forgotten people, like the Armenian artists in diaspora. So, the Middle East had a huge Armenian diaspora population in Egypt, in Lebanon, in Iran as well. We wanted to show the Armenian artists that were living and producing there, as a section with an essay by an academic, and also to have a focus part of our exhibition. This actually doesn't usually end up being very fruitful in terms of sales, but it's actually something we, as a group in the Middle Eastern team, really believe in, since we don't have these museums that will be able to showcase these amazing gems or tell these stories which are so necessary in terms of Arab and Iranian modernity.

**“[IN SOTHEBY’S] WE’RE TRYING TO
CREATE NICHE SECTIONS TO HIGHLIGHT
THESE EVEN MORE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE,
LIKE THE ARMENIAN ARTISTS IN
DIASPORA.”**

T.F. It doesn't come easy. I think the show on surrealism took us six years to put together. You helped us get the pieces, because you know many of the people that own some of the pieces or were connected with the group. You simply had the trust or they were family friends for many, many years. So, there is a different kind of way of accessing the works. I think the duty of museums internationally is not so much to include pieces from all over the world simply because we have to globalise. But what I find really fascinating about the K20 acquisition, for example, is that this group of artists was very active.

M.E. And international.

T.F. That's what I'm saying, they're international. But in this case particular, their manifesto in 1938 actually took a stance against the fascists in Germany and against the defamation of artists as degenerate. They took a very clear stance against fascism and were made up of refugees that were actually able to work freely in Cairo at a time when none of these works could have been shown in Europe. I think the amazing thing when you really dig a little bit into

these connections is that they are interconnected; the story of what happened to these artists in Cairo at that time is very strongly connected to what was happening to artists in Germany at that same time. They were in dialogue and in contact with each other or with those that were in exile. I think this is where it becomes really, really interesting. We have to talk about the gaps in the stories that appear when we go a little bit back from the contemporary. They can make us see the connections and stop us from really ending up talking about a Middle Eastern artist as a Middle Eastern artist, because we see that there is a long history of connections and stories that need to be told.

**“THERE IS A LONG HISTORY OF
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EUROPEAN
AND MIDDLE EASTERN MODERNISTS
THAT NEED TO BE TOLD.”**

M.E. And the question that is always asked is, if it's a Middle Eastern artist, do they shy away from nudity?

T.F. Clearly not.

M.E. No, obviously, not. It's voluptuous and very interesting. But we seem to forget that the Middle East is not what you see on CNN. We seem to forget that the Middle East isn't necessarily what is the by-product of 1979 as a political situation, whether it be the Islamic Republic of Iran or the siege of Mecca, which was really the turning point in the Middle East and changed the image of the Middle East; pre-1979 Middle East was quite liberal, quite different and quite secular, so to say. The art being produced pre-1979 is completely different than the art being produced post-1980. And that's also a very interesting thing to see and to analyse.

Quite sadly, there's actually no course on Middle Eastern art history, nor is there a textbook on Middle Eastern art history. The first Middle Eastern art programme started in 1987. So, it's a very rich and in-depth artistic history—sorry for lack of a better word—but which we haven't been looking at. And right now, all the focus is on contemporary artists versus the modernists.

S.R. What happened was that when contemporary art started to pick up, there was a definite interest in who the other artists who came before were.

T.F. Exactly.

M.E. Absolutely.

S.R. Actually, I think they both help each other.

M.E. It went in tandem. Those are just some examples of the artists that we've sold, and we've sold very well. I've just taken an Iranian modern master, an Iraqi modern master and an Egyptian modern master. And this is *The Minotaur scares the Good People* by Bahman Mohasses, which is from 1966, pre-1979, pre-everything. He also ended up living in exile in Italy.

“WE SEEM TO FORGET THAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS NOT WHAT YOU SEE ON CNN.”

So, in all honesty, it's not the easiest of markets for sure. It does have, like any market, peaks and down points, but it's definitely worth discovering these gems to either them bring them back home to an Iranian collector in Dubai or an Iranian collector in L.A. from collectors that were in Europe, or have them in a museum like the Met, which bought that Al Gazzar at auction. It's always interesting to see these things.

