

**ACQUIRING CONTEMPORARY ART IN TODAY'S GLOBAL MARKET:  
COLLECTING STRATEGIES AT SMALL, MID-SIZED AND REGIONAL  
AMERICAN MUSEUMS**

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# **Acquiring Contemporary Art in Today's Global Market: Collecting Strategies at Small, Mid-Sized and Regional American Museums**

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, prices for contemporary works of art have continued to rise to the point that many small, mid-sized and regional American art museums have difficulties collecting in this arena. Few authors have examined this phenomenon, or the different tactics in place to combat it. This study aims to fill this gap by undertaking a detailed analysis of successful museum acquisition processes at several museums.

To ground the discussion I closely examine the hierarchical systems of the art world and its subset, the art market, and investigate the ways in which particular actors, including collectors, dealers and museum curators, negotiate this realm. Despite the economic hardships that they face, many museums embark on creative strategies to compete in this global market. In order to identify and evaluate these strategies I take an ethnographic approach to the research. Participant observations were undertaken at three American art fairs to fully understand the role of key participants in the market. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with gallery dealers, museum curators and museum directors revealed both the challenges and solutions involved in the acquisition process, and led to the examination of six key strategies currently in place at museums around the United States. An analysis of these strategies demonstrates the creativity and entrepreneurial nature necessary for continued collecting of contemporary art in a market that has outpaced acquisition budgets.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Introduction

This study examines the effect of the rising prices of contemporary art on the ability of museums—particularly small, mid-sized and regional American museums—to continue collecting the art of our time. Collecting contemporary art is a practice undertaken by museums globally. This study, however, specifically focuses on American museums for two reasons. First, to explore a little investigated area in detail, and second, because many of the funding sources and processes for museum acquisitions differ in America from those adopted around the world. My research elucidates not only the difficulties these American institutions face in acquiring works of art, but also the new and creative strategies they employ to continue to actively build their collections.

Before narrowing my focus on the processes museums use to collect art, and the difficulties they encounter, in this introductory chapter it is necessary to take a broader view of how the art world and the marketplace for art function. Once an understanding of these arenas is established, I explore the interplay of several theories, including Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on capital and fields of practice, Isabel Graw's knowledge and networking markets, and Etienne Wenger's theory of community of practice, to provide a framework and guide for my findings into how museums deal with the challenges of collecting contemporary art. To do so it is important to examine how the art world functions as a field of practice, embodying a

realm wherein art is the nucleus that all the actors revolve around. Furthermore, I explore how acquiring works of art relates to different forms of capital: cultural, economic, symbolic and social. Additionally, it is important to investigate other aspects of the contemporary market that contribute to difficulties in museum collecting. These include the correlation between art and social value, the reasons private individuals collect contemporary art, and how private museums established by individual collectors are now in competition with public museums for contemporary works of art. Lastly, I provide an outline of the rest of the study.

As seen in the following chapters, the art world and art market as a whole is experiencing change across many of the elements that comprise its structures and interactions, including the auction system itself, the surging number of art fairs, the proliferation of worldwide biennials, the globalisation of the art world and the increase in wealth around the globe. Many of these factors have also created a problem, as these shifts have impacted on the ability of museums to actively acquire contemporary art, especially small to mid-sized or regional institutions.

A review of the both general studies and theoretical literature provides the framework for the study, and illustrates how little attention is paid to the difficulties museums face in collecting contemporary art today. This dilemma has been discussed in the art media (Crow 2008; Finkel July 8, 2007; Johnson June 3, 2007; McNulty May 16, 2007; Rosenbaum 2007; Spiegler 2002), but has yet to attract the attention of scholars. In fact,

despite a glut of research into museum collecting in general there is a scarcity of scholarship outlining the difficulties facing museums that collect contemporary art. The topic is, for example, only given brief mention in Noah Horowitz's *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in A Global Financial Market* (Horowitz 2011) and Olav Velthuis' *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Velthuis 2005).

This study aims to fill this gap.

However, prior to delving into the details of museum acquisition, it is important to paint, in broad strokes, the structure of the art world.

## **Defining the Art World**

The art world is a construct that has been the subject of numerous theoretical positions and debate. Many use the term casually; as sociologist Howard Becker describes, it is employed 'In a loose and metaphoric way, mostly to refer to the most fashionable people associated with those newsworthy objects and events that command astronomical prices' (Becker 2008: xxiv). Yet the term 'art world' has a more specific meaning. In 1964, Arthur Danto coined the term by placing the art world within a philosophical and sociological realm, as a way to classify the aesthetics of Pop Art objects. He stated, 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry—an atmosphere or artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld' (Danto 1964: 577). For Danto, the art world is a place wherein artists, curators, critics and collectors

embody the knowledge needed in order to identify or consider a work of art.

Danto's definition provided the foil for philosopher George Dickie's interpretation of the art world, a concept he continued to refine through a number of articles and books beginning in 1969. Dickie approaches the art world as a part of an institutional theory of art. He characterises it as a 'loosely organized, but nevertheless related, set of persons including artists (understood to refer to painters, writers, composers), producers, museum directors, museum-goers ... and others' (Dickie 1974: 35).

Becker expanded on the work of these two thinkers in his 1982 book *Art Worlds* (expanded and updated in 2008) by positioning the art worlds in the realm of sociology, and defining them as follows:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works, which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artifacts. The same people often cooperate repeatedly, even routinely, in similar ways to produce similar works, so that we can think of an art world as an established network of cooperative links among participants. (Becker 2008: 34-35)

My interpretation of the art world aligns closely with Danto's theory, as both Dickie and Becker expand their classification beyond the visual arts and include a broader range of actors than I do. Danto also provides the most commonly accepted definition among visual art world practitioners. Figure 1 functions as both a visual representation of how I view the contemporary art world system and as a tool I used to frame my thinking about how the actors and events of this world relate to each other as I embarked upon this study.

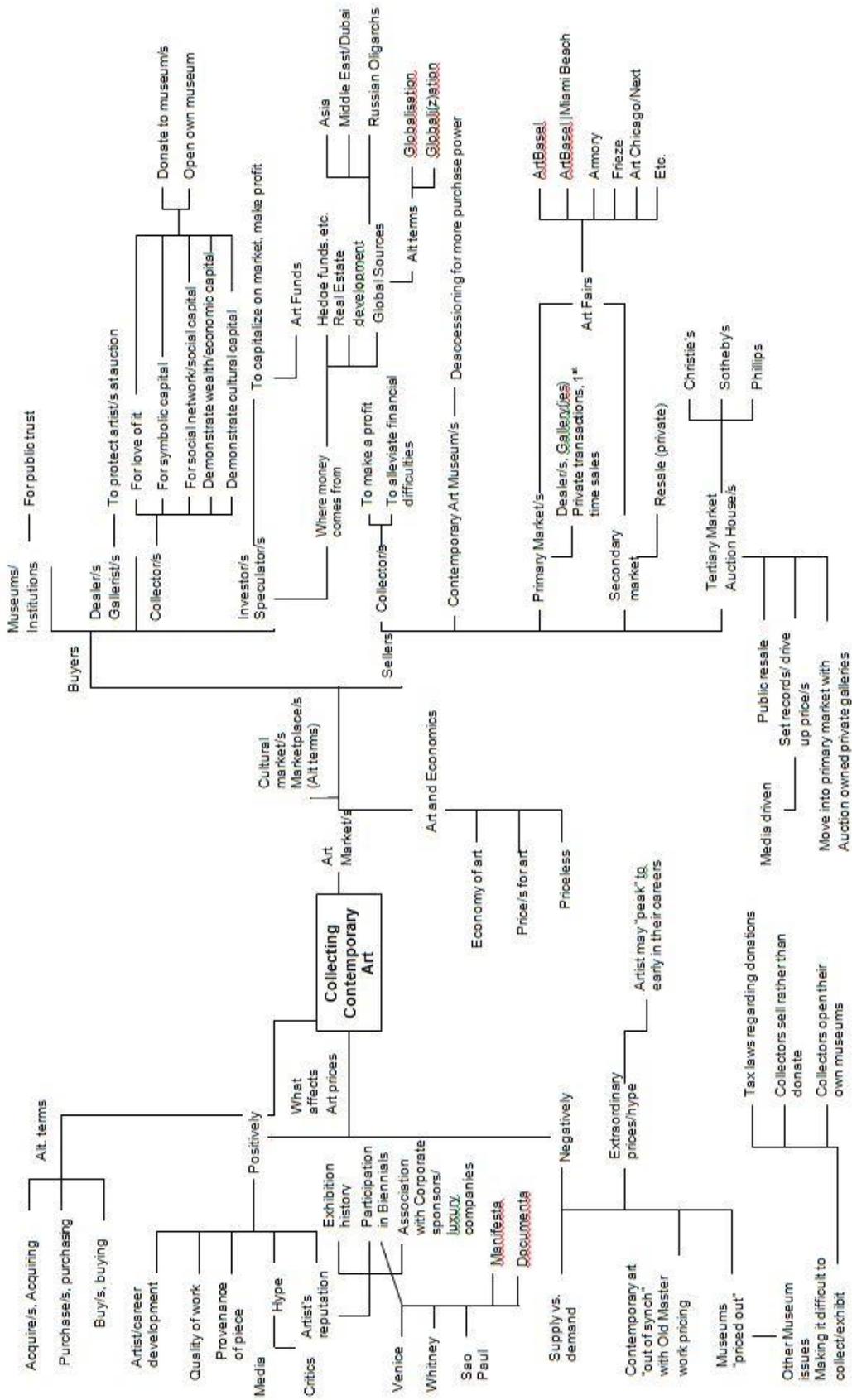


Figure 1: A visual representation of the art world for contemporary art

The art world is large and complex. For this study, I focus on a particular segment: the current or contemporary art world. In order to do so, it is important to identify what exactly constitutes contemporary art. Several authors provide a range of explanations. Anthony Haden-Guest states that '[c]ontemporary artists were so described to distinguish them from the Moderns. In practice, it means artists whose careers got going after end of World War II' (Haden-Guest 1996: 1). Danto provides a broader definition that speaks more to style than the date of an art work's execution:

The chief mark of contemporary art—contemporary not simply in the sense of the art being made at the present moment but in the further sense that 'contemporary' names an overall style, which the characteristic art of our times exemplifies—is its extreme and total diversity and openness. It is a style unlike that of any previous period in that no criteria can be offered for it, and hence no way of telling whether something is 'contemporary' through recognitional capacities of the kind called upon by such stylistic terms as 'baroque' or 'classical' or 'mannerist'. (Danto 1999: 6)

Similar to Danto, Terry Smith discusses the seemingly straightforward aspect that contemporary art is art that is made today. He finds that the concept, however, is hard to pin down, and that it does not classify all art, but only art that embodies a shift away from the modern art of the early twentieth century. He states, 'In the visual arts, the big story, now so blindingly obvious, is the shift—nascent during the 1950s, emergent in the 1960s, contested during the 1970s, but unmistakable since the 1980s—from modern to contemporary art' (Smith 2009: 5). Smith's view is one that is widely accepted today, and the designation of Christie's Auction House's department for this type of art as 'Post-War and Contemporary' reinforces this viewpoint. For the purpose of this study, I rely on a

combination of Danto's and Smith's classification of contemporary art to ground the discussion. Specifically, when I use the term contemporary art I refer to works of art that, first, were created in the 1960s or later, and, second, exemplify a style that resonates with today's thinking and cannot be classified as any other style from the past.

With these foundations in place we can now turn specifically to the contemporary art world, and begin to examine how prices for contemporary art escalated, leading to the 'pricing out' of contemporary acquisitions by small, mid-sized and regional American art museums.

## **Escalating Prices for Contemporary Art**

The origins of increasingly high pricing in the contemporary art market can be traced back to a single event: the 1970 auction of the private collection of Robert and Ethel Scull, the first auction exclusively focusing on contemporary art (Haden-Guest 1996; Horowitz 2011; Jeffri 2005; Velthuis 2005). Containing works by pop artists such as Jasper Johns (American, born 1930) and Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925–2008), the sale grossed \$2,242,290 (equivalent to \$13,756,055 in 2014 when adjusted for inflation), with several works fetching almost 1000% of their original purchase price (Jeffri 2005). Both Noah Horowitz and Olav Velthuis look to this sale as a turning point; Howowitz calls it a 'watershed in the upward trajectory of the contemporary art market' (2011:10). Velthuis concurs, further stating that this auction irrevocably changed the landscape of the

art market, and that it was in fact part of the downfall of the art world (Velthuis 2005: 156). He asserts that this was due to a shift in the marketplace: 'In the models of dealers and other members of the art world, the high prices that were established at the sale changed the atmosphere of the marketplace, and it turned it from an art market proper into a commodity or investment market' (Velthuis, 2005: 142). This break changed the dynamic between dealers and collectors and began the dramatic increase in prices for works of contemporary art. Such works of art now also became not only something purchased by connoisseurs and art lovers, but also chips in a status game, denoting symbolic capital.

The Scull sale foreshadowed what was to come. In the late 1980s another art market boom produced increasingly high prices for art, although the focus was on Modern, specifically Impressionist, art, as epitomised in the sale of *Iris* by Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890) for \$53.9 million (almost \$110.7 in 2014 when adjusted for inflation) at Christie's Auction House in 1987.<sup>1</sup> At that time, cultural critic Robert Hughes clearly identified the problem for museums as the auction frenzy continued for art. He stated: 'From the point of view of American museums, the art market boom is an unmitigated disaster. [...] And as the museum's buying power fades, public experience of art is impoverished' (Hughes 1989). Museums could not purchase at these prices, but the areas they were priced out of were

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<sup>1</sup> Ultimately the collector was unable to pay for his purchase, and the painting was later sold to the Getty Museum for an undisclosed price. Private sale prices are rarely a matter of public record, and in some cases can be higher than works at auction.

still limited to periods such as Impressionist art, while contemporary art still was within their capacity to collect.

What Hughes identified as being problematical for museums in the late 1980s has grown into a crisis today. Previously, it was the blue-chip, noteworthy and recognised artists from historical periods that were too expensive for museums. Now, the inability to purchase has expanded into contemporary art. Over the intervening decades, prices for contemporary art have continued to rise, as witnessed in Christie's and Sotheby's record-setting New York evening auctions held in November 2013 and May 2014. These sales generated over two billion dollars between the two houses (Christie's Auction House 2013 and 2014, Sotheby's Auctions 2013 and 2014).

On May 13, 2014 Christie's auction house in New York hosted an auction that brought in a total of almost \$745 million for their Postwar and Contemporary sale (Duray 2014). This followed their sale six months beforehand, on Tuesday, November 12, 2013, which generated a new record for the highest sale in auction history when the triptych *Three Studies of Lucien Freud*, 1969 by artist Francis Bacon (Irish, 1909–1992) sold for over \$142 million (Matthew 2013). At the same event the artist Jeff Koons (American, born 1955) established a new record for a work by a living artist with the sale of his 1994 sculpture *Balloon Dog (Orange)* for more than \$58 million (Matthew 2013).

