

Day 8 - Kelly Zona

<http://www.jayjopling.co.uk/>

Jay Jopling was a visionary art dealer who established his White Cube gallery in London in 1993. He helped to launch the careers of some important young British artists, including Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Andreas Gursky, Gilbert & George, and Anthony Gormley. He was the only British dealer to rival the dominant American art scene with his group of brand name artists.

Though Jopling's approach is more risky and experimental than that of other dealers, he has secured a solid base for his gallery through his branded artists. Hirst is perhaps the most well known of these. His works, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, better known as the \$12 Million Stuffed Shark, and *For the Love of God*, a human skull encrusted in diamonds, are some of the most ostentatious works ever created in terms of price. Because Hirst is such a powerful brand name, he will likely continue to be valued in the art market regardless of the artistic merit of his works. Collectors have already shown their faith in his brand equity, the fact that they are willing to pay more for his name.

As a side note I would like to point out that Hirst's *For the Love of God* never sold and in 2008 was purchased by a consortium that included Joplin and his gallery. Does this work represent the limit of brand equity? Is it the price that prevented this work from selling or was it something else?

Please see link for image:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/13/arts/design/13skul.html>

Jopling's approach is quite adventurous and he has taken profitable risks over his career. He offered to finance some of Hirst's early works, before he had made any name for himself. He announced on British TV that he would sell drawings that Tracey Emin drew of herself masturbating (Thompson, 37). But Jopling continued to take risks even after securing these well established names. This is reflected in his gallery's business structure, which is fairly fluid in its relationship with artists. He works with about twenty artists total, but does not have a contract with any of them; they are free agents and White Cube is their primary dealer in the UK. In fact, these artists are not shown at regular intervals, as seventy percent of White Cube's shows are dedicated to overseas artists being considered for representation by the gallery (Thompson, 38). This is quite progressive in comparison to other galleries who normally only dedicate five to ten percent of their time to trial shows (Thompon, 38). This is actually an ingenious marketing strategy on Jopling's part.

Jopling has built a brand name for himself and White Cube through the success of the brand names he represents. If branding minimizes collectors insecurity, then Jopling is triply reinforced through the brands of his artists, his gallery, and himself. However, one should remain wary of such pervasive branding, which often replaces aesthetic judgment. As pointed out in the *Mona Lisa Curse*, the art market has "transformed the museum into a commercial model." Is the same thing happening to avant-garde galleries?

Bibliography:

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