T.F. Fantastic. Thank you so much. I think we can maybe now move on to Vilma. What would be great is to build a little bit on what Sunny was saying earlier on. She was there before Alserkal even existed, and before this creative hub happened, before there was Art Dubai. But I think it is really also very important to talk about the role of institutions in this whole market, if you want to call it that. It would be great if you could tell us a little bit about that role. You're a bit of a hybrid commercial/non-commercial institution. If you can tell us a little bit about that model and the impact that you see it's having on society and perhaps also on the market in Dubai.



V.J. Good evening, everyone. So initially I had a different kind of slide to start with, but yesterday I was taking a walk and I saw this. I thought, what if I asked you what kind of image comes to you when you think of Dubai? Perhaps you would all have different kind of perceptions as to what that city is. And I guess I would like to invite you on a more in-depth journey and perhaps to try to understand that each city has those complexities and social structures that we sometimes tend to shy away from because of this reductive regionalism or ideas about what a particular place is meant to be like. I think my colleagues here touched upon some of those aspects.

When Alserkal Avenue began, the West didn't even know what to do with us. We didn't tick any of the traditional boxes. We are a neighbourhood. We are a curated community that represents the Middle Eastern art market, but also the creative economy for the city. We are content producers and we give back through Alserkal Arts Foundation.

“WHEN ALSERKAL AVENUE BEGAN, THE WEST DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH US. WE DIDN'T TICK ANY OF THE TRADITIONAL BOXES.”

So, what does that make us? We always thought it was important to not view ourselves as a physical space, although predominantly we house ninety galleries, but as the community of thought leaders, literature, film and theatre; all these mediums where they were able to challenge the conventional by being home-grown businesses and organisations. That is really important to note, because we sometimes think that in Dubai everything is imported. As a content producer, we stage exhibitions. We work with partners like Hayward Gallery in London, or the Victoria and Albert Museum. But we also work with a tiny arts foundation from Dhaka in Bangladesh, and the Atassi Foundation in Syria. I still remember when we inaugurated the very first project by Rem Koolhaas's OMA in the UAE in what became our exhibition space. There were no museums at the time and the Louvre was just about to open. A journalist asked me why we didn't open with an international show. Yet we inaugurated the space with a show called *Syria into the Light*, which was in collaboration with Atassi Foundation. What makes Syria not international?

It is really important to challenge those perceptions through our programmes, but also through experiences. In yesterday's panel, Joe and colleagues kept referring to how you connect with your local audiences, how you grow them

and the kind of experiences that you stage. As a content producer, as the co-producer, it's important that we engage our audiences locally, internationally and virtually through music or alternative contemporary dance. I remember when we started, some of those programmes were quite rigorous and complex and seven people would show up, but that didn't discourage us. It's so important that as institutions, we actually continue to stage this kind of programming because you educate your audiences organically, and you grow that interest and curiosity. Today we do have an arthouse cinema that is now our business although seven years ago there were only seven people in the audience. And it's the same with contemporary dance performances.



Alserkal Avenue

The same would be true of our exhibitions programme. Sunny already also touched upon the importance of educating your own marketplace, and I think a lot of that burden fell on commercial galleries. To be a business while you're developing an entire infrastructure in parallel is quite challenging, especially for a young gallery model. Yet audience numbers have really grown. We started with a few thousand, and we have now more than 600,000 visitors annually that engage with multiple diasporas.

Dubai houses 200 nationalities. So, when someone was referring to diversity, it's our bread and butter. How do we connect these diasporas? How do we serve many audiences? Because that's how we think about our programmes. And certainly, our population is young. We don't have this conversation about "Okay, boomer", because our median age is 33. It's only Millennials and Generation Z. And so, for us, we don't have much unlearning to do. We have to think of a new model for our context right away.

And so, I think certainly one of the functions that we also had to reimagine, as a district or a community which is the content producer, is how we help build this commercial infrastructure. It's a collective effort. We are a conduit, a liaison between public and private sector as we work closely with the government, changing the legislation that could be adapted to facilitate those businesses in the arts and creative economies. But we also had to think of ways such as creating collective programmes and collective trips, and almost taking on the role of an art fair in our own context, or commissioning artists from our galleries and inviting them to do artist takeovers to re-imagine our public realm.