A close examination of other works on offer during the 2013 and 2014 auctions reveals something perhaps even more significant. During that

period at both Sotheby's and Christie's Auction Houses, 225 of the 289 lots available (almost 78%) sold for over a million dollars each—some for substantially over that amount (Christie's Auction House 2013 and 2014, Sotheby's Auctions 2013 and 2014). Auctions such as these fit into Arjun Appadurai's concept of a 'tournaments of value', which are 'complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life'. Furthermore, Appadurai outlines that participation in tournaments of value is both a benefit for those who already hold power, and a way to compete for additional status. Lastly, a tournament of value, as illustrated in contemporary art auctions, is where culturally valued items, such as art, are tokens in a game wherein actors compete for status and prestige (Appadurai 1986: 50).

Developing this further, it is apparent that auctions are more than just straightforward economic exchanges of money for art. Instead, they are arenas wherein collectors compete for power. Certainly, Christie's and Sotheby's auctions in 2013 and 2014 caused many in the contemporary art world to sit up and take notice, negatively reacting to these power plays and the possible ramifications. Writing on this state of affairs in his article 'Post-Incipient-Vomiting (or, An Analytical Look at "If I Live I'll See You Tuesday")', dealer and cultural critic Ed Winkleman compared what occurred in the art world with how Jean-Paul Sartre defined 'disgust'. He uses the metaphor of a battlefield doctor, who becomes inured to the horror he witnesses and instead approaches it analytically. Winkleman states:

I still wish to note the parallel I find between such doctors' evolution toward an analytical approach to horror in battle and my own reaction to the marketing and resulting sales prices of contemporary art at auction these days. Essentially, there is no longer any point in feigning disgust. We have grown so accustomed to the bodies of work by artists we admire being reduced to mere commodities in this market that any incipient horror has now evaporated. (Winkleman 2014:)

In addition, the focus on prices themselves obscures the fact that it has now become nearly impossible for museums to acquire contemporary works through the auction process. Furthermore, museums also face financial hurdles when trying to acquire contemporary works through the traditional means of purchasing directly from a commercial gallery.

## **The Market for Art**

Auctions, of course, are only one avenue of purchasing contemporary art. As such, it is necessary to examine the structure of the market and how the art world assigns value.

Examining the literature shows that one of the first authors to thoroughly investigate contemporary art in the context of today's financial markets in a concrete rather than theoretical way is Julian Stallabrass. In *Art Incorporated* (Stallabrass 2004) he examines market forces while defining contemporary art. Taking a stance against much of the previous literature, Stallabrass first connects art to free trade, asserting that art investment is part of a speculative market. Aligning art with advertising, Stallabrass furthers his argument that art has an 'affinity to capital'. He establishes a

timeline and political framework for his examination, and takes a wide view, comparing art and popular mass markets. By drawing upon a combination of economic and Marxist theories, Stallabrass positions contemporary art in the realm of commodity exchange.

Similarly, in his book *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Horowitz 2011) Horowitz explores the relationship between art and wealth, while providing a detailed examination of the art market. Although the main thrust of his investigation relates to the purchase of video and experimental art, he still provides an excellent breakdown of market mechanisms. Horowitz's focus on the commercialisation of the contemporary art market is analogous to Isabel Graw's view, who details the retail aspects of the market in *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity* (Graw 2009). However, Graw goes a step further, exploring the symbiotic relationship between art's economic and symbolic value. She sees art as a vehicle that endows celebrity, while arguing that art needs to become disentangled from the market to retain its true value.

While it is true that the celebrity of both artists and collectors has become an essential element within the contemporary art marketplace, in many ways Graw's argument for the need to separate art from the marketplace is somewhat idealistic. Although aesthetic value can be judged on a number of factors, once an object (or the artist that creates it) achieves the celebrity Graw speaks of, there is always a market correlation that cannot be removed. However, both Graw and Horowitz agree that there is a

distinct difference between the art world and the art market. The differences unquestionably need defining, and Horowitz clearly does so:

I should begin by differentiating between the art market and the art world: the former refers to the makers, buyers, and sellers of art (artists, dealers, auctioneers, collectors, art financial services firms, etc.); the latter, to the marketplace as well as the expansive web of stakeholders involved in the producing, exhibiting, viewing, and discussing of art (from studio assistants and museum curators to gallery-goers, critics, and art historians). Distinctions are rarely absolute—we often think that museums operate outside the market even though they enter it explicitly through acquisitions and support it implicitly through the exhibiting, and thus validating, of art—but it is nevertheless important to establish an overarching clarification of terms. (Horowitz 2011: 17–18)

The art market—a key facet, but separate division of the larger art world—is a highly structured environment composed of three main components: the primary market, the secondary market and the tertiary market (Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011; Robertson & Chong 2008; Winkleman 2009). An exploration of each segment follows.

### *Primary market*

Comprising galleries and private dealers, the primary market introduces original works of art into the marketplace. Dealers take a personal interest in their artists, and carefully build and shape their careers. By selling and holding works strategically, and by structuring pricing, each dealer has a profound effect on the position their artists hold in the market (Jeffri 2005; Robertson 2005c). Educating collectors and building relationships based on trust are paramount to dealers. They also build up their artists' profile

and reputation by introducing the work to critics and attempting to sell to museums (often at discounts), or to collectors they believe might donate to museums (Velthuis 2005). A fuller picture of this market emerges in Chapter 4, as it details the business practices dealers follow, and the relationships they have with other constituents in the art world. A particular focus is on their relationships with museum curators and directors, and the process of institutional sales.

### *Secondary market*

Some dealers participate in both the primary and secondary market concurrently. The secondary market encompasses the resale of a work of art in a private arena. As evidenced in the current heated market, art can sometimes change hands after only a short time of ownership, generating a quick profit for the collector (also known as 'flipping' a work of art). In some cases, a collector may consign the work back to the gallery he or she purchased the work from, or the work may be consigned to another dealer, or to auction (Robertson 2005c). Dealers try to control the market for their artists, and thus often create agreements between themselves and collectors. These agreements ensure that collectors offer the gallery first right of refusal on the work as a way to deter collectors from selling at auction (Lindemann 2006; Spiegler 2002).

### *Tertiary market*

Auction houses form this third market arena. Primarily representing sellers, and looking to amplify selling prices, the goal of an auction house is different from both primary and secondary dealers. As discussed earlier, their impact on the market cannot be underestimated. Both the art world and the general public recognise auctions as the measure of the art market, often confirming and validating an artist's value (Velthuis 2005). When an artist's work begins to steadily appear in the secondary market, and especially at auction, their prices in the primary market inevitably climb (although not to the levels reached at auction). Unlike other markets, where lower prices create higher demand, in the art market, higher prices function as a gauge of excellence, creating demand (Plattner 1996). As select artists rise to this pinnacle, a pricing phenomenon occurs, cyclically feeding the frenzy of the art market.<sup>2</sup> This in turn leaves many museums unable to purchase works of art through auction houses. In addition, the success of many works at auction can have an adverse result on the number and level of museum donations. Recent record-breaking sales at auction provide the impetus for many collectors to sell in this forum rather than offer works back to the dealer or donate to a museum collection.

In 2013 alone, Christie's and Sotheby's Auction Houses posted approximately \$11 billion in revenue; sales focusing on Post War and

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<sup>2</sup> Behind the scenes at auction houses is a game being played that defies usual market structures. Dealers use auction houses to manipulate prices, so elevating the price of the stock of one of their artists. Furthermore, auction houses themselves engage in the process of utilising 'chandelier bids', or bids that they create or 'pull out of the air' to keep bidding going and drive up prices. Both of these auction houses were prosecuted for price fixing in 2000.

Contemporary during this period brought in a combined \$3.4 billion (Gerlis 2014). What this indicates is not only the growing desire among collectors to acquire contemporary art, but also the scarcity of historical works, aiding market growth for contemporary works positioned as important and valuable by savvy dealers alongside the impact of shifting global wealth.

Horowitz relays accounts of this very issue revealed during his research:

“Five years ago buyers who spent more than \$500,000 at our auctions came from 36 countries”, a spokesman for Sotheby’s remarked in 2008. “Last year they came from 58”. There are great differences in the wealth distributions across these various countries, and each will feel the impact of the financial crisis in different ways. But it is a fact that the art market is more global than ever previously, and that new collectors and institutions from developing regions will play an important role in the future development of the art economy. (Horowitz, 2011: 14)

In this ever-expanding art economy, each of these three divisions in the art market—primary, secondary and tertiary—has an essential role to play.

The primary market thrives on the control over and shortage of works of art; the secondary market is dependent on excess, as are the auctions in the tertiary market (Spiegler 2002). Sometimes at odds with each other, and at other times working in tandem, each of these markets collectively manages supply and demand for contemporary art.

In addition to these segments of the selling market that comprise the commercial art market, Graw introduces another concept of a parallel market embodied within the art world; one she calls the ‘market of knowledge’. She asserts that this market consists of

art institutions, large-scale exhibitions, symposia, magazines, art academies, and publications. [...] The relationship between these

two markets [the commercial art market and the 'market of knowledge'] is characterized by a mix of attraction and opposition. Although there is a noticeable increase in the overlap between the commercial art market and the knowledge market, each possesses its own distinctive value system, criteria, language games, and set of rules. (Graw 2009: 11)

Furthermore, Graw defines this art market as a networking market, wherein there is interaction between the participants (2009). She goes further, suggesting that, 'On the basis of their relations to each other, the participants in such a networking market themselves define where the market is to be found. [...] Consequently, the market is wherever a few market players stand together and communicate among themselves' (2009: 64). These two concepts—the selling market and the market of knowledge—are particularly relevant for this study, as they provide a structure to interpret the relationships between actors and how power flows between them, while also illustrating that social relationships among actors underpin the art world.

## **The Currency of Capital**

After delineating parameters of the art world and the art market, and then looking beyond the networking market, it is important to understand the framework that allows for contemporary works of art to reach such high prices. The concept of capital is particularly important to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theories, and it is also a helpful tool in understanding the constitution of the art world. Every relationship and action in the art world is, at its core, related to the four types of capital, either alone or in

combination: cultural, economic, social and symbolic. Michael Grenfell, in *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts*, clearly defines Bourdieu's ideas, which encompass three of these types:

For Bourdieu, there are three basic forms of capital: cultural, social and economic. Cultural capital refers to the possession of symbolically valued cultural accouterments and attitudes. These may be material in nature—books, paintings, clothes—or symbolically prestigious—for example, a 'good' accent, educational qualifications, refined manners. In this way, capital can be expressed materially, corporally or gesturally, but in each case it is symbolic because it attracts acknowledgement of value from those sharing positions within the given field. Economic capital is perhaps the most material form of capital; it refers to financial wealth or possessions, such as income, land and buildings. In a way, it is a capital which speaks for itself—it does not have to be symbolic. Finally, social capital refers to the network of personal relations that an individual builds up. Such networks are symbolic—you are valued by who you know—but these networks do 'buy' advantage in a way analogous to money capital—it is not what you know, it is who you know. Social capital acts to amplify the efficiency of both economic and cultural capital. (Grenfell & Hardy 2007)

While Grenfell writes that these three forms of capital can become symbolic, he does not go as far as to classify the symbolic as a form of capital in his interpretation of Bourdieu's writings. Conversely, in his introduction to Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production*, editor Randall Johnson defines and emphasises the importance of the symbolic as a form of capital alongside that of cultural capital. He states:

Two forms of capital are particularly important in the field of cultural production. Symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honor and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*). Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions. In *Distinction*, the work in which he elaborates the concept most fully, Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural

relations and cultural artefacts. He suggests that “a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code into which it is encoded”. (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993: 7)

For the purposes of understanding the art world it is important to identify the interplay between all four forms. Bourdieu likens interaction between forms of capital in ‘his concept of field to designate competitive arenas where other forms of capital (e.g. symbolic, cultural, social) as well as economic capital are invested, exchanged, and accumulated’ (Swartz 1997: 44). Certainly, in a research project that, at its heart, is an investigation into the acquisition and collection of works of art, economic capital is crucial. However, my argument is that acquisitions are not purely about who can afford to make purchases. Economic capital, while significant, is often not as important as cultural, social or symbolic capital in regard to acquiring works of art.

Robert Moore (Moore 2008) provides another helpful viewpoint; he categorises capital into two different forms: objectified and embodied.<sup>3</sup> Objectified capital is represented in material form, such as a work of art itself, an artifact, a museum or a publication. On the other hand, embodied capital is more ephemeral in nature, is incorporated within a person, and includes their attitudes, outlook and opinions (see Table 1).

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<sup>3</sup> Moore looks at both cultural and scientific capital. For the purpose of this research project I only focus on his classification of cultural capital.

<i>Form of Capital/types</i>	<i>Objectified</i>	<i>Embodied</i>
Cultural	Galleries, museums, libraries, concerts etc.	Cultivated gaze, poise, taste, desire for the recognition of distinction.

**Table 1: Forms of capital, modelled on Moore (Moore 2008: 106)**

Aspects of embodied capital, i.e. those located within a person, also resonate with Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, defined as the ‘structured and structuring structure’ (Bourdieu 1994: 170). Specifically, it is the accumulated dispositions embodied within a person that have been assimilated through circumstances and experiences. Theorist Karl Maton provides the formula linking capital, habitus and field (explored below), and demonstrates that these three elements combine in practice according to the formula: [(habitus) (capital)]+field=practice (Maton, 2008: 51).

## **The Art World: A Field of Practice**

Figure 1 charts the contemporary art world as a system and depicts the actors, events, and structures found within it—a system which also relates to what Bourdieu theorised as a field of practice. Like other authors, I find Bourdieu’s theory is a helpful conceptual tool for examining the art world (Grenfell 2007; Krauss 1979; Lipstadt 2005). Hélène Lipstadt classifies Bourdieu’s field as ‘a universe of social relations constituted by the members of the field in accordance with their own habitus, logic, stakes,

capitals, and interests' (Lipstadt 2005: 433). Bourdieu identifies a field of practice as:

a network, or configuration, or objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97).

In *Culture and Power* David Swartz further clarifies the idea of field:

Fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital. Fields may be thought of as structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital (Swartz 1997: 117).

Bourdieu often used this theory to explain aspects of art and culture. In particular, in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984), *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1996) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993), Bourdieu convincingly argues that artistic practice and cultural consumption are products of a field of practice and production. For example, in *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu expands upon Danto's, Dickie's and Becker's definition of the art world, and re-organises it as an artistic field. He states:

In other words, it is a matter of constituting the artistic field (which includes art analysts, beginning with art historians, even the most critical among them) as the locus where the belief in the value of art and in the artist's power of valuable creation is continually produced and reproduced. This would yield not only an inventory of the artist's indices of autonomy (such as those revealed through the

analysis of contracts, the presence of a signature, or affirmations of the artist's specific competence, or the recourse in case of a dispute to the arbitration by peers, etc.), but also an inventory of the signs of the autonomy of the field itself, such as the emergence of the entire set of the specific institutions which are a necessary condition for the functioning of the economy of cultural goods. These include: places of exhibit (galleries, museums, etc.), institutions of consecration or sanction (academies, salons, etc.), and specialized agents (dealers, critics, art historians, collectors, etc.), all of whom are endowed with the dispositions objectively required by the field and the specific categories of perception and appreciation, which are irreducible to those in common use and which are capable of imposing a specific measure of the value of the artist and of her products. (Bourdieu & Johnson 1993: 259–260)

By breaking down the artistic field and positioning different types of institutions and agents, both in this work and in *Rules of Art*, Bourdieu creates a framework that can be referenced when analysing the power relationships between the actors (artists, collectors, curators, dealers) of the art world (Grenfell & Hardy 2007). Bourdieu also uses the metaphors of a market and a game to illustrate his concept of a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Thinking of the art world as a game clearly conceptualises actors as positioning themselves to compete with each other in their attempts to acquire more capital and power. However, much of the 'game playing' takes place in the art market segment, where collectors vie for works by important artists and small, mid-sized and regional museums compete with larger institutions and private collectors for works of art.

