

Day 8 - McKenzie Sullivan

Art dealers are of the utmost important to the art market. They have the ability to advertise and promote artists which help elevate the artists career and provide a certification of quality to the art pieces the dealers endorse. This is crucial in making the art market flow, especially in terms of contemporary art because it is so subjective. Contemporary art tends to be either a hit or miss with buyers, thus a dealer needs to act as a liaison and mediator between buyer and producer and endorse their artists, to make for a smooth transaction. One art dealer I was particularly interested in was David Zwirner. He is a gallerist, art dealer and owner of the David Zwirner Gallery in New York City.

David Zwirner's gallery is active in both the primary and secondary markets. Since 1993, it has been home to innovative, singular, and pioneering exhibitions across a variety of media and genres. The gallery has helped the careers of some of the most influential contemporary artists, including Luc Tuymans and Neo Rauch, who had their U.S. debut exhibitions at the gallery. The gallery relocated from SoHo to West 19th Street in Chelsea in 2002, and expanded from 10,000 to 30,000 square feet in 2006, which now allows for multiple full-scale exhibitions.

I found David Zwirner an interesting dealer because he focuses on historically relevant work by a diverse group of artists. In the primary sector, the gallery covers a broad spectrum of contemporary artistic practice, from seminal Minimalist works to large-scale installation (i.e. Dan Flavin) and time-based performances and video work. In the secondary market, the gallery has become known for presenting historically-researched exhibitions and publications devoted to the work of modern and contemporary artists as well.

In an Interview in Wall-Street Journal in 2009 Zwirner said "Art should be the most democratic of all endeavors, but these days it's not". "You see cartoons in the New Yorker and stereo-types on soap operas where the galleries are filled with haughty people standing around. It bugs me tremendously that the white-cube gallery is this intimidating, turnoff-ish kind of environment. My front-desk people are instructed to be particularly friendly. You can test us on that and let me know." Although Zwirner may believe his gallery is more "friendly" than most, I have been to both the Zwirner Gallery in Chelsea and two of Larry Gagosian's galleries in Manhattan and they all give off a snooty and uptight vibe.

Zwirner has been known to host a diverse group of artists, innovative artists and people who push the boundaries of art further. There is no one aesthetic to the gallery, which he prides himself in. Zwirner boasted in the WSJ article "We have Lisa Yuskavage and On Kawara – that's quite a stretch." Both these artists are highly regarded with strong audiences, but aesthetically they are very different. I personally believe that this tactic of having an array of different artists is a good one as it gives the gallery a more invigorating reputation and is more interesting to the potential clients.



David Zwirner in the David Zwirner Gallery in Chelsea, New York, 2009.

David Zwirner is often compared to Larry Gagosian as a competing leading dealer of contemporary art in New York; however, as dealers they actually have quite different methods. Both but on extraordinary shows, however from what I understand Zwirner comes from the primary market and expanded into the secondary market and Larry Gagosian did it the other way around. Zwirner has a more stable group of artists who he has built up over time whereas Larry Gagosian has tended to grab artists at the peak of their fame and capitalize off them. Although Zwirner, like Gagosian, has a hard-ball reputation, I believe Zwirner is a less "money-grubbing" kind of dealer, unlike Gagosian he is more willing to build relationships with artists and seems genuinely intrigued by each exhibition and show he puts on.

Click here to read the very interiguing interview with David Swirner & the Wall Street Journal: <http://magazine.wsj.com/hunter/rebel-yell/arts-go-to-gallerist/>



(David Swirner Gallery in Chelsea)