**“DUBAI HOUSES 200 NATIONALITIES.
HOW DO WE SERVE MANY AUDIENCES?
THAT'S HOW WE THINK ABOUT OUR
PROGRAMMES.”**

We've certainly done that. Some of us call it an art family. There were earlier visitors, such as Till or Georgina Adam, who were curious from early stages as to what was happening there. There was, I think, a change in the way the West views the Middle East. We are members of acquisition committees for the Middle East on Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, British Museum, etc. None of these acquisition committees for the Middle East or South Asia existed seven years ago. Some are maybe just ten. And so, you'd think the fact that these institutions decided it was actually worth archiving and collecting what was happening in this part of the world is important. I think there was a shift in thinking. And as Alserkal Arts Foundation, what's important for us is that we are not a collecting foundation. We always worked with artists that are working in difficult conceptual mediums that are not maybe very commercial and invite them to produce ephemeral work within the publicly owned area of Alserkal, the city or internationally. Essentially, I think that we should challenge the conventional, inviting multidisciplinary practitioners who transcend those borders through research, residency programmes, research grants and artistic production.

It's also important that we are claiming this new position in the context of scholarship. We are going beyond post-colonial and decolonial studies. I think there is this new generation of thinkers that are really reimagining what our region is or what we have to say. And so, we're not really seeking that validation or correctness. The Eurocentric view of the Middle East as a waiting room for history, which Dipesh Chakrabarty was writing about it in the 1990s, is being

rejected by a new generation of thinkers, who are claiming a completely new role. And so, I think us supporting those thinkers and producing new forms of knowledge is really the key mission of our foundation.

As a close, it's important that we think of Dubai as a conduit, as a space, as a city which allows for diverse voices to come together. I remember when we hosted ACAW (Asian Contemporary Art Week). It was founded by Leeza Ahmady and had been taking place in New York for more than five years. Last year, for the first time, it took place in Dubai. As she said in her opening remarks, "Finally, Asia is connecting back to itself." It is one of the aspects that Sunny mentioned and Dubai allows for that. A lot of these artists couldn't get a visa to go to New York. Dubai is that platform that depoliticises some of those aspects through its infrastructure.

**"WE ARE MEMBERS OF ACQUISITION
COMMITTEES FOR THE MIDDLE EAST
ON TATE MODERN, CENTRE POMPIDOU,
BRITISH MUSEUM, NONE OF WHICH
EXISTED SEVEN YEARS AGO."**

And so, I think that was important for us as a foundation, as a space. We are this hybrid model. We are looking at economic, social and environmental aspects. I think they benefit each other. They have their own challenges and we had a lot to learn. We went through this journey of milestones but I think we also just were forced to innovate. And I remember when we tried to actually commission a competitive landscape study, the consultants said, "we can't find anyone that's exactly like you guys." But we're not alone; there's Dhaka Art Summit, for example. These kinds of initiatives are, I think, challenging what constitutes as global. I mean, what does global even mean? How are we thinking about this definition? Because perhaps it requires that we allow those diverse voices and models that are emerging from other parts of the world to be treated equally. I think that's the kind of conversation we should have. Even Talking Galleries is initiating this by having these new platforms as part of their programme.

T.F. Thank you, Vilma. I wanted to build on that a little bit. For those of you have not been in Dubai, I think one of the most striking things when you get in from the airport is actually that it's the only city in the world where you really can't feel like a foreigner, because everyone is a foreigner: 90 per cent of the

population is not from the UAE. People come from literally all around the world with all kinds of cultural and religious backgrounds.

It's this weird place that was constructed from scratch. And although no city is perfect and it is clearly no utopia, I think therein lies a strength for Dubai. It allows for some kind of creative experimentation. What more often grabs the headlines, in my opinion, having been there for such a long time, is perhaps the Louvre Abu Dhabi, which is an imported model and has its own values, its own position. But I can tell you that there are plenty more institutions like Alserkal that are really not following a model, but that are really, truly home-grown somehow and trying to figure something out. How can we actually engage with our community? I think, Sunny, you were doing this very early on, and there is this creative phenomenon that is taking place, and I think it also goes very much in line with what you were saying against this binarism.