To apply the framework of a field of practice, Patricia Thomson, in her essay "Field", reiterates Bourdieu's recommended three-step process:

1. Analyse the positions of the field vis-à-vis the field of power.

2. Map out the objective structures of relations between positions occupied by the social agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority of which this field is a site.

3. Analyse the habitus of social agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field... a more or less favourable opportunity to become actualized. (Bourdieu, in Thomson 2008: 75)

Conceptualising the contemporary art world as a field of practice, and using a similar approach to Bourdieu's process of examining field, allows for a deeper understanding of the relationships between actors (collectors, curators and dealers). Utilising Bourdieu's field theory to identify the dominant and subordinate positions held by these differing actors exposes the existing power relationships that affect value and collecting. Swartz argues that fields operate as a system wherein the accumulation of capital (cultural, social and/or symbolic capital) shifts the power dynamic. He insists:

Bourdieu stresses time and again that positions in fields are determined by the unequal distribution of relevant capital rather than by the personal attributes of their occupants. Fields are to be viewed as systems in which each particular element (institution, organisation, group, or individual) derives its distinctive properties from its relationship to all other elements. (Swartz 1997: 123)

In the contemporary art world, nowhere is this system more apparent than at the art fairs.

## Art Fairs

If, indeed, the contemporary art world is a system, it is helpful to classify art fairs as a type of ecosystem wherein the participants interact with each other within a specific environment. Art fairs are at the epicentre of the art world, performing the specific function of bringing a sampling of all of the actors together in one place at one time. Fairs occur frequently throughout the year at sites around the globe, and, over the last ten years, the fair landscape has expanded dramatically. For example, at the first iteration—Art Basel | Miami Beach in 2002—was the only fair in Miami. In 2013, nineteen satellite fairs simultaneously convened in close proximity to Art Basel | Miami Beach (ArtCollecting.com 2014). In 2014, over 200 fairs will have occurred globally (ArtCollecting.com 2014). Comprising both primary and secondary sellers, art fairs are a speciality market, and many galleries use them as an opportunity to introduce their artists to collectors, sell their work and move up the ranks to more influential fairs. Prestigious fairs such as ArtBasel, ArtBasel | Miami Beach, Art Basel | Hong Kong, and Frieze include top galleries, and, by association, noteworthy artists. These types of fairs help define and drive the market by attracting leading collectors (Keller 2006; Robertson 2005c). In Chapter 3, I closely examine several art fairs held in America to investigate how these events have an impact on collecting, and study the social interaction of the actors. At this juncture, however, it is important to recognise how art fairs function, not only as a networking market, as demonstrated by Graw, but also as one that emulates a community of practice.

Etienne Wenger introduced the concept of a community of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002), which he defines in the following way: 'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). In theorising about how groups learn, he discusses how small groups of people build relationships and work together through forming a community of practice based upon mutual engagement in a joint enterprise, and using a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998). Wenger's theory provides a useful filter for the exploration of art fair culture. In *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge* (2002) Wenger sets out a framework for a community of practice, demonstrating that members must share 'ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories, and documents' in order to develop specified knowledge and resources for communal benefit (2002: 29). For example, in the case of art fairs, the community shares the knowledge of trends in the art world, including up and coming artists, rediscovered artists, which artists will have important retrospectives in the near future, which are the best galleries to deal with, what style or technique is trending as 'hot' and so on.

Wenger's theory in many ways parallels Bourdieu's ideas about field and capital. However, Wenger provides a helpful way of classifying the interactions and communication between actors in a localised arena, such as the site of an art fair, and demonstrates how shared knowledge builds their community. Wenger sees a community of practice as a tool for

'learning as social participation' (Wenger 1988: 4). Bourdieu's theories, on the other hand, are more structured, helping to classify the larger, overall field, and relying more on the connections between actors as a result of their habitus, or the amounts of different types of capital that they hold.

Wenger does note, however, that establishing a community of practice among consumers in a retail market, such as in the art fair model, presents certain difficulties. He states:

Creating genuine communities among consumers (whether face-to-face or online) is not easy—and many attempts to organise market based 'communities' hardly fit the description. Such communities require something compelling to elicit member participation and bring people together—a real opportunity to share useful knowledge and to develop a valued identity. (Wenger 1998)

Art fairs are able to overcome this impediment by providing VIP perks, as well as by maximising the potential for networking and buying into social capital to entice dealers, collectors, curators and others interested in art. These compelling aspects provide the impetus that brings people together in a genuine community of practice, as Wenger suggests. These incentives not only allow participants to become more deeply ingrained in the art fair system, and, by association, the art world, but they also function to keep 'outsiders' out. Wenger details three reasons why these boundaries occur in a community of practice:

- 1) Participants form close relationships and develop idiosyncratic ways of engaging with one another, which outsiders cannot easily enter.
- 2) they have a detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise as they define it, which outsiders may not share.

- 3) They have developed a repertoire for which outsiders miss shared references. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002)

The groups of people involved in art fairs, including dealers, curators and collectors, clearly fit into Wenger's definition of a community of practice; the art fairs function as places for these groups to build their tacit, mutual understanding, and share knowledge and perspectives about art and the art market. Because dealers participate in multiple fairs, and so encounter many of the same collectors at each venue, they build relationships through shared engagement in the art, and in the activity of participating in the event. However, as I discuss in further detail in Chapter 3, the structure of art fairs, suited to quick decisions regarding purchases, often makes it difficult for museums that have limited funds and drawn out acquisition processes to thrive. Instead, museum curators and directors use fairs as a way to participate in a networking market and a community of practice by cultivating patrons and connecting with gallery dealers, peers and collectors.

## **The Economy and the Contemporary Art Market**

Over the last several years the art fair landscape has shifted dramatically. These changes certainly contribute to the growth of contemporary art; however, it is only one component in the larger art marketplace. Much like the overall economic landscape, the art market is cyclical in nature, featuring periods of both highs and lows. In the last fifty years, approximately three periods of considerable escalation preceded some

sort of crash: in the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s (Plattner 1996; Ruiz & Gerlis 2007). Each downturn wrought varying degrees of devastation, yet, in comparison to the rest of the economy, the art market is far less turbulent (Horowitz 2011; Robertson 2005b). This has certainly held true today, where the record-breaking prices for works of art at auction in November 2013 and subsequent strong auction sales are out of step with the slow and tentative recovering global economy.

While Velthuis has some astute observations about the general art world in *Talking Prices*, his research focuses on the gallery systems of New York and Amsterdam. As such, his perspective is limited, and it does not take into account a contemporary art market that has become increasingly globalised over the past few years. However, his use of sociological and psychological frameworks provides a clear interpretation of his data, drawing valid conclusions that contribute to a new understanding of pricing and art market structures. For example, Velthuis methodically tracks how prices are determined. By looking at a number of factors, some concrete (size, medium) and others more intangible (artist reputation and 'institutional recognition'), Velthuis comprehensively encapsulates the art market. In addition, he contends that prices are significant on a number of levels: they relate to the quality of the work itself; they function as an indicator of value; finally, they provide a reflection of the purchaser. Furthermore, he solidly outlines the otherwise nebulous meanings of prices and begins to define the idea of branding artists as superstars. He pinpoints when artists were first thought of as superstars as beginning with the extraordinary results at the Scull sale (Velthuis 2005: 145).

After the success of this landmark auction sale, the contemporary market rose and fell episodically. The market for modern and contemporary art again exploded in the 1980s, driven primarily by speculators (evidenced by the Japanese buying of Impressionist paintings at record prices); but it severely crashed again in 1990 (Mei & Moses 2002). Anthony Haden-Guest, in *True Colors*, examines this period, pointing to the April 1987 sale of Vincent van Gogh's (Dutch, 1853–1890) *Sunflowers* at Christie's of London for \$39.9 million. His observations are that this auction foreshadowed problems with museum purchases in the current art market, an assessment he made by capturing the reactions of large museums such as the Getty and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, both of which have large acquisition funds yet could not even have attempted to purchase *Sunflowers* or works like it at such price levels (Haden-Guest 1996).

Beginning in the United States in 1997, the reemergence of a speculative culture surrounding high-tech industries, including the dot.com businesses, along with corollary stock market surges directly affected art prices.

Inflated prices for artists such as Damien Hirst (British, born 1965) and Jeff Koons set new auction records. By 2001, the dot.com bust, along with major financial shake-ups involving companies such as Anderson Consulting and Enron, and the events of September 11, all contributed to a slump in both the general economy and the market for art (Ruiz & Gerlis 2007; Stallabrass 2004).

Despite following a pattern of boom and bust in the past, today's art market appears to pursue a different mode of organisation. Driven by a

wider range of players, the market is now flooded with an even greater amount of wealth. Along with traditional collectors from Western Europe and the United States, the increase in global wealth has brought forward an emerging collector base from Russia, China and the Middle East, creating an even more competitive market for fewer works (Horowitz 2011). The upswing, which began in 2002, continues to this day, and easily rivals the boom markets of the 1980s and early 1990s (Spiegler 2006). According to Art Market Research, an index maker, prices for contemporary works have quadrupled in ten years, having risen as much as 50% since December 2006 alone (Sandler 2007b; Sandler 2007c; Spiegler 2006). Collectors, perhaps overconfident about the strength of the market, continue purchasing at record prices. Art, to them, has become an asset that enhances and validates their lifestyles (Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011). Unique works of art have become another commodity in a world obsessed with amassing material objects and cultural capital, all the while helping collectors build social and symbolic capital (Graw 2009).

In describing the extraordinary growth of the art market today, Iain Robertson claims, in the anthology *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, that 'without the wealth developed by bankers and accrued from the global trade, the art market would have remained undeveloped' (Robertson 2005: 7). Both Bruno Frey and Stallabrass concur with this assessment, pointing out the similarities between the art and finance markets. Stallabrass and Derrick Chong emphasise the role of globalisation, stating that there is a correlation between art prices, the number of art sales and the state of the stock market (Chong 2005;

Stallabrass 2004). Certainly, this holds true in the purchasing of art and escalating prices, as wealth garnered through financial markets often filters through the contemporary art market. However, this money often bypasses financially strapped museums, and they are consequently unable to compete in the escalating market.

In his attempt to learn why some art is valued at \$12 million or more, Don Thompson clearly defines the problem and puts the extraordinary prices into context. He comprehensively looks into the economic practices of the art world, reviewing and analysing both the financial aspects and the psychological motivations for purchasing art (Thompson 2008; Thompson 2014). Of particular note is that in his book *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* Thompson focuses on the auction realm, but does point out that the short lead-time involved in organising these sales events can have serious consequences for museums. Often, there is not enough time for museums to raise enough funds to be competitive bidders with private collectors and speculators who have immediate access to funds (Thompson 2008). Thompson does acknowledge, however, that both Christie's and Sotheby's will often provide museums with up to ninety days in which to raise the necessary funds, should they successfully bid on a particular piece (Thompson 2008). While he does not devote much space to this issue, many of his arguments support this assertion obliquely. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the author takes a strong stance regarding this problem, labeling it a 'crisis' (Thompson 2008: 242).

## Factors Influencing the Contemporary Art Market

A number of writers have explored the factors that influence the art market. For example, Haden-Guest (1996) provides an interesting and useful insider view on the gallery and auction business, along with charting historical sales—such as the Scull sale—that reveal the landscape of the art world. He also establishes reasons for collecting, explores the channels for acquiring works of art, and provides an outline of the art market, as do authors Adam Lindemann and Don Thompson (Haden-Guest 1996; Lindemann 2006; Thompson 2008).

Although Haden-Guest's *True Colors* is a slightly dated study (written in 1996) of the psychology of the contemporary art market, many of Haden-Guest's observations remain relevant today. Delivering an 'insider' perspective comprising many first-hand accounts and proclaimed 'wild histories,' Haden-Guest focuses on the personalities of 'superstar' artists, dealers and collectors. While *True Colors* provides a subjective overview, written for a general audience, there are many valuable components to it, including historical accounts and insights into the formation of value.

Classifying the art world as a type of 'industry'—and being one of the first to do so—Haden-Guest emphasises the role of money in all transactions.

In addition, Haden-Guest illustrates the impact of art galleries and dealers by tracing the development of the contemporary gallery scene into a global industry. By narrating the story of the nascent community of galleries that formed the SoHo Art District, the establishment of New York's Chelsea neighborhood and the concurrent emergence of galleries in Europe,

Haden-Guest ably documents the growth of the international gallery scene. Principally, the author weaves together accounts that focus on the dealers, artists and collectors who played significant roles in the way the art market is structured today, including artists Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), Jeff Koons, Julian Schnabel (American, born 1951) and Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1997); collectors Peter Brandt and Charles Saatchi; and dealers Mary Boone, Leo Castelli and Larry Gagosian. More than just reciting lists of sales and deals, Haden-Guest attempts to portray the psychology behind the personalities who rule the market. This is a crucial element, as social relationships and strong egos are equal partners with money in an inflated global art marketplace. The weaknesses of Haden-Guest's commentary, however, include its anecdotal nature, the fact that some of the players no longer have any influence, and the market's extraordinary growth since this book was penned.

Mining much of the same materials, but bringing it up to date, Thompson (2008, 2014), in his sensationalist view of the art world, has some pertinent observations. For example, he introduces the key concept of 'branding', classifying the most influential artists, auction houses, biennials, collectors, dealers and museums as brands, an analogous term for superstar found throughout much of the literature (Frey 2000; Haden-Guest 1996; Robertson 2005b; Stallabrass 2004; Velthuis 2005).

Branding is not a particularly new concept; artists have long produced signature works that are linked to them inextricably, thus creating something very marketable. Thompson takes the step of positioning art

within popular culture, likening branded dealers, auction houses, art fairs and artists to the branding of consumer products such as Nike, Coke, Mercedes and Prada (Thompson 2008). Each product imparts a status of 'being in the know' (cultural capital) or of prestige (symbolic capital).

Haden-Guest, Lindemann and Thompson all emphasise the importance these branded or superstar artists and dealers have in the art world. Other authors, such as Graw, Horowitz and Velthuis have also pointedly and astutely drawn parallels between superstar status and symbolic capital (Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011; Velthuis 2005).

