

The Gallerist

Art buying advice

Once you've seen a lot of art you can see who is putting it on and who is genuine. A lot of people have concerns about contemporary art which are well founded as there is an abundance of art product instead of good art.

As a collector I'm more informed by my failures than by my successes. I am more proud of what I've bought in the last 10 years than in the previous 10 as I've become better at judging what's culturally relevant.

I like seeing qualities in artworks that I've not seen before so I'm an 'early adopter' of the culturally relevant. Often I forget the artist's name whose work I've bought because I liked the work, not the name.

Some artists don't become significant. Others are one hit wonders but are still worth owning. Some go on to bigger and better things so a purchase is serendipitous.

I've bought some artists throughout their career because I've had a long association with them. Lindy Lee is one.

My advice to aspiring art collectors is to look at lots of art. Don't be afraid. Refine your taste. See lots of exhibitions and seek advice from a reputable gallerist/adviser. Learn what makes a work great. To me, great work must have long standing cultural relevance.

Museum of Contemporary Art Foundation

These days, our major art galleries don't get enough funding to buy important artworks so as a MCA Foundation Board Director, I help with fund raising. Australians have this idea that the government will pay for everything but in this instance, the government ain't footing the bill! So the MCA board, which is chaired by investment banker and philanthropist Simon Mordant, is trying to encourage people who are successful in business or who have inherited wealth, to give money to the MCA to buy art works and not be shy about it.

Art Month

For most Australians, art is a scary thing. I would like Australians to engage with art as enthusiastically as we engage with sport.

Most Australians, if they see art at all, only see Summer blockbuster exhibitions at big art galleries. Art Month normalises the experience of seeing art and engaging with it because we encourage smaller galleries to put on special events.

My involvement with Art Month *Collector's Space* comes back to my belief that private art collectors have a duty to show their art publicly. Because art galleries have very little money to buy art, it is private collectors who buy works on global markets at the time the art is made rather than state galleries. *Collector's Space* is a special pop-up exhibition at 125A Kent Street, Sydney

where significant private collectors publicly display their collections.

By being a board member of Art Month I've been able to encourage other art collectors like me to lend their work to galleries and exhibitions like this one."

See a selection of Dick's private collection during March. Visit artmonthsydney.com.au

Dick will also be speaking at a *Collector's Space* talk on Wednesday, 13 March 2013 at 6 – 8 pm (free, bookings essential) with curator Natalia Bradshaw and art critic John McDonald. Free and open to everyone during March.

Matthias Arndt is a German gallerist with 25 years experience in the global art market. Now married to an Australian, he maintains his ARNDT gallery in Berlin, a viewing room in Melbourne and runs temporary pop-up shows in Sydney and elsewhere. He explained his role in the art collecting process to Private Word's **Anna Fenech**.

What is a gallerist?

We distinguish between gallerist and art dealer. The dealer just buys and sells, the gallerist is all in one: a dealer, artist's agent and manager, producer, editor, educator, manager and salesman. A gallerist can support artists' careers over a long period.

I've worked with European artists like Sophie Calle, Thomas Hirschhorn and Nedko Solakov for nearly 20 years.

What's your role in the art collecting process?

I start by identifying where the collector is in his or her collecting journey. This may include viewing their collection, discussing preferences and gauging how involved the collector wants to be. Then, I make a target list for future purchases.

Next, I source desired artwork. This includes tapping my international contact base of artists, collectors, fellow dealers and galleries, to find the right work. I am a frequent global traveller! I also educate clients by organising studio visits and trips to art fairs.

How do you know collector Dr Dick Quan?

I met Dick several years ago and immediately understood he was a keen art collector with precise ideas and taste. Collaborations like this are both exciting and challenging. My task is to find the right work at the right

price. In a very competitive market, it's often hard work to convince an artist or dealer to sell a work to a particular buyer.

One case was very special. We invited Dick to a dinner in honour of a major artist at the Venice Biennale. Shortly after, I found myself convincing the artist to make a commissioned sculpture for Dick. This led to works from the artist getting placed in other Australian private and public collections.

He has also bought works by Indonesian artist Eko Nugroho through me.

How do you choose artists whose work you hold for sale/exhibition?

I work permanently with a group of major artists who represent their countries in art biennials and appear in exhibitions at leading museums and top collections worldwide such as Sophie Calle, Gilbert & George, Jitish Kallat, Eko Nugroho, Erik Bulatov, and Nedko Solakov. I also identify and approach artists. I attend key world art fairs and shows, look at work, talk to dealers and go to studios. I've held about 270 exhibitions.

Do you specialise in any particular artists/styles/regions?

I hold/show art from all major markets but my current focus is Southeast-Asia, where countries have young creative scenes and great art, most at reasonable prices. Some artists such as Natee Utarit (Thailand), Eko Nugroho, Entang Wiharso (Indonesia) will have big careers.

Should collectors buy art they like or established names?

It depends on the buyer's aim. We build some collections similar to an investment vehicle: the portfolio includes emerging art from established markets; art from new markets and safe haven art. But you should start by buying what you love or feel attracted to. You can then seek advice on its commercial viability.

Is one medium better than others?

Paintings are the most commercially viable medium but photographs and film will be strong this century. Sculpture is less competitive than painting and more affordable. Also you can still buy masterpieces from major artists as prints for affordable prices. We recently bought a unique Jackson Pollock print and a beautiful Joseph Beuys drawing for under US\$50,000.