**"THERE ARE PLENTY MORE
INSTITUTIONS LIKE ALSERKAL THAT
ARE REALLY NOT FOLLOWING A MODEL,
BUT THAT ARE REALLY, TRULY HOME-
GROWN."**

Is a city where you have ex-patriates from all over the world living and working, whether they are from the Philippines, the Baltics like Vilma, the States or anywhere else, still really a Middle Eastern city per se, or is it a global city? I think many of us actually carry that in us. I spend a lot of time in the Middle East. I'm not Middle Eastern, but I'm extremely familiar with the region. So, am I still western in that binary definition? I think art history and everything that has been done has to probably be retaught a little bit and rethought of in those terms. So, I think it goes back a little bit to my opening remark on why I think the panel has a very problematic title, the Middle Eastern art market. I hope that we gave you a little bit of a deconstruction of that as we were talking here. And with that remark, I would now like to open up to questions for our panellists and hear back from you.

QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: Thank you very much for this really, really interesting panel and for shifting us a bit from the western-centred discourses we have had. I just want to ask what your efforts were when you were rejected by fairs and Middle Eastern art was still unknown and was a bit of a taboo.

And then going back to the Middle East not being what you see on CNN, it's very true. I come from Serbia and actually I still get questions about whether it's safe to travel to Belgrade—and the war was in 1993. I went to Beirut for New Year's and half of my western friends thought I'm completely crazy. When the coup d'état happened in Istanbul, my parents were actually living there and I was going there. People were cancelling their trips and stuff. But when the terrorist attacks happened in Paris, Brussels and London in 2015, nobody was cancelling trips to those cities. There is a bit of a problem in how the West still sees the East and I would just like to know how you overcame these prejudices.

**“THERE WAS A CERTAIN EXPECTATION
AS TO HOW CONTEMPORARY ART
COMING OUT FROM THE MIDDLE EAST
SHOULD LOOK OR WHAT MESSAGE IT
SHOULD HAVE.”**

M.E. When I say the Middle East is not what you see on CNN, it's also the Middle East is not a country. The Middle East is a lot of countries. So, for example, when I come and talk about the Moroccan modernist movement, which was in the 1960s, it's completely different to the Egyptian modernist movement, to the Iraqi modernist movement, to the Iranian modernist movement. And when someone comes up to you and asks you to tell them a bit about Middle Eastern art, it's like me going up to you and asking you to please tell me about European art. What is European art? It's a very, very rich and diverse region and each country had their own path and trajectory for growth. So, Morocco in the 1960s is a lot more minimal. Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s has a lot of academic and romantic art. Iraq has a lot of constructivist art. Everything is very, very different. So, everyone has their own path and everyone has their own trajectory for growth. And if we constantly attempt to box the Middle East as one area and one region, it's really, really counterproductive, I find.

S.R. I agree. And to answer your question, it was challenging because nobody thought there was any contemporary art coming out from the Middle East, that there were no Arab or Iranian artists of a certain generation. On the one hand, there was a certain expectation as to how it should look or what message it should have.

M.E. That it should have a bullet.

T.F. Or calligraphy.

**“2001 SERVED AS A REALLY IMPORTANT
MOMENT, BECAUSE SUDDENLY
EVERYONE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT
WAS GOING ON IN THE MIDDLE EAST.”**

S.R. Yeah. And I consciously avoided that unless I thought that the artist was doing something really interesting within that. There is an artist I work with who is a master calligrapher, but she was doing something really interesting with calligraphy, so it's not that I was totally rejecting it. But there was an expectation. The Middle East has always been viewed through this Orientalist lens, and we had to break through a lot of that. I wouldn't say it was taboo to show Middle Eastern art, it was maybe just misunderstood. And we can't deny that the art world is a very white male-dominated world, although it is changing. And interestingly, in the Middle East-

T.F. It is the complete opposite, actually.

S.R. Yes, there's a lot of women in the art world that like myself. And people always ask me, “Are there female artists?” Yes, so many! And again, we weren't setting out to only work with Middle Eastern female artists, but it wasn't taboo. I think people just didn't understand. However, I actually think that 2001 served as a really important moment, because suddenly everyone wanted to know what was going on in the Middle East. There was a huge interest in the area and its peoples, and artists were able to tell that story. I don't know if I answered your question.

Q1: What created that interest?

T.F. Well, I really think that the advent of Art Dubai on the scene actually had an enormous impact on that, for better or worse. All of a sudden, there was a global platform.