#### *'Superstar artists' and 'superstar prices'*

Conferred upon artists in great demand, who receive extraordinary prices for their work through market formats, is the status of 'superstar' (Chong 2005; Frey 2000; Plattner 1996; Robertson 2005c; Sagot-Duvaroux 1992; Pflieger & Rouget 1992). An artist's successful participation in different facets of the marketplace, including selling through galleries, at art fairs and at auction, along with participation in museum and biennial exhibitions, can result in this designation. In the past, this status has correlated with talent; currently, it is a mix of talent and savvy promotion within the market by all of the players—artists, dealers and the media. In *Arts & Economics: Analysis & Cultural Policy* Frey posits two contradictory classifications for superstar. He first argues that talent is the deciding factor between those artists who become superstars and those that do not; he then continues to state that it is through the market system of supply

and demand that artists become superstars (Frey 2000). It is Frey's second proposition that rings most true today. Robertson agrees, and cites the example of Andy Warhol, who rose to superstar status by becoming a media darling in the 1960s, thus creating a market for his work (Robertson 2005). Many artists—as talented, or more so, than some 'superstar' artists—do not attain the top echelon because they do not integrate themselves fully in the market. This may be the result of not participating in exhibitions, biennials, art fairs and branded dealer relationships that feed the market.

Many of the top gallery dealers are experts at advancing their artists though strategic marketing. They foster an air of exclusivity for their artists among their collector clients at events, opening parties and elaborate projects presenting ideal situations to buy the artists' work. Some artists, such as Andy Warhol (as explored by Robertson), Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst and Julian Schnabel, have all successfully exploited the media and the market to create their own brand, increasing the worth of their works of art. In addition, much of the art world is a socially shared construction. The network of collectors is relatively small, and competition between them often drives demand for a particular artist's works (Frey 2000). Certain collectors, who embody high levels of social and symbolic capital, have the power to influence an artist's career and increase the value of their works as much as, if not more than, the support of a museum. If an influential collector owns a piece by a particular artist, the work becomes imbued with symbolic capital. As such, other collectors often follow suit by

acquiring works by that artist in an attempt to share this capital. Frey explores this phenomenon further:

Superstars also emerge because art consumption is not an isolated activity, but is socially shared. Much of the pleasure derived from consuming art consists in the possibility of discussing it with other people, especially friends and acquaintances. Such exchanges of views and experiences require that the other participants share some common prior knowledge, which makes it much easier. As a consequence, discussion focuses on widely known persons, the superstars (Frey 2000).

This idea clearly resonates with Graw's theory of a networked knowledge market (collectors who have knowledge of exciting artists that become branded as superstars) and with Bourdieu's ideas of cultural, social and symbolic capital (those collectors who own works by such artists).

Thompson certainly makes a case that 'superstar' status is confirmed by using the language of branding. He claims that the hierarchy of value enhancement is first decided by 'major dealers, later by branded auction houses, a bit by the museum curators who stage special shows, very little by art critics, and hardly at all by buyers' (Thompson 2008: 27). In theory, this appears to be a valid assessment. However, in more and more cases the purchase of a work of art by a branded collector significantly influences value. Furthermore, Thompson maintains that museums are the first choice of artists and galleries for placement of a work of art, with branded collectors second (Thompson 2008: 40). That may be true of branded museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, but that does not necessarily hold true for smaller institutions, as we will see in Chapter 4 of

this study. Common to all branded or superstar artists, dealers and collectors is that they embody social capital, and their association with a work of art consecrates value and symbolic capital.

## **Art and Social Value**

As previously argued, price is not the only indicator of the value of a work of art; social factors also play a part. Frey begins to examine this by listing four features of human behaviour which are characteristic of economic transactions:

1. Individuals not groups, states or society as a whole, are the acting units (methodological individualism), but this does not mean that individuals act in isolation, rather that they constantly interact with each other;
2. Behavior depends on individual preferences as well as on the constraints in terms of resources (income), time or norms as individual is subject to;
3. Individuals are, on average, mostly pursuing their own interests; their behavior is determined by incentives;
4. Changes in behaviour are, as far as possible, attributed to changes in constraints rather than changes in preference, because the latter are better observable. This strategy allows us to derive empirically testable propositions. (Frey 2000: 21-22)

These are crucial classifications determining how, and most importantly why, individuals enter the art marketplace. His first assertion, that art collecting is a shared social activity, points to the essential nature of the art world: that collectors do influence each other despite their individual

choices and inclinations. The actions and decisions a collector makes regarding art purchases are clearly shaped by art world society. Frey's first assertion also resonates with how museums collect. While they do not act as individuals do, they nevertheless reflect the influence of curatorial agency, and additionally are governed by boards of individuals who review their acquisitions and bring their own opinions and motivations to the table. Thus, while museums acquisitions reflect the choices made by individuals, they also result in an institutional response.

Contemporary art is, on many levels, also influenced by the social value, or cultural capital, a work of art embodies. Purchasing works by a designated superstar or branded artist can provide entry into specific social circles. Furthermore, works of art gain additional value by being part of certain celebrated private collections—those of superstar or branded individuals. As a result, competition among collectors for works of art by specific artists is commonplace. Frey's theory explicating art's social context gains support from other thinkers as well (Haden-Guest 1996; Lindemann 2006; Robertson 2005b; Stallabrass 2004; Velthuis 2005).

Further bringing the idea of a social network to the forefront, like Frey and Graw, Julian Stallabrass outlines how collectors actively build the market for an artist's work, not only by purchasing it, but by bringing it to the attention of other collectors. It is in this way that the value of art is socially constructed, as such collectors often buy not only to fit into a particular social circle and gain social capital, but also to impress their peers.

Amassing large collections adds to the allure of the wealthy, as can be seen in the examples of collectors from the past and the present: the Medici family, the Rockefeller family, Peggy Guggenheim and Charles Saatchi, among others. Additions to that list include contemporary collectors Eli Broad, Steven Cohen, Don and Mera Rubell and François Pinault. Velthuis proposes that private collectors have as much influence on the success or failure of an artistic career as curators and critics (Velthuis 2005: 12). This influence correlates to the shift that elevates private collectors into the position of ‘tastemakers’ in the canonisation of artists within art history. Furthermore, the elevation of private collectors’ power begins to chip away at the influence that smaller, regionally based museums wield, increasing the difficulties that such museums face in acquiring high-priced works.

What remains of the shared influence of curatorial and institutional support granted through museums and biennials does function to validate an artist, thus positively affecting prices for their works of art. However, as critical and institutional acclaim build artists’ reputations and create a frenzied market for their works, the very museums that are their early supporters may eventually no longer be able to compete in acquiring pieces. Instead, wealthy collectors from a global base—some of who buy speculatively as an attempt to capitalise on high resale returns, or to increase their social status by trading in cultural and social capital—keep the market energetic and exclusive.

In fact, both large (branded) and small institutions struggle to acquire works by superstar artists, and they are often unable to compete with wealthy individuals. Like Haden-Guest, Thompson documents recent art sales to illustrate this problem, citing the example of the Tate Modern's offer to the Gagosian Gallery of \$2 million for Damien Hirst's work *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*—the Stuffed Shark of the book's title—and being turned down. Eventually, this work of art sold for \$12 million: six times the amount the museum was able to put forward.<sup>4</sup> Thompson also takes the opportunity to put into perspective how the growth of a global economy has created a group of extraordinarily rich individuals, demonstrating that, despite exorbitant prices, the growing financial portfolios of such individuals enable them to continue to purchase contemporary art. Over the course of the last decade, the number of 'mega-rich' individuals around the world who collect contemporary art has increased significantly. This is key to understanding how extreme the art world has become in terms of pricing, and illustrates that the art market may continue to hold strong even in cases of economic downturns in other financial markets.

Although the sway and capital (social and cultural) that prominent individual collectors hold in the art world is significant, museums also embody many of the same traits. Indeed, most agree that museums still have a positive impact in the market of artists that they add to their permanent collections and who they feature in exhibitions—particularly

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<sup>4</sup> The buyer of this work, Steve Cohen, lent this work, on long-term loan, to a large, branded museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

with solo presentations (Pommerehne & Feld 1997; Jeffri 2005). This is a result of growing curatorial agency. The ability of curators to shape innovative and important solo and thematic group exhibitions, along with fostering relationships with artists and collectors, is invaluable to influencing how artists are regarded within the marketplace. To date, the knowledge and scholarship of curators in selecting artists worthy of inclusion in museum exhibitions have been highly regarded by the public, gallery dealers and collectors alike. Curators, and the institutions they work for, have thus far functioned to filter the most pertinent and important works of art of our time. Their collective expertise in building relevant collections and featuring significant artists through exhibitions can introduce an artist to the art market or revitalise a career. As curators 'rediscover' contemporary artists and organise retrospectives that reevaluate their work, there is often a corresponding increase in the market value for their works. A case in point is the art of Ken Price. His 2013 retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in California brought this figure from the 1960s back into the spotlight; shortly thereafter, new auction records were set for his work.

Museums rely on dealers to make artists' works available and provide good prices for their art, often at a discount (Robertson 2005c; Velthuis 2005). In turn, retail galleries rely on museums to help build and sustain the artists' reputations. Alexandra Peers illustrates this case in her article 'Art World Report Card', about the artist Joe Bradley (American, b. 1975). With solo exhibitions at Le Consortium (2014), France and the American Academy in Rome (2013), as well as inclusion in the Whitney Biennial

(2008), Bradley is making a mark in the art world. Currently, however, according to his CV the only museum collection he is included in is the Museum of Modern Art, NY, in all probability because prices for his works have significantly jumped within a short period. Peers charts the rapid rise, stating:

appearing at auction in 2010, his work bought in then at a \$5,000 estimate. A larger work showed up at Phillips six months later and sold for three times' the estimate, or \$60,000. Bradley's art was offered in sales at Phillips and Christie's South Kensington several times in 2010–11. It "graduated" to a Christie's evening sale in October 2011, then selling for about \$80,000. By November 2012 he was bringing \$206,000 at Sotheby's. Then MoMA Curator Laura Hoptman, whose husband also happens to show at Gavin Brown, interviewed Bradley for Interview magazine. (It's a small world.) By 2013, a work he had done the same year sold for \$658,000 at Phillips. (Peers 2014)

With such a swift escalation in prices for his painting, it is not surprising that more museums do not own his work. It is unlikely that any institution would be able to purchase one of his paintings at auction for such a cost; and, while prices at his gallery are more regulated and not based on speculation, it is certain that the auction results have impacted on his price structure. In situations such as this, a museum's reliance on collectors to donate choice works of art to help build and grow its collection becomes crucial. However, particularly in an overheated market, some collectors become reluctant to donate their works; the lure of high profits at auction may shift their original philanthropic intentions, or they may decide to open their own private museums to control the display of their works, as is discussed in the following section.

## Private Collecting—Key Factors and Motivations

Private collectors enter into the contemporary art market for a range of reasons. For some, it is because they truly love art and are connoisseurs; others buy art as a way to gain social capital; and a small percentage think of art as a good economic investment. In their essay 'Factors Affecting Price on the Contemporary Art Market', Dominique Sagot-Duvaroux, Sylvie Pflieger and Bernard Rouget speak of the four types of 'utility' that a collector gets when purchasing a work of art:

- Civic utility, which corresponds to an altruistic need to support art and which is independent of the artist's fame;

- Functional utility corresponding to a need for decoration or to a closed relation between collector and work, which is also supposed to be independent of the artist's reputation;

- Ostentatious utility corresponding to the prestige which is gained from buying works of art, increasing with the artist's fame;

- Financial utility corresponding to prospects of profit as regards art investment, which is less risky when the artist is famous. Out of two equally talented artists, the one who is a star brings more overall utility to the consumer that is why the price of his paintings is higher. (Sagot-Duvaroux, Pflieger & Rouget 1992: 92)

The first and second utilities correspond to connoisseurs and those who want to support artists. The third utility relates to those who attempt to gain cultural, social and symbolic capital through owning noteworthy works of art, and the fourth relates to those who see art as a commodity that can help increase their wealth through investment. As a result of the spread of economic capital, the collector pool is expanding globally. For example, China, India, the Middle East and Russia now have an increased number

of wealthy collectors seriously participating in the art market (Beck 2007a; Adam 2007c; Feigen 2007). This is readily apparent in the sales results at Christie's Contemporary Art Sale on May 13, 2014, when many pieces sold to Asian buyers. Reports about the auction stated that auctioneer Jussi Pylkkanen 'was impressed by the amount of bidding from China, which, he said, shows how global the art market is' (Duray 2014).

The rise of financial markets over the last decade has contributed to the creation of a new affluent class. Many have generated extraordinary capital from gains from investments in the financial markets, and many of these newly wealthy participate in the art market, although they are not purely interested in art alone. Looked at as an alternative investment, the purchasing of art also provides entry into a new social realm in which art becomes the capital (Adam 2007; Beck 2007; Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011; Plattner 1996). Yet some participants, like Steve Cohen, a prominent hedge-fund manager, buy not only for investment but also from an apparent appreciation of the arts. Cohen reportedly purchased Willem de Kooning's *Woman III* for \$137.5 million and Damien Hirst's *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (Beck 2007a, Sproule 2007). Collectors such as these suffuse the art market with tremendous wealth and, according to Iain Robertson, it is this wealth from financial markets that has allowed the art market to fully mature (Robertson 2005d).

## Public Museums Versus Private Museums

This injection of money into the marketplace along with the rise of a new affluent class that uses contemporary art to barter cultural and social capital has a direct effect on institutional collecting. As explored in Chapter 5, museums collect in a thoughtful and deliberate way, looking for works that not only enhance their existing collection, but also pieces that will prove to be relevant in the future. With contemporary art, following trends risks the pitfall of an artist falling into obscurity 50 years later.

Bruce Altshuler, in *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*, discusses how museum purchases, and to a lesser degree the inclusion of work in exhibitions, impact on the market (Altshuler 2005). For him, the likelihood of a particular artist or work of art joining the art historical canon increases through association with a museum. In such cases, the work of art embodies additional symbolic capital. This area is of particular interest to Velthuis, who studied what effect 'institutional recognition' has on an artist's reputation (2005). His findings were that, not only is the artist's reputation enhanced, but the amount a museum pays for a work of art positively affects the value of the work on the art market. Belk also agrees that institutions can influence value. He believes that institutions have more influence than individual collectors, as inclusion in a museum's collection legitimises and consecrates objects.

Furthermore, as museum acquisition budgets can no longer compete with the wealth of private collectors, they lose their ability to influence the market. As such, it is important to note the interaction between museums

and their patrons; museums often court donors, hoping that private collections will, one day, merge with museum collections, as discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

Curator Robert Storr, in his essay 'To Have and to Hold', details the difficulties inherent in the relationships between museums and their patrons (Storr 2005). He outlines how many museums make the mistake of counting on donations from patrons that ultimately fall through, for any number of reasons. Some collectors feel gifts are not as well regarded as purchases.