S.R. I think it was 2001 that created the interest. People starting asking, “Who are these people and what are they doing?”

T.F. Well, I think the curiosity and animosity has probably been there for centuries, since we went over with the crusaders. There’s a long history of unpleasant encounters.

S.R. There is a fascination with the things that you don’t know.

T.F. But I think Art Dubai played a major role in putting it on the map.

M.E. I agree with Sunny; I think it’s pre-Art Dubai.

T.F. I’m talking about the art market.

M.E. But I think it’s not only the art, I think that this fascination with the Middle East, whether it be literature, whether it be film or art, it was always post-2001. It was like, who are these people and what are they like? Are they like us? Or are they not like us?

T.F. I’m not sure I totally agree with that. I think it also depends on where you are and which city. New York is not the same as where I grew up in Germany. And I can tell you that there was a lot of knowledge of Iranian or Persian, at the time, history and filmmaking and everything throughout. The whole war and the revolution had an enormous impact on business links with Germany. It was very, very prominent. Also, the first empress had German origins, and so people followed the royal family. There are lots of connections so I’m not sure it is entirely true.

You can’t make such assertions about the West either. To answer your question on whether the West sees it like this or that, I think we all live in very diverse societies. I think even in Spain, you cannot say what is the Spanish art viewer. We are in Catalonia now and we follow the news. We are arts people. We like the arts. That means we cannot probably have a normal conversation with 95 per cent of the population in our own societies because they don’t get us, and we don’t get them.

I’m being a bit sarcastic, but there are so many divisions between rich and poor, city and country. Barcelona is not Madrid and not Sevilla. All the cities are so diverse that I think the individual viewpoints of what your individual reference points are really have an enormous impact also on where you live and what the connection is with this Middle East. So, while I think you can’t lump the Middle East together, I’m also always very, very, very strongly advocating against lumping the West together. For example, you’re from Serbia. Is that west? Many people in the Middle East will probably think of you as western, but in a European context, we would think of you as eastern somehow. Is Russia the West? Is Brazil the West? Are we talking about something Christian? Is South Africa the West? Is Australia? What exactly do we mean when we talk about the West? This is also a very silly term in my mind.

Q1: I have a very interesting anecdote from a gallerist from Estonia that told me how they are perceived changes according to where they go. So, when they go to New York, they are seen as eastern because Estonia was in the Soviet bloc, even though they’re trying very hard to get rid of that identity. When they go to Cosmocoscow fair, they’re seen as the West because they’re part of the EU now, and in Europe, they’re just East.

V.J. If I may just kind of draw us back to the UAE, I think you mentioned Art Dubai a lot, but we have to mention our colleagues that work across different Emirates, like Sharjah and what Hoor Al Qasimi has done with the biennial that began in the 1990s. There was a lot of private effort regionally to entice that curiosity as to what is happening in the Middle East. But I would like to detach from that aspect of the Middle East. I think Dubai as a city can act as a conduit for cross-regional conversation. Is it south to south? Is it north to south? This is because of where it is geographically located but also in terms of the kind of content that we produce, the kind of stories that artists are telling and the efforts that all stakeholders are initiating. These dialogues are no longer geographically limited and I think it’s really about that mobility. Distance is imagined today. The only distance that we have is with our public, and that’s probably the only thing that we need to be revisiting.

Q2: Thank you very much for your talk. I wanted to ask you two questions about the near future. One is about your cooperation this year with the universal Expo. Are you working together to promote your initiatives in galleries in the Alserkal? And on the other hand, what is your strategy to have more international co-operations? I am thinking in particular of Spain, Barcelona, Madrid or whatever, because also Spain is the country in Europe which has the

historic cultural link with these lovely countries, and I think your initiative is quite unknown in this country.

S.R. I just started to work with an artist who's based here in Barcelona who is actually here, Anuar Khalifi. So, I think that's something that's somehow bringing me here. So, I feel that's what I can tell you right now. On the other hand, we're trying to do something with the Expo, but it's a government project, a very different organisation.

T.F. And Alserkal as an institution, Vilma?