For example, the American couple Burton and Emily Hall Tremaine, who ranked among the world's biggest collectors in the 1980s, were frequently generous with gifts of art to museums. Yet they noticed that often their gifts disappeared into storage. Displeased with this outcome, the couple decided to sell work to museums rather than donate them. As a dealer recounts: "With good reason, Emily [Tremaine] thought the museums appreciated works most if they had to pay for them" [...] The fact that a museum had to make a sacrifice to purchase an artwork induced curators to exhibit the work more frequently than donated works for which there was no apparent sacrifice'. (Velthuis 2005: 174)

Storr also argues that, not only do patrons stipulate many demands for donations, which can cause gifts to fall through, but also that there is a high level of competition among institutions to gain the favour of a limited number of private collectors who are willing to donate to institutions.

Today, museums compete not only with each other for this favouritism (and hopefully, gifts of art), but also with private foundations and private museums set up by collectors.

Certainly, it is true that many public museums around the world grew from private collections. Notable examples in the United States include the Barnes Collection (PA), the Frick Collection (NY) and the Phillips Collection (Washington, DC). Other great public museums have collections formed from multiple private collections, becoming 'collections of collections'. Institutions such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim (NY), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY), the Museum of Modern Art (NY) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PA) all fall under this category. It is the melding of diverse collections that provides the core strengths of each of these institutions (Dennison 2006; Finkel July 8, 2007). Indeed, for many museums, especially smaller institutions, the holdings in which they are strongest came from significant and focused donations from collectors.

In the last several years, however, in addition to difficulties encountered with purchasing works of art, donations to museums have been falling off (Frey 2000; McNulty May 16, 2007; Plattner 1996). There are several factors involved, including changing tax policies, being able to sell and make a profit at auction and, as is now more often the case, the wish of collectors to open their own private museums, to celebrate their own 'eye' and collecting practices. Demonstrating the wealth and significant collecting power that some individuals hold is the repeated inclusion of several men—Eli Broad, Ronald Lauder, François Pinault and Charles Saatchi, for example—to the yearly 'Power 100' listing of the most influential figures in the art world in *ArtReview* magazine (2001–2006). Not only are they remarkable for their collecting power and social capital, but each of these collectors has opened their own private museums: the

Saatchi Gallery in London, the Palazzo Grassi in Venice and the Neue Gallery in New York. Other major collectors that have opened, or are in the process of developing, private museums or foundations include real estate mogul Eli Broad, Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, the family of Gap Stores proprietor Donald Fisher, singers Elton John and George Michael (and his former partner Kenny Goss), sole heir to the Jumex juice drink fortune Eugenio López, Latin American entrepreneur Bernardo Paz and Don and Mera Rubell. It is precisely this spate of new institutions opening through private means that removes works of art from both the contemporary market and from public institutions (Robertson 2005b).

## **Outline of this Study**

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the actors and events that comprise both the art market and the larger art world described thus far. A basic understanding of how each relates to the other is crucial to grasping the relationships at play in this networking market. Up to this point, my examination has focused on outlining the structure of the market (primary, secondary, tertiary), identifying the participants (private and institutional) and exploring their motivations for purchasing works of art (for the benefit of the public trust for museums, for private collectors as a way to enjoy art and/or to trade in cultural, social and symbolic capital). Now that the foundation is in place, a deeper discussion can unfold to examine how curatorial agency at museums (particularly small to mid-sized institutions)

function within the system, and specifically how they acquire contemporary works of art that will be relevant in the future. By bringing together several different concepts, including Bourdieu's theories of capital and field, Graw's ideas on knowledge and networking markets and Wenger's model of a community of practice, I attempt to interpret the art world in a way that provides a deeper insight into how contemporary collecting is challenging many American museums.

To begin, in Chapter 2 I outline my chosen methodologies for this study, while illustrating the sociological approach behind much of the research. Currently, as a practicing museum curator of contemporary art, my approach is one of auto-ethnography (Emerson 2001). My experience and position provide me with an innate sense of the structure of the art world, as I am a full participant and often have an 'insider' point of view. As a researcher this is helpful, as I have already established contacts who have contributed to my understanding; yet there are times when I need to look at results from an outsider perspective. Throughout the process I actively switched 'hats', as it were, between curator and researcher, although admittedly there is no escaping the filtering of my findings through my experiences and knowledge. Chapter 2 clarifies my dual roles and the strategies I undertook to unearth data about elements of the art world, including art fairs, gallery dealers, museum curators and, importantly, examples of acquisitions.

In Chapter 3 my experiences as a participant observer at several American art fairs demonstrate an aspect of the art market that is actively

growing and can be seen through the filter of Wenger's theory of a community of practice. These proliferating fairs cater to private collectors, leaving museums unable to compete for numerous reasons. As will be seen, museums often do not purchase at these events, yet museum curators and directors do utilise fairs for other purposes, primarily as what Graw identifies as networking markets.

The key actors at art fairs and in the art market are gallery dealers, and they hold the power regarding the placement of a work of art, whether in private hands or institutionally. Chapter 4 delves into their realm, exploring dealers' business practices along with their relationships to public museums and private collectors. I investigate the reasons why it is important for dealers to participate in art fairs, and examine how they view the different private museums opened by collectors. Lastly, I examine how the relationships that dealers forge with curators can facilitate different ways in which museums acquire contemporary art.

After first establishing the collecting philosophies of several museums and their different processes for acquiring contemporary art, Chapter 5 explores the social relationships between curators, private collectors and dealers. Through an examination of curatorial agency within the acquisition process, I begin to outline some of the strategies institutions employ to acquire contemporary works of art. In Chapter 6 I reveal six strategies that small, mid-sized and regional museums pursue to combat rising prices for contemporary art and so continue to collect in this area. By exploring these approaches in detail I am able to illustrate the ways that

museums creatively subvert the art world power system. In particular, I focus on museums dedicated to illustrating the contemporary art historical narrative through owning artworks by canonical artists, rather than museums that have found a niche collecting, for example, specific themes, local or regional artists, or media.

The concluding chapter ties these assorted strings together, painting a picture of how museums acquire contemporary art in a market from which they are often 'priced out'. I elucidate the strategies these institutions employ, and highlight the position museums hold in a networked field in which different forms of capital rule. In addition, Chapter 7 provides some avenues for future research to explore.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the reasoning behind the methodologies I chose to answer my primary research question: how do small, mid-size and regional American art museums collect contemporary art in a market in which prices for contemporary art are higher than ever before? A secondary question stems from the first: if indeed purchases are made, what strategies do the museums employ in order to facilitate these acquisitions? Furthermore, I aim to identify how these museums build and cultivate the social relationships that aid in building their collections. In order to find answers to these questions, I need to engage in the specifics of the art world and how it operates. Repositioning the contemporary art world as a field, and using Bourdieu's theories of field and capital, as described in Chapter 1, has allowed me to classify the art world as a system for further investigation. In so doing, I can address the power structures that emerge when capital and the market intertwine, and what impact this has on a museum's ability to acquire contemporary art.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the actors and key events that comprise the field of contemporary art. I created it as a way to understand how the field is constructed. In order to explore the field as represented in this way, and how contemporary collecting practices can be understood as a result, it was necessary to employ a range of research methods, including questionnaires, participant observation, semi-structured

interviews and case studies (which incorporate several research methods in themselves). While a qualitative approach was the primary instrument to conduct this research, quantitative methods also offered valuable tools to supplement the investigation; secondary analysis of recent auction results were then integrated to help flesh out the data. Each of the methods provided different entry points to this complex system and allowed me to understand the overall structure, as discussed below.

## **Research Methods and Data Sources**

As the art world is, in essence, a social world, the best approach to study it is a qualitative one. As sociologist Jennifer Mason argues,

Qualitative research is [...] grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly 'interpretivist' in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted. While different versions of qualitative research might understand or approach these elements in different ways (for example, focusing on social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions), all will see at least some of these as meaningful elements in a complex—possibly multi-layered and textured—social world (2002: 3).

Another sociologist, Graham Gibbs, outlines additional reasons to embark upon qualitative research. The following resonate closely with why I chose this particular approach:

- Qualitative researchers are interested in accessing experiences, interactions and documents in their natural contexts and in a way that gives room to the particularities of them and the materials in which they are studied.

- Qualitative research refrains from setting up a well-defined concept of what is studied and from formulating hypotheses in the beginning in order to test them. Rather, concepts (or hypotheses, if they are used) are developed and refined in the process of research.
- Researchers themselves are an important part of the research process, either in terms of their own experiences in the field and with the reflexivity they bring to the role—as are members of the field under study. (Gibbs and Flick 2007: xi)

The first point is important, as it highlights the necessity of being aware of and developing a deep understanding of the various contexts within which the practices to do with the objects being studied take place. His second point demonstrates the nature of flexibility needed in my research methods. While I began this project with an idea that there is an existing problem—that of small to mid-sized museums being ‘priced out’ of acquiring contemporary works of art—a varied qualitative approach allowed for refinement of my question. This enabled me to not only address the problem and the reasons it exists, but also to focus on the solutions and strategies adopted by these museums to combat the issue. In his final point, Gibbs stresses the importance of employing qualitative methods when the researcher has experience in the field, as I do. Thus, the nature of this project necessitated a qualitative approach.

I set out to answer my research question by embarking on field work in a structured way, to glean information and then dig deeper through more intensive means. First, I visited several American art fairs to observe relations between dealers and collectors, and how museums exploit these events. Second, I sent questionnaires to a number of gallery dealers.

Third, I employed semi-structured interviews with a number of gallery dealers, museum curators and museum directors. Finally, I narrowed my focus by interviewing a select group of museum curators and directors for case studies that investigate the innovative collection strategies that museums are now utilising. This structure of gathering information is reflected in the narrative both of the following sections and the thesis itself. Balancing out the fieldwork involved an extensive evaluation of the existing literature, meticulous keeping of field notes, an examination of secondary sources, such as auction results, and an analysis of all of the gathered data. The following sections detail these investigations.

### **Fieldwork Among One's Own People**

To understand the art market further, as well as identify the main participants, I embarked on participant observation in the setting of several American contemporary art fairs—the nexus of the art market. The practice of participant observation 'is often one element in a broader "ethnographic" approach, involving the use of a range of other research methods' (Mason 2002: 84). This is true in my case, as I employed a variety of methods throughout the entirety of the research project. However, to explore the environment of the art fairs and its associated activities, to witness how sales were made, to see the building of networks in action, and to investigate how the art fairs functioned as a community of practice, necessitated the approach of participant observation.

It is important to identify key elements of the fairs themselves to investigate not only what activities take place at these fairs, but also the meanings behind the activities. Spradley suggests that

Every social situation can be identified by three primary elements: a place, actors, and activities. In doing participant observation you will locate yourself in some place; you will watch actors of one sort or another and become involved with them; you will observe and participate in activities. These primary elements do not exhaust the social and cultural meaning of social situations, but they do serve as a springboard into understanding them. (1980: 39-40)

As such, I adopted this approach at the three most established and recognised art fairs held on American soil at the time: Art Basel | Miami Beach (ABMB) in Florida, The New York Armory Show in New York and Art Chicago/NEXT in Chicago.

Art Basel | Miami Beach (held every December) is the largest fair in the world, and second only in prestige to Art Basel, Switzerland. ABMB accurately describes itself in the following manner:

Art Basel Miami Beach is the most important art show in the United States, a cultural and social highlight for the Americas. As the sister event of Switzerland's Art Basel, the most prestigious art show worldwide for the past 39 years, Art Basel Miami Beach combines an international selection of top galleries with an exciting program of special exhibitions, parties and crossover events featuring music, film, architecture and design...An exclusive selection of more than 250 leading art galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa will exhibit 20th and 21st century artworks by over 2,000 artists. The exhibiting galleries are among the world's most respected art dealers, offering exceptional pieces by both renowned artists and cutting-edge newcomers. (MCH Swiss Exhibition (holding) Ltd. 2008)

The Armory Show in New York (held every March) claims to be 'the world's leading art fair devoted exclusively to contemporary art since its introduction in 1999. The fair is the successor to the highly acclaimed Gramercy International Art Fairs that attracted thousands to their New York, Los Angeles and Miami shows between 1994 and 1998' (The Armory Show 2009). Lastly, Art Chicago (held in May) underwent major restructuring several years ago; the final event was in 2011. While not as prestigious as ABMB or the Armory Show, Art Chicago and the ancillary fair NEXT brought over 200 exhibitors to the Midwest, and featured established galleries which often do not participate in other fairs. In addition, marketed as cultural and social destinations, secondary satellite fairs, including Bridge, Pulse and Scope, among others, often occur simultaneously with these major art fairs.

I visited these three fairs for a total of fifteen days, spread throughout 2009 and 2010. Despite the fact that this was not a prolonged period of time, my prior involvement in the field as a curator of contemporary art and my existing contacts with key informants provided me with the ability to enculturate myself easily. While attending these fairs along with their ancillary events, my unquestioned and accepted presence allowed for cultural inferences and data gathering that supported my initial suppositions. Spradley states that 'Making inferences involves reasoning from evidence (what we perceive) or from premises (what we assume)', and by doing so we can find out what people *know* (Spradley 1980: 10).

I selected participant observation as a methodology, as it allows for an investigation of the fair environment while providing an opportunity to visually monitor and identify the activities and participants in art sales situations, gauge the economic health of the art market and view the educational elements that provide an academic air to the fairs. Observing buyers in their 'natural' habitats—or one of them—is particularly revealing of the hierarchical nature of the art world and the social relationships that drive it. In addition, attending three different fairs allowed me to 'compare the way similar events unfold on different days, under different circumstances, and at different times of the year' (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002: 77). Observing three fairs also allowed for analysis of what Spradley terms 'clusters of social situations', according to which a social situation involves multiple locations, and 'networks of social situations' where the same people participate in different situations (Spradley 1980). Building upon Spradley's ideas of networks of social situations, these fairs in many ways exemplify not only the range of a networked market, as defined by Graw, but also what Wenger outlines as a community of practice that meets at various locations. Emphasising this, many of my conversations with dealers provided an intimate glimpse into social and professional relationships along with the financial mechanisms driving this market. In addition, I witnessed how museum professionals position themselves within this arena.

Unlike some researchers, my position as a participant observer in the setting of art fairs was one of auto-ethnography. Emerson defines this process as a way to draw data directly from the fieldworker's own

experiences and subjective insights (Emerson 2001: 125). He further elaborates on this concept by invoking Hayano's (1979) formulation of auto-ethnography as involving 'fieldwork among one's own people where researchers possess the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognized both by themselves and the people of whom they are a part' (Emerson 2001: 125). For me, the realm of art fairs is a familiar world; one in which I am fully integrated, and in which I have a tacit understanding of the culture (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002). My position as a curator fully integrates me into this segment of the art world, and I enjoy established relationships with many art dealers, other museum curators, and several collectors. These relationships have a basis in trust, allowing me access as a researcher into a context that, while it is open to the public, consists of many closed-door dealings.

Additionally, my experiences and previous participation as an art professional provide fluency with the verbal and nonverbal cultural language, and the knowledge of what are deemed within the system to be proper responses. Not only does my experience impact on the ways in which I interact with other participants, but it also shapes my interpretations of my encounters and observations. As a researcher, however, I have attempted to take a step back, to make the familiar unfamiliar in order to view these situations—and the cultural patterns that exist in this setting—with a fresh and critical eye, balancing actual observations with my accrued knowledge born from past experiences.

The use of this particular methodology, however, provided a particular challenge. Art fairs are ticketed events open to the public and involving thousands of participants, and so it was not feasible to identify my role to all. Instead, I walked the line between covert and overt activity (see Figure 2), an approach based on a sociological methodology. While I did not hide or obscure my role or the intentions behind my research, the size and nature of the event led to my inability to widely broadcast my objectives or obtain signed consent from all those being observed. This approach needed a clearly defined ethics strategy to protect all involved. While researching in a semi-covert situation, where private information, often of a financial nature, is discussed and easily overheard, it was important to ensure that I handled all the gathered data, especially data that I observed without explicit consent, in a particularly sensitive way. To guide me in this matter, I sought the advice of two ethics officers in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester: Katy Bunning and Dr. Giasemi Vavoula. They helped ensure that the solutions I designed to protect myself and others were in place. As the fairs are a publicly occurring event, participants do openly reveal much information; however, I focused only on information directly relevant to the research goals. Additionally, in the process of writing up this material, I anonymised comments not only from information gleaned from sources during participant observation, but also later, when I included statements from interviews. In such cases, I tried to approach my decision to include names or to anonymise quotes sensitively, choosing to err on the side of caution with any comments that I thought might be inflammatory. With this

strategy in place, my application for ethics approval was granted (See Appendix 1).



**Figure 2: The position of the researcher between covert and overt activity**

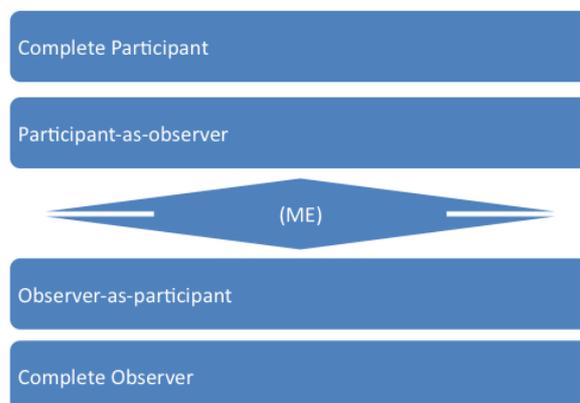
Nonetheless, working more covertly allowed me the benefit of being able to witness and record things that may not have been readily apparent if I was working overtly. Emerson discusses the value in this:

First, fieldworkers may adopt a covert role in order to gain access to settings which would exclude an openly identified researcher. Covert fieldwork can help penetrate the various fronts, lies, and evasions that groups put up to keep outsiders, including fieldworkers, from learning the truth. Secondly, covert field roles may help minimize reactive effects and circumvent likely efforts to hide important matters from observers. The fieldworker will be treated as just another member in the setting, so that any effects from one's presence or behaviour may be regarded as 'natural' for this setting. (Emerson 2001: 115)

Furthering this idea, David Waddington expands upon R.G. Burgess' categories of researcher identities; the spectrum spans four levels between covert and overt:

1. The complete participant, who operates covertly, concealing any intention to observe the setting.
2. The participant-as-observer, who forms relationships and participates in activities but makes no secret of an intention to observe events;
3. The observer-as-participant, who maintains only superficial contacts with the people being studied (for example, by asking the occasional questions); and
4. The complete observer, who merely stands back and 'eavesdrops' on the proceedings. (Waddington 2004:154)

In looking at these categorisations of identities, my role as both a curator and a researcher positions me squarely in the middle (see Figure 3). Key informants were selected from pre-existing connections with gallery dealers, curators and collectors, and these individuals often introduced me to new informants. Although I was not purchasing works of art for a collection or a museum, I did inquire about sales, and witness transactions taking place. Additionally, I simultaneously worked in a professional capacity and as an outside observer by participating in events such as looking at art and attending panels, lectures and social activities.



**Figure 3: Burgess' categories delineating the different levels of participation adapted to include my position (Burgess 1984)**

In fact, it is my position as a curator that allowed me entry to many of these events and activities via VIP passes provided to art professionals. In many ways, although I was an active participant, pure observation came to the fore. The fairs are chaotic, with an atmosphere of collectors clamouring for the dealers' attention. As such, not all dealers were available to engage in conversations, as potential sales took priority. As an observer, however, my presence was inconspicuous, as I blended in with others who were thronging the fair looking at art. Additionally, many visitors to art fairs take notes regarding work that they like, and it is not unusual to see people actively engaged in writing. Thus, my log keeping of observations was not out of place. As I walked through the fairs, I recorded my impressions of what I witnessed in the moment. When unable to take notes immediately—for example, when engaged in social activities—I completed them shortly after they occurred. Additionally, at the Armory Show, Art Chicago and Next, I took photographs. At ABMB, however, cameras and recording equipment were not allowed within the fair.

The resulting descriptive narratives and the analysis of the data gathered form the basis of Chapter 3. Clearly delineating the art world as an ecosystem, Chapter 3 further details the data collected through participant observation, as well as painting, with broad strokes, my experiences of the activities of the art fairs and my understanding of how they are positioned within the art world.

## Questionnaires

After witnessing how the art world comes together at art fairs, and following preliminary conversations with gallery dealers and curators during these events, I knew that I needed to have more in-depth conversations with these actors. In order to lay the groundwork and introduce my research project to a group of gallery dealers I utilised the qualitative method of open-ended questionnaires. I envisioned that this method would allow me to tease out some general information, such as how many artists the gallery worked with, how often they sold works to museums, and whether they extended discounts to museums and private collectors—and if so, what were the amounts and rationales behind the discounts. I hoped this would set the stage for further qualitative investigation by targeting candidates for later interviews.

The decision to employ self-administered, open-ended questionnaires stemmed from the desire to reveal the individual experiences of gallery dealers in their encounters with museums. I believed this format would allow ‘study participants [to] provide answers in their own words, no researcher bias is introduced by presenting or predetermining answers’ (Peterson 2000: 33). In particular, I hoped that the short, focused questionnaires would aid in generating statistical information regarding art sales, as well as provide information that could be generalised to reflect gallery sales practices. I believed that, since the research question requires ‘overt information from individuals’, questionnaires were the best tool to find out information (Peterson 2000: 13). Furthermore, I believed

that the confidential and (if so-wished) anonymous nature of the questionnaires provided the opportunity for candid and honest responses.

My goal was to send out one hundred questionnaires to various gallery dealers, with the aim of a return rate of 25%. I decided early on to focus the questionnaires on gallery dealers exclusively, as they hold information on what works of art are selling in today's market, and to whom. This type of information is not readily available, as the art market is one of the last unregulated markets and financial information is not often publicised (Adam 2009). Thus, information about where the works were selling could lead directly to curators at museums who purchased contemporary works of art. Comprising nineteen questions (see Appendix 2) and administered by the web-site Survey Monkey, the design of the questionnaire was meant to lead directly to those who would be willing to further participate in the study. Furthermore, I hoped these questionnaires would provide initial data that I could analyse through the NVivo software program, to generate a full picture of contemporary art sales and discounts extended to both museums and private collectors. I planned to send the questionnaires to gallery dealers in both Los Angeles and New York, as these two cities host the greatest concentration of galleries in the United States. Additionally, these locations have the highest number of established galleries working with 'superstar' artists.

Prior to sending out a large group of questionnaires I set up a small sampling frame of five gallery dealers with whom I had previous dealings, to test the questionnaires and help me refine them. This proved to be a

crucial and revealing step. Despite my prior connections with these gallery dealers, and even after numerous attempts to obtain responses, only one dealer responded. His answers revealed, however, that his gallery only rarely sold to museums, and thus he was not a good candidate to interview further.

While, on the face of it, the step of conducting questionnaires seemed to be a failure, in fact it provided significant information by proving that direct contact with individuals would be more productive. In my attempts to generate responses, I had conversations that led me to believe that the dealers were more likely to share information through direct interviews. Thus, I refined my fieldwork methodology by abandoning the use of questionnaires and began the next step: that of conducting semi-structured interviews.

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

As I learned from the unsuccessful attempts with the questionnaires, people were more willing to talk one-on-one. Thus, I ruled out focus groups, as the professionals I sought information from did not openly share business practices or talk openly about their relationships. Instead, the method most suited to gathering the data I sought was that of semi-structured interviews, as they are a way of 'understanding social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality

is what people perceive it to be' (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 26).

Furthermore, as my research is interested in revealing the underlying social relationships at play in the art world, qualitative interviewing became the perfect vehicle to reveal this social world. As Mason argues, the use of qualitative interviews 'suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore' (Mason 2002: 63).

In early 2011 I approached gallery dealers via email for interviews for the same reasons that I sought their insights through questionnaires: they are positioned in the centre of the art world, and the information gathered could lead to identifying the best candidates from the museum sector to interview later. For my interview sampling strategy I targeted gallery dealers who work for (or founded) reputable, established galleries that had been in business for at least five years prior to the time of our meeting. Each gallery that I approached dealt primarily with contemporary artists, and many sold works by artists considered 'superstars' (Chong 2005; Frey 2000; Plattner 1996; Robertson 2005; Sagot-Duvaroux, Pflieger and Rouget 1992). Many of these galleries also participate in various art fairs, and thus have an international presence. I sent inquiries to seventeen different galleries, approximately half of which I had had prior dealings with. Of this group, eleven dealers from ten galleries agreed to speak with me, although, due to scheduling conflicts, two were unable to meet. From this group, I had had a previous working relationship with four of the dealers. Overall, this sampling group provided a representative sample of

galleries that had been in business for varying lengths of time, had worked with a range of emerging to 'superstar' artists, had sold works of art to museums, and had held to standard business practices. As such, the data revealed helped me to generalise about what occurs in the broader art market in the gallery system, thereby allowing me to gain a clear understanding of their practices and what effects they currently have on small to mid-sized museum purchases.

In February 2011 I travelled to New York to meet with these nine gallery dealers. The interviewees included Carolyn Alexander, owner and director of Alexander and Bonin Gallery; Serra Pradhan, director of the Marianne Boesky Gallery; James Cohan, owner and director of the James Cohan Gallery; Mark Hughes, former director of Galerie Lelong; Jay Gorney, former director of contemporary art at Mitchell, Innes and Nash; Sally Morgan Lehman and Jay Lehman, owners of Morgan Lehman Gallery; Wendy Olsoff, founder of P.P.O.W; and one other individual, who requested anonymity for themselves and their gallery. These conversations with the dealers revealed what types of art sells, the process of a sale, why certain works of art are significant for purchase, and how both public and private acquisitions occur. Other questions put to the dealers explored their relationships with private collectors and museums and the effect economic shifts have on their business. Analysis of the data gleaned from interviews with these gallery dealers forms the basis of Chapter 4.

For my research project, it was also necessary to interview people from another profession: curators at regional or small to mid-sized art museums that collect contemporary art. Speaking to professionals who are working together, yet who come from opposite sides of the field, has generated balanced data. Rubin suggests that '[O]bserving life from separate yet overlapping angles makes the researcher more hesitant to leap to conclusions and encourages more nuanced analysis' (Rubin 2005: 4). To that end, I approached ten different curators by email, three of whom I knew personally. For others, I either made use of introductions from various artists, or contacted cold. This yielded a higher rate of acceptance than with the dealers, as seven curators at six museums indicated their willingness to speak with me, including my three acquaintances. A representative from a university art museum also participated. Similar to my approach to the galleries selected, I imposed a sampling structure. For my interviews with curators, I looked to museums that had active acquisition programs for contemporary art. All the museums that participated in the study differed slightly in their mission: some collected contemporary art exclusively, while others were encyclopaedic in nature, with a dedicated contemporary art department. In order to look at the difficulties surrounding contemporary art collecting in a wider context, I ensured that all the selected institutions took a broad approach to collecting contemporary art, rather than focused on specific or limited media, regions or styles. Geographically spread throughout the United States, these museums offered a well-rounded sampling of the small to mid-sized institutions in a variety of regions outside of major metropolitan

areas. Despite their differences, their approaches to collecting contemporary art allowed for generalisations regarding various acquisitions processes in these types of museums to emerge.

In April, May and June of 2011, I spoke with Lisa Dent, formerly of the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio; Elizabeth Brown, formerly of the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, Washington; Rene Barilleaux at the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; Lisa Hostetler, formerly of the Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Suzanne Weaver, formerly of the Speed Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; and two others who wished that they and their museums remain anonymous. Due to the wide geographic distribution, only a few of the interviews with museum professionals took place in person. Instead, I conducted the majority of the interviews via telephone. Each interview tackled subjects ranging from relationships with donors and patrons, relationships with galleries and auction houses and the challenges of acquisition during a period of widespread economic shifts, to the process and goals for building their permanent collections (see Appendix 4). Again, like the interviews with the gallery dealers, my initial set of questions for the curators served only as a guide, allowing me to probe and clarify answers while sparking various other avenues to follow up. The analysis of the resulting data from the curator interviews provides the structure for Chapter 5.

All of the interviews, with both gallery dealers and curators, embodied several of the components that sociologists Steinar Kvale and Svend

Brinkmann define as able to elicit both factual and meaningful information.

They state that these types of interviews function in the following manner.

Qualitative. The qualitative interview seeks qualitative knowledge as expressed in normal language; it does not aim at quantification. The interview aims at nuance accounts of different aspects of the interviewee's life world; it works with words and not with numbers. The precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation in qualitative interviews correspond to exactness in quantitative measurements.

Descriptive. The qualitative interviewer encourages the subjects to describe as precisely as possible what they experience and feel, and how they act. The focus is on nuanced descriptions that depict the qualitative diversity, the many differences and varieties of a phenomenon, rather than ending up with fixed categorizations.

Specificity. Descriptions of specific situations and actions are elicited, not general opinions. On the basis of comprehensive accounts of specific situations and events, the interviewer will be able to arrive at meanings on a concrete level, instead of general opinions. (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009)

As a result of these qualities, I was able to gather a great deal of data to work with.

While I employed a similar format for each interview session, with specific questions I hoped to find answers to (see Appendix 3 and 4), each interview was semi-structured in format. Individual answers often necessitated new lines of inquiry, as well as the flexibility to follow these different paths (Mason 2002). Prior to the start of all of the interviews, both with gallery dealers and curators, I shared my research aims with participants, made clear how I intended to use the data, assured them of confidentiality if they required it, and obtained informed consent. All interviews conformed to prescribed ethical standards. Each interview lasted, on average, one hour. I taped each interview and transcribed it

quickly thereafter. Directly following each interview, I recorded my reflections, impressions and observations in my field notes. Throughout the interviewing process, I engaged in reflexive analysis as I tried to clarify how my professional experiences added to or conflicted with the data gathered, while also remaining objective as a researcher. I also employed a more systematic analysis of meaning that emerged as I compiled transcripts and field notes later.