V.J. Well, I think again, there are the kind of urban interventions within the city. It's our duty as a conduit that liaises between public and private sector; it's important to work with different initiatives. I think there are two aspects to working with Expo. We are part of their youth programme and we identified ways to participate allowing our creative economy representatives and business in Alserkal Avenue to actually produce different products and be part of it and, as an institution, to find our way through programme as we are not so attached to that physicality. Expos produce so much content that it can be overwhelming. I think our way was to create more of a pause and a way to rethink during that time. And so, we will be very active in Alserkal and at the Expo, creating those connections and actually exploring mobility between the two and how programming can occur to make change.

I think it's important to not hold us synonymous with both environments but look at us as a social structure that can initiate those conversations through the artistic medium and beyond. We are very collaborative as an institution, and we worked with many partners across the world to facilitate those connections and conversations: we have been for the past six years at Venice biennial, we have created an experimental programme that usually produces content throughout a particular initiative. So, we are always open to any ideas, any suggestions, any interest.

Q3: So, my question is to everyone on the panel. You've spoken about the paucity of traditional art institutions in the Middle East, but you all have very strong connections, whether to Western museums, auction house franchises, art fairs or businesses. How does the lack of traditional local institutions affect the market in the Middle East? I run an art gallery in Ukraine and it's part of the post-Soviet bloc, where there are very strong traditional institutions, and often the private sector is in conflict with those post-Soviet museums and

academies. When the PinchukArtCentre opened in 2008—it's the privately funded contemporary gallery that brought Damien Hirst, Ai Weiwei and Anish Kapoor to Ukraine—there was a lot of resistance from the museum community as well as the gallery community to this institution existing. So, is perhaps the lack of traditional institutions in the Middle East allowing you to kind of forge your own path? And can you comment on Leonardo's *Salvator Mundi*, please?

T.F. Funny second question.

S.R. Where is it?

T.F. About the Leonardo Da Vinci, I think we all can read the same international press, unless you guys have any inside scoop on the story, which I don't have.

S.R. I have a scoop but I am not going to share.

T.F. You can spill it in a minute maybe.

S.R. It's private.

T.F. You have it at home! I wanted to say something really important. I think we should perhaps clarify when I was saying that there is perhaps a lack of traditional institutions, this is also something that you need to differentiate city by city and country by country. In Lebanon, for example, you do have a much longer standing tradition of institutions, and you have organisations that have been around for a very long time, for instance, the American University of Beirut, which is one of the oldest universities in the entire region and has an art gallery. You have the Sursock Museum. You have also other initiatives like the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art in Cairo or the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. There are a lot of institutions. This is not true in the UAE, because I think that's traditionally a different, smaller population that is not really maybe thinking of archiving in the way that we are used to in many European places. The UAE is a very special place.

M.E. How old is the UAE?

S.R. The UAE is only 46.

T.F. As a country. I think there have been people living there for a long time, but there were very small populations.

S.R. Nomadic tribes mostly.

T.F. Yes. What I wanted to say is that in many cities, in many places, what would happen if there were a political change or political turmoil is that these institutions would become either politicised or neglected, or they would become part of something that artists actually end up criticising. So, in many cities, you have this situation that you're either with the government or, as most contemporary artists, actually completely against a certain establishment. It is a clear dichotomy. However, it doesn't happen in other cities and countries, and I think Cairo is a prime example. It is not always the case that they are really embracing the local art scene and archiving it. So, it's really a city-by-city approach. The story is a little bit more complex, but it is still true that there are many places you can't expect to go to an art museum and tick it off your list like in Barcelona. There are cities where you can and others where it's much more challenging.

M.E. On the topic of the Ukraine, I compare it to Alexandria, where I'm from. I co-support an art school for young emerging artists called MASS Alexandria, together with Wael Shawkly, who's one of the most established Egyptian artists. He's actually represented by Lisson Gallery. And the University of Fine Arts hates us both. They think what we're doing is completely disruptive because we're not really educating the students in what they think is proper Fine Arts education, and they're being exposed to something completely different. So, they forced their students not to apply to the programme, and if a student applies to the programme, they make sure to make him fail. You do see these hurdles; however, we end up probably having some of the most interesting young avantgarde Egyptian artists coming out of these projects, because they're also rebelling against the institutes.

And these institutes are governed by very strict old archaic systems and you just need to keep pushing the boundaries. I think one of the things that we are missing in Cairo is a Kunsthalle for contemporary art which is independent from the government. And I think once that opens, definitely the Ministry of Culture will be asking, why are you guys doing this and why are you competing with our museums?