### **Narrowing in on Specific Acquisition Strategies Through Case Studies**

My initial semi-structured interviews with various curators provided a route to specific case studies which could then be explored in detail. In these initial interviews, the curators alluded to strategies their museums employed for purchasing works of art. Curious as to the details of how these purchases occurred, I narrowed down six particular cases to study in more depth as a research strategy. These were approaches that warranted further investigation; to understand the complexities of these events, I interviewed two curators and one museum director about their experiences with acquisitions. These interviews focused on their reasoning for selecting particular works of art and how they fitted into each museum's collecting mission, along with posing the following questions: how did the transaction transpire? Who were the key players involved in the acquisition? Were there any special circumstances to the acquisitions? In addition, how long did it take to finalise the sales? Closely examining these

discrete elements illuminated the whole process, and the resulting generalisations provided crucial information for unpacking the larger research questions. These ‘how and why’ questions regarding specific acquisitions demonstrate the reasoning behind the selection of case study research, as sociologist Robert Yin explains: “‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are more *explanatory* and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research strategies. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence’ (Yin 2003: 6).

Case study methodology has wide ranging definitions throughout the literature, but my use of it aligns closely with J. C. Mitchell’s definition, as relayed by sociologist Norman Blaikie: ‘we may characterise a case study as a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principle’ (Blaikie 2000: 217). Looking at the specific events and the particular sets of circumstances that led to these diverse practices of museum acquisition allowed me to examine and evaluate six different strategies in use by museums today.

Furthermore, my case studies fit into two other categories that Blaikie models on Gluckman’s terms: first, an ‘apt illustration, or a description of an event in which some general principle is in operation’; second, ‘an analysis of social situation’ which ‘involves a more complex collection of connected events that occur in a limited time span, and which demonstrate the operation of general principles of social organisation’ (Blaikie 2000:

218-219). Although I studied specific acquisitions that occurred over a limited time span, the conditions set in place for each of the acquisitions are repeatable in the future, not only at these specific museums but also at other museums. Thus, my research relates to the first category. It also relates to the second category in that my investigation reveals the ways in which museums cultivate patrons through social events and opportunities in order to facilitate acquisitions. Lastly, my investigation of these six strategies explores what Yin terms 'revelatory cases' (Yin 2003). Blaikie defines revelatory cases as investigating 'a situation where some phenomenon has not been studied before; where an opportunity arises to research something that has been previously inaccessible' (Blaikie 2000: 221). I believe that my research is the first to disclose these various strategies in any detail.

Specifically, in Chapter 6 I reveal my analysis of these discrete acquisitions. The interviews and resulting data relay the story of how the following artists' works ended up in museum collections: Chakia Booker's sculpture at the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; a Kerry James Marshall painting at the Birmingham Museum of Art in Birmingham, Alabama; a photographic installation by Fred Wilson, shared by the Birmingham Museum of Art and the Memphis Brooks Museum in Tennessee; and a Willie Doherty video installation at the Speed Museum in Louisville, Kentucky. Additionally, I explore an innovative acquisition strategy pioneered by the Dallas Museum of Art in conjunction with multiple private collectors.

These selected case studies have been chosen to provide naturalistic data that demonstrate that regional, small and mid-size museums continue to struggle to acquire certain types of works today. However, they also illustrate the creative partnerships these museums now employ as alternative solutions for making acquisitions.

## **Field Notes and the Use of NVivo**

I also made use of supplementary methods to organise and analyse my data, in addition to the major components of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the exploration of specific case studies. As mentioned previously, keeping detailed field notes was an integral part of the process. While, on the surface, the creation of field notes appears to be a basic exercise, sociologists Kathleen Musante DeWalt and Billie DeWalt explain its importance:

Doing detailed field notes is an important means of training one's mind. As one replays (in the mind) and recounts (in field notes) conversations and events, many different details emerge than when one just simply participates...Nonverbal expression and gestures are also important to understanding what is going on. Attention to detail in observation should also include noting nonverbal cues and communication. (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002: 74)

Notes undertaken during participant observation and in the following individual interviews generated important supplementary material. Annotating in an ethnographic manner visual observations relating to date, time, place, behaviours, physical descriptions of environment, general mood of social actors and overall impressions aided in the interpretive

process of the research. In addition, keeping field notes became essential when interviewing as a way to document conversations that occurred after the recording device was turned off.

In particular, my field notes helped track my progress, and allowed for preliminary analysis that guided further research. By looking through my notes, I pinpointed developing themes and targeted specific areas that needed further investigation. Most importantly, my field notes become a reflexive tool or reflexive diary (Gibbs and Flick 2007). In thinking through the process and writing up the field notes, I continually gained insight into, and become more cognisant of, my thought process. Since I am situated within the very world I am researching (the art world) as a contemporary art curator, the self-scrutinising process of creating and working through my field notes continually helped me test out and eliminate any biases, while allowing me to incorporate my background knowledge when appropriate. This process ensured that I remained open to interpreting the data as presented, without preconceptions.

In practical terms, I initially handwrote the field notes, including reactions and observations, questions, and ideas for further inquiry, during the participant observation process, and both during and following interviews. For example, for the gallery dealer interviews, where I met with the subjects in person, I quickly recorded my observations about the demeanour of the interviewee, their reactions to the questions and any areas of discussion that stood out in my memory. These were later compared to the transcripts to see if non-verbal cues revealed additional

information. For the interviews I conducted over the phone, I still recorded my impressions of how forthright, or not, I sensed the person was, in addition to any other reactions or questions that the interview raised. In both of these cases, and in particular with my field notes relating to participant observation at fairs, I established what sociologist Nicholas H. Wolfinger terms 'salience hierarchy' (Wolfinger 2002: 89). He defines this as the observations that strike the researcher as 'the most noteworthy, the most interesting, or the most telling' (Wolfinger 2002). He goes on to state that researchers often record what stands out, and that these observations often stand out because they deviate from what the researcher expects to see (Wolfinger 2002). These deviant cases or things that stand out are higher in the hierarchy of salient information recorded. Thus, the term 'salience hierarchy' is particularly apt in capturing the type of information recorded at the art fairs, as the amount of observable interactions in these environments is often overwhelming.

Later, I embarked upon the extensive process of indexing, cataloguing and analysing my handwritten notes with the aid of the analysis software program NVivo. I selected NVivo 8, as its organisational capacity, structure and flexibility provides the perfect platform to sort, search and cross-reference data across the various research methods, and allows for in-depth coding and analysis. Additionally, NVivo enabled me to create memos during analysis as a way to synthesise the material. Drawing on Richardson, Gibbs defines these as 'theoretical notes', stating they are 'hunches, hypotheses, connections, alternative interpretations, critiques of what you are doing/thinking/seeing' (Gibbs and Flick 2007: 31). Data

analysis incorporated several techniques and discourses. For example, I noted patterns, compared structures, and interpreted and condensed meaning.

The capacity of NVivo to effectively aid in coding proved to be very beneficial. The large data set compiled using a variety of methodologies called for a wide range of codes. Gibbs describes coding as 'a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it' (Gibbs and Flick 2007: 38). He continues to define two different approaches to coding: concept driven and data driven (Gibbs and Flick 2007). My use of coding stemmed from a combination of the two. It was concept driven, in that I generated a set of codes prior to analysis that I based upon thematic ideas that originated from my previous knowledge of the topic. These codes, for example, included basic categories for each of the art fairs and for the various actors (museum curator, museum director, gallery dealer, artist, new collectors, established collectors etc.) involved, and codes for the activities that took place (including looking at art, purchasing art, selling art, participating in supplementary activities etc.). On the other hand, it was also necessary to include data driven codes that emerged from themes in the material itself. Furthermore, I felt it important to use line-by-line coding of the material so as not to let any preconceptions or presuppositions resulting from my involvement in the art world to alter the data. The resulting analysis, which revealed patterns and relationships, is the basis for the written thesis.

## Secondary Data Analysis

Lastly, to understand fully the art market and the escalating prices for contemporary art it was necessary to embark on one additional method: data analysis of secondary sources, such as auction records. These auction records, along with databases such as *ArtNet* and results in the *The Art Newspaper*, are a rich source of data. Extracting information from these sources helps illuminate the phenomenon of increasing prices for contemporary works of art at auction. The nature of these data sets necessitated not only the analysis of the material, but also the study of it in a quantitative manner. Prices ultimately are sets of numbers that can reflect various pieces of information. By statistically noting, for example, how many pieces sold for a million dollars or more, I could make observations on the economic robustness of the art market. The results underlie the analysis and suppositions made throughout the thesis.

While an in-depth study of all contemporary auction prices is beyond the scope of this research project, I did examine recent and record-breaking auction results. Focusing on the period 2011-2014, this study of auction records reflected the growth and recovery of the art market after the recession starting in 2008. As seen in Chapter 1, this period witnessed extraordinary selling prices for contemporary pieces at auction.

Various factors, including size, medium, and whether or not a work is from a particular series or from a particular collection, can all influence prices. Certainly, prices at auction are not reflective of the prices of works sold through dealers. However, consistently high auction prices inevitably

inflate gallery prices. By noting which artists' works steadily sell at high prices, particularly for over a million dollars, it is easy to determine those artists whose works are no longer within the reach of museums—especially smaller and mid-sized museums. This in turn illustrates whether it is viable for museums to purchase contemporary art at auction, what effect high-prices have on their ability to collect, and whether they can compete with private collectors for these artworks. Furthermore, charting high auction results helps to elucidate how social relationships and economic factors combine to create value, providing the backdrop for discussing museum acquisitions.

## **Conclusion**

The body of research involved in this project consists of many interrelated facets. Each plays a specific role, and investigates different, but linked, data. In analysing the information, I employed a triangulated approach as described by Mason: 'At its best, I think the concept of triangulation—conceived as multiple methods—encourages the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles, and to explore their intellectual puzzle in a rounded and multi-faceted way' (2002: 190). However, underlying all of my analysis is an interpretive, ethnographic approach that ties all the threads together.

Inherent in this study are limitations. First is the variable nature of the current economy. While this is an exciting aspect of the research—to be in

the middle of shifting conditions, and to be able to chart the changes—it relates very specifically to this time period. However, the strategies in use at the museums I investigated were all fiscally responsible. Thus, even if the economy improves, and philanthropic giving to museums escalates so that museums are no longer ‘priced out’ of contemporary art purchases, I believe they will continue to employ these strategies, for reasons explored in Chapter 6. Additionally, as the art world is unregulated, and there is an air of secrecy concerning financial information, I feared that my interviewees might have been reluctant to be candid and completely honest. However, I found all the participants to be forthright and open with me. While very few disclosed actual purchase amounts, I found that I could glean enough information to not only draw informed conclusions, but also to paint a clear picture of where museums fit within the art market and the art world.

Lastly, as described above, it is certain that my role as a contemporary curator endows me with a particular viewpoint and has shaped my research questions. Despite my connection to the subject, my investigations were not driven by any definite preconceptions; instead, I sought to challenge my assumptions and arguments by discovering if indeed small, mid-sized and regional museums face difficulties in acquiring certain types of contemporary art, what those difficulties are, and what solutions are currently in place.

# Chapter 3: Navigating the Cultural Ecosystem of Art Fairs

## Introduction

Acquiring works of contemporary art by well-established artists is a competitive endeavour leaving many museums, particularly small to mid-sized institutions, out of the game. Sales to private collectors, gallery dealers and corporations now dominate the market. An investigation of art fairs is extremely helpful in identifying and understanding the role of key participants in the market, and also in starting to comprehend how and why small to mid-sized art institutions have difficulties participating fully in this market. The environment of the fairs provides an opportunity to visually monitor and identify the activities and participants in art sales situations as well as gauge the economic health of the art market.

Observing private collectors in one of their 'natural habitats' reveals the social relationships between collectors, curators and dealers. In this chapter, I explore how the contemporary art world system (see Figure 1) revolves around the axis of dealer and collector at the intersecting point of the art fair. After introducing the different fairs, I examine the social setting both in terms of social environments and physical layouts; I investigate how the art market and the art world come together at the fairs; I observe how fairgoers involve themselves in a community of practice; and I illustrate how both dealers and museums utilise the format of the fair to court collectors.

## The Fairs

Art fairs are global events bringing together a cross-section of all of the various art world participants (Figure 1): an international mix of museum curators and directors, collectors and art dealers. Art fairs clearly fit Graw's description of a networking market as a 'market wherever its participants interact with one another' (Graw 2009: 11). Furthermore, the fairs can be seen as one segment of Graw's idea of a divided market of knowledge, described earlier, sitting alongside museums, large-scale exhibitions, symposia and publications, among others (Graw 2009).

In fact, art fairs take up a particular position in Graw's market of knowledge in that they embody the perfect overlap of commercial and educational opportunities. As hubs that bring together participants from all facets of the art world while combining sales and knowledge building, art fairs also become perfect locations for communities of practice to develop. It is at the fairs that art collectors and professionals share 'ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories, and documents' as a way to build knowledge and share resources (Wenger, McDermott & Synder 2002: 29). These ideas are at the core of Etienne Wenger's theory of communities of practice and manifest in various ways at art fairs. For example, through social and networking interactions, conversations and panel discussions, participants—collectors, curators and gallery dealers—become aware of various trends in the art world. This allows them to participate in a way that not only allows for knowledge building, but also ensures that the participants retain their power as 'tastemakers' rather than as followers

who may not be 'in the know' as to who are the most important artists of the moment.

At the annual round of art fairs, the players in the market meet and the dealers do a major portion of their business. As such, the fairs become a microcosm of the art world. As my research focuses on how the collecting programmes at small, mid-sized and regional American museums are impacted by the current market, I chose to explore the top three art fairs held on American soil: ArtBasel | Miami Beach in Miami, Florida (ABMB); The Armory Show in New York City; and Art Chicago/NEXT in Illinois.<sup>5</sup> Each fair possesses its own personality, honed throughout the years. While there is much crossover in the programmes, the art on view and audience attendance, each fair has its own distinct brand. As such, it was important to look at each of these fairs individually to view both the commonalities and the differences. In addition, attending the three different fairs allowed me to compare the way similar events unfold on different days, under different circumstances and at different times of the year (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002: 77).

In 2009, ArtBasel | Miami Beach (ABMB) featured 250 art galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa, showcasing modern and contemporary art. The organisers boasted that over 42,000 people attended the fair and over 100 museum groups were officially registered to visit (Fitz & Co. 2009). Certainly, with these kinds of numbers

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<sup>5</sup> These were the major fairs in the US at the time I undertook my fieldwork. In 2012, Art Chicago cancelled their event, and a new fair, Expo Chicago, took its place. Furthermore, Frieze, another leading and important fair, began hosting their fair in New York in 2012, after the completion of fieldwork.

it is evident that many members of the public visited the fair, but many of the visitors to ABMB and the other art fairs came from the art world, attending in order to participate in this community of practice and connect with other members. In 2010, The Armory Show attracted 60,000 visitors—4,000 more than the previous year—and its organisers claimed that there were hundreds of visitors associated with museums and institutions who viewed approximately 250 galleries (Garcia-Fenech 2010a). Lastly, Art Chicago (held concurrently with NEXT: The Invitational Exhibition of Emerging Art), while not as prestigious as ArtBasel | Miami Beach or the Armory Show, reportedly had 50,000 visitors to the more than 200 exhibitors in 2010 (Garcia-Fenech 2010b).

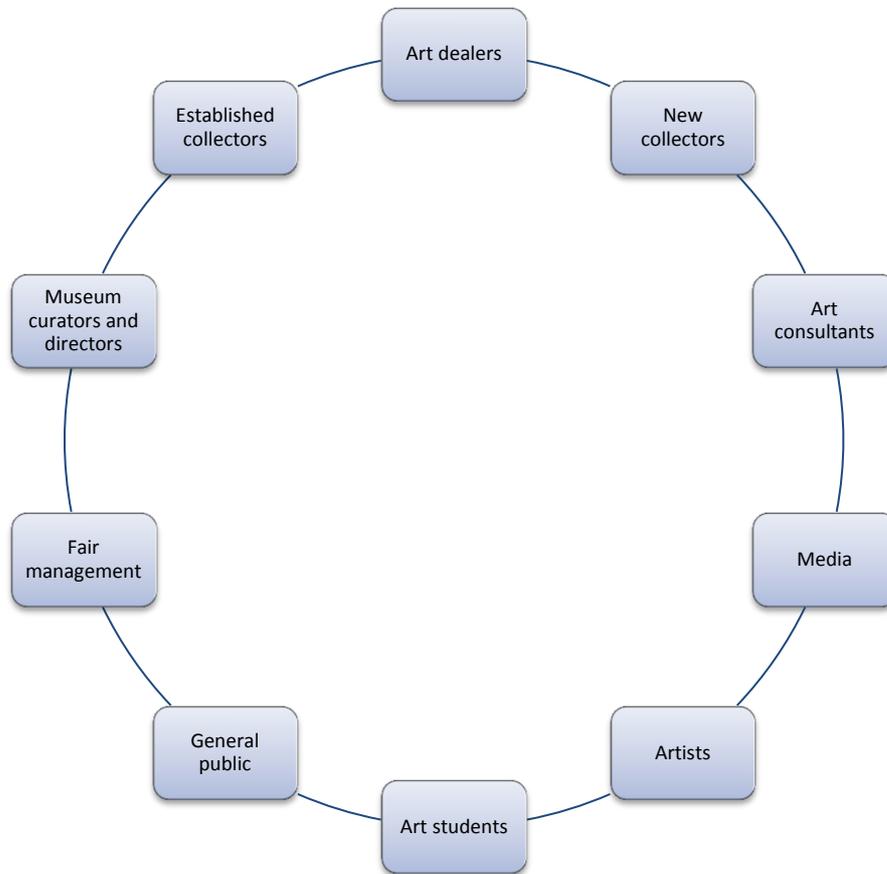
Appendix 5 lists all of the participating galleries at each of these fairs, revealing various factors at play including the hierarchy of the different fairs and the associated calibre of galleries involved, the number of galleries exhibiting at multiple fairs, and the current geographical location of the art centres. While these hierarchies may be most apparent to those familiar with the art world, Appendix 5 helps clarify the rankings by identifying which fair each gallery participates in. Those that exhibit at ABMB hold more prestige than those who only participate in the Armory, and those who show at the Armory have more stature than those who participate in Art Chicago or NEXT. Furthermore, galleries that participate in multiple fairs, as noted in the list, also hold more power. They not only have clientele drawn from a larger demographic that makes it worthwhile for them to participate in different locales, but also have financially thriving businesses that allow them to invest in different fair arenas.

Marketed as cultural and social destinations, multiple satellite fairs, including Bridge, Pulse, Scope and Volta, surround each of these major art fairs. For example, during 2011 in Miami, nineteen official satellite fairs flourished.

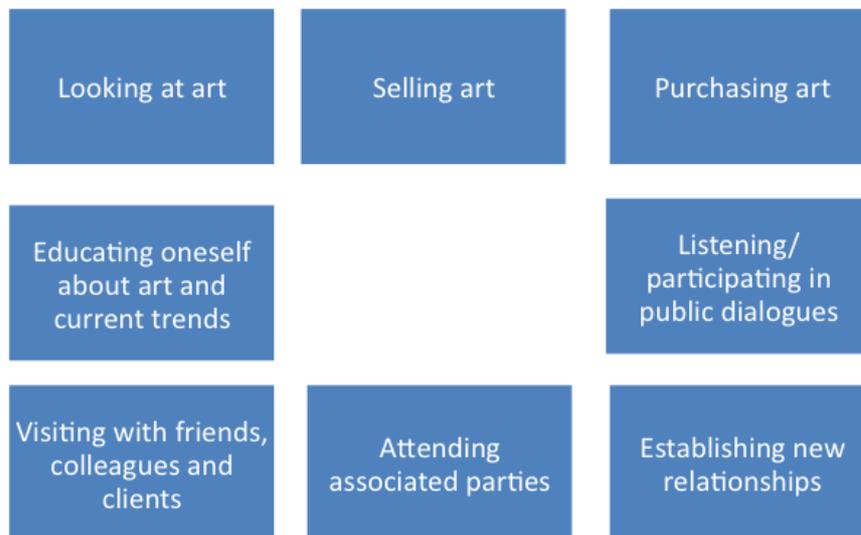
## **The Social Components**

Demonstrating the complex system that is an art fair are the multifaceted events that revolve around the presentation and selling of art. Actors and activities involved in the various art fairs involve gallery dealers, collectors and museum professionals participating in buying and selling art, making new social connections and re-establishing existing associations (building a network market), and engaging in educational activities. As seen in Figure 4, there is a hierarchy among the actors. However, like the Ferris wheel the diagram resembles, the power structure can easily shift without the circle being broken. Different actors are crucial to different aspects or activities of the art fairs, as depicted in Figure 5. For example, for the primary purpose of selling works of art, dealers and collectors must be present. Yet, for activities such as panels and discussions, neither dealers nor collectors need to take part (although they often do); thus, for these events, art enthusiasts, the public and art students may take on a more primary role within the system. A close examination of the different social opportunities and interactions at the fairs reveals the different ways actors

engage in activities to both participate in the 'game' and gain power advantages.



**Figure 4: Various actors participating in art fair activities**



**Figure 5: Activities taking place at various art fairs**

### ***Opening events***

The Vernissage preview at ABMB on December 2, 2009 had a very social feel; it is a see-and-be-seen type of event. Clustered outside of the convention centre were people waiting for friends, having a smoke break or taking a breather from the frenzy within. After walking inside, and passing through an informal security detail checking VIP passes and scanning bags for contraband cameras or recording devices,<sup>6</sup> the bright colours of the artworks competing for attention in the booths and the sounds of thousands gathering in the huge hall were almost dizzying. Even arriving in the early evening for the professional preview, the fair was already in full swing, with collectors, gallery dealers, museum curators and directors, celebrities and artists strolling among the booths. The VIP lounge overflowed with people relaxing with a drink after spending the day

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<sup>6</sup> I was unable to take photographs depicting the scene at ABMB due to the prohibition against cameras.

viewing and buying art. It is impossible to walk through the fair without running into friends, colleagues and acquaintances, many issuing invitations to additional parties and social occasions, demonstrating that the art world is small and fairly exclusive in nature; a world that thrives on introductions and connections for full access to all that it offers. The language and actions at these events are often only fully understood by the participants, presenting boundaries to those outside of the art world and fostering air of exclusivity that would be lost if this environment were open to all (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002).

Here in Miami, parties are sponsored either by ABMB as an after fair event, or by non-affiliated organisations who capitalise on the fair's ability to gather people in one locale. Often, these organisations target ABMB VIP card holders; or they have their own private guest lists to keep the parties exclusive. For example, a cocktail get-together at the Sagamore Hotel in Miami Beach (known for its excellent contemporary art collection) brought together various participants and their guests from the Artist's Pension Trust, an organisation through which artists give work to the Trust, which will eventually sell them to provide a pension for the artists. Additionally, The Standard Hotel, Sotheby's Auction House and Artadia (an organisation that funds artists through individual grants) hosted a party populated by artists, museum curators, art consultants and multiple collectors, who were actively sharing information about which artists they collected and the newest acquisitions of the day.

Museums in the region also take advantage of large audiences already interested in art by mounting exhibitions that they believe will appeal to those attending the fairs. For example, the Bass Museum, located three blocks from the convention centre housing ABMB, held an opening party for its winter exhibitions on the same evening as the fair's opening.

Running until midnight, the museum becomes the site for an official ABMB after-party, with crowds spilling from one venue to the next. Curators, collectors and art aficionados from around the world pack the exhibition galleries to view the graphic sculptural installations of Chicago artist Dzine and the loan of objects from the holdings of Mexican collector Eugenio Lopez Alonso and the Jumex Corporation. While many curators, collectors and some dealers continued talking about and viewing art, others danced to the DJ in the café or pushed their way to the front to order cocktails in the crowded courtyard.

The excessive party atmosphere surrounding the fairs is one way those involved demonstrate wealth and a version of success. Those who participate often aspire to become more involved in, or 'win' their place in the field by becoming more deeply embedded in the peripheral events and parties. However, like any such community or field, the art world is also populated by those who choose not to participate fully with all the glitz and glamour. Many of those not participating already hold dominant positions of power in the field and do not need to participate in these see and be seen events, choosing rather to make their connections and conduct their business more discreetly.

While opening night boasts a particularly festive spirit, every evening, after the fairs close down, opportunities abound to attend openings for other peripheral fairs, social events for other non-profit organisations, or after parties. Yet, in 2009, the social setting, while still robust, had a more subdued feeling than previous years, due to the economic recession.

Before 2009, ABMB had actively constructed a party atmosphere, drawing all sorts of people together to socialise and party, including celebrities and sports figures. Now, because of the economic downturn, participants were primarily people associated directly with the art world. At each party/event there was general talk of art, but the main topic was what people thought of the fair, and what other fairs, collections and museums they had seen. At all of these social events, there is an abundance of informal dialogues, with people trying to sell work or attempting to book exhibitions or travel shows. While some of these ideas eventually come to fruition, many others stay on the table along with the empty glasses.

In comparison, there is no lack of social activities in New York. Yet the party hopping that is intrinsic to ABMB is more temperate at The Armory Show. This is partly because fair organisers are more selective about who they provide VIP passes to, including established and recognised collectors, dealers directly involved in the fair, and curators at the larger, important museums. Thus, the parties in New York revolve around those who are more entrenched in the field. Additionally, many official Armory events have centralised locations at selected sites, and on the piers where the fairs take place. Similar to both ABMB and Art Chicago\NEXT, the opening day of The Armory Show works on a tiered system: yet here, the

higher the price paid for an entry ticket, the earlier one may pass through the doors, again reinforcing the power forces at play in the system. An after party at the Museum of Modern Art, unlike the free VIP opening at the Bass Museum in Miami, also has a ticketed entry to raise funds for the museum.

Armory Week (March 4-7, 2010), as it is known, embodies much more than the fair itself. While the fair is the impetus for many to travel to New York, the city itself is an art hub, with world-class contemporary museums and galleries, many of which host activities to coincide with the fair. For example, a good number of galleries in the Chelsea district host Saturday morning brunches for fair attendees that occur prior to the fair opening at noon. Other galleries stage opening celebrations for their newest exhibitions, and fête their artists at invitation-only dinners. Additionally, every other year the Whitney Biennial draws fairgoers to survey contemporary American art trends. While walking around New York or at any art venue it is not unusual to run into others making the circuit. The questions asked upon meeting are, 'Have you been to The Armory yet?' or 'What did you think of the Biennial?' with the merits of the visiting each debated and recommendations of other fairs or exhibits given freely.

The social scene at the Art Chicago and NEXT fairs are a combination of ABMB and The Armory Show. Here, as at ABMB, the VIP designation is not as exclusive as at The Armory Show, and there are plenty of social opportunities, including studio visits with artists; private, curator-led tours at museums; openings at area galleries; and parties every evening after

the fair closes. The Vernissage opening operates in a similar format to the other fairs: the early part of the day is a paid fundraising event costing \$150 per ticket, and at 3:00 pm the fair opens to VIPs. The openings of these two sister fairs alongside the opening of the Art and Antiques fair (all housed in the Merchandise Mart and billed as a single event, Artropolis, April 20-May 3, 2010) creates an extremely social and festive experience. The crowd attending the Art Chicago opening dress up for the occasion; many men wear suits and the women are in cocktail attire, contributing to a formal atmosphere. Art Chicago, on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, has a similar feel to other art fair openings; it is a celebration.

However, down on the 7th floor at the NEXT Fair, sponsored by Grolsch beer—which was freely available—the opening showcased art, roving performances, and loud music courtesy of a ‘nightclub’ art installation, drawing in a younger crowd. Interspersed between arts professionals and collectors were laid-back art students familiar with the more experimental and cutting edge galleries participating in the fair. By separating the event into two discrete fairs, each embodying a different feel—Art Chicago with more established and perhaps more conservative works on offer, and NEXT as the more avant-garde—the management regulated and attracted the appropriate audience demographic for what was on offer at each location.

Partnerships often spring up between new hotels and the art fairs as a way to cross-promote agendas among those with money. For example, a new boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Chicago hosted an after party on

opening night in the attempt to take advantage of the large number of out of town guests who might later stay at the hotel. The hotel also acted as a sponsor of the fair, offering discounted rates for fairgoers. In this way, hotels, restaurants and other establishments in the city attempt to exploit the wealth and capital that the fair attracts. Yet, despite the after parties on offer, beyond the fair's opening Art Chicago and NEXT did not draw the types of contributors such as magazines, arts foundations and organisations, luxury banking and retail outfits that sponsor additional social experiences and parties with other fairs. As a result, of all the fairs, Art Chicago and NEXT felt the most sedate.

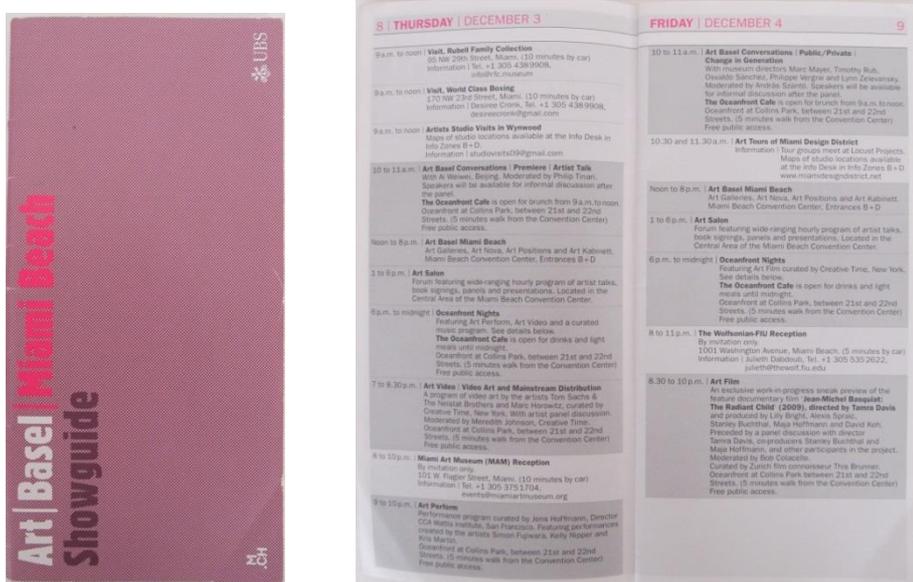