T.F. But because they think it is contemporary, somehow.

M.E. Exactly. Because they have their own definition of what contemporary art is. And it's actually not at all in congruence with anything related to

contemporary art. So, I think that's what you have to always see. And again, I can talk about Cairo and Alexandria and we can also look at Morocco, which has a very-

T.F. A striving scene.

M.E. In Morocco, Marrakesh has a beautiful museum called MACAAL, which I think was spoken about last year.

T.F. Even Tunis.

M.E. Exactly. Every city in the Middle East has a different trajectory. And it's also in conversation with their own governments and their own societies.

V.J. And I think, if I may just add to this, in the context of Dubai, even when I think of Alserkal being around for ten years, at some point we were wondering whether we are becoming traditional because of the context. When we started, I think we had different gaps to fill. Now that other institutions have emerged and we don't have to fill those gaps any more.

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So, it requires us to undergo a cultural audit to rethink who we are, what is needed and where we want to grow in the future. I think with that, we started allowing for more experimental commissions and work, and allowing for that critique by artists and multidisciplinary practitioners and researchers that we would invite to come and engage with the city for a two-month residency programme three times a year. Going back to your first question as to how you can change those perceptions, I think you can't. Our attempt is creating those invitations and those conversations and inviting different minds, practitioners and artists to produce these new forms of knowledge through research, which is perhaps the way that we're thinking of pursuing that going forward.

Tim Schneider: Hi, guys. Sunny, you mentioned during your presentation that The Third Line started off representing artists in a western way. And then you

moved away from it. I was wondering if you could expand on what that means and why it happened.

S.R. Thanks, Tim. So, what I meant is the representation model that we initially started off with, on how you sign an artist and the things that you agree on. I took that from my experience in working in New York and galleries there. It was different because in the Middle East artists had not had representation. So, I guess what I was saying is that we actually were representing them. It's a long view on their career which initially came up against disagreement or lack of understanding, and it still sometimes does. However, some people actually really embraced it and loved its long-term nature. So that's what I meant by western model. I should've just an established gallery model.

“WE STARTED OFF WITH AN ESTABLISHED GALLERY MODEL. IN THE MIDDLE EAST ARTISTS HAD NOT HAD REPRESENTATION. WE WERE ACTUALLY REPRESENTING THEM.”

T.F. And having been there in the early days, I can also tell you that it really didn't feel like a western model when you went there. There were also these picture culture nights or something that, really, I think it's fair to say, was much more like a community centre. So, it's maybe the established model in terms of representing artists, buying and selling, or structuring the programme, perhaps, but, everything else felt really much more like a community art centre that was filling the gap. It was the go-to place for creatives at that time because there really wasn't much.

S.R. Yeah. To clarify, I think what I meant by a western model was that we offered representation of our artists rather than just a space where they do a show and then we forget about them and they move on. We were doing a lot more than that. But the space itself was definitely very dynamic. We tried to do as much as we could. We'd watch Iranian and Arab films. We'd have discussions in the book club, artist talks and that kind of programming that was also very educational. There were no institutions at that time and now the institutions are doing that. I mean, Alserkal is great. They're filling a lot of these gaps that we had to at the time.

T.F. Great. And I just want to thank our panellists. I want to like maybe add just one final thought on my end, my two cents. We all share this passion for art, and art really brings people together. We make the effort to try to find out something about artists, and what is very important in these times of global politics and the discourse that we live in is that we also make the effort to actually listen to different viewpoints and visit different cities. I think we all too often have opinions about people that we don't know, about places that we have not visited, about cultures that we don't know, about things that we simply don't want to see. I would urge everyone, if you haven't been to Dubai, come to the fair in March, check out the art scene, meet all the people. I think the people that you see here on the panel are actually very typical. This is what Dubai is; this is what Dubai really looks like. You should come and discover for yourselves.

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This book collects the key talks and panels that made up the programme of the 2020 edition of the Barcelona Symposium, the flagship event of this ever-evolving think tank for galleries. From 20th to 21st January 2020, the in-person two-day conference brought together leading experts and a diverse audience of art market professionals in a specialised context for exploring the peculiarities of “gallerism” at large.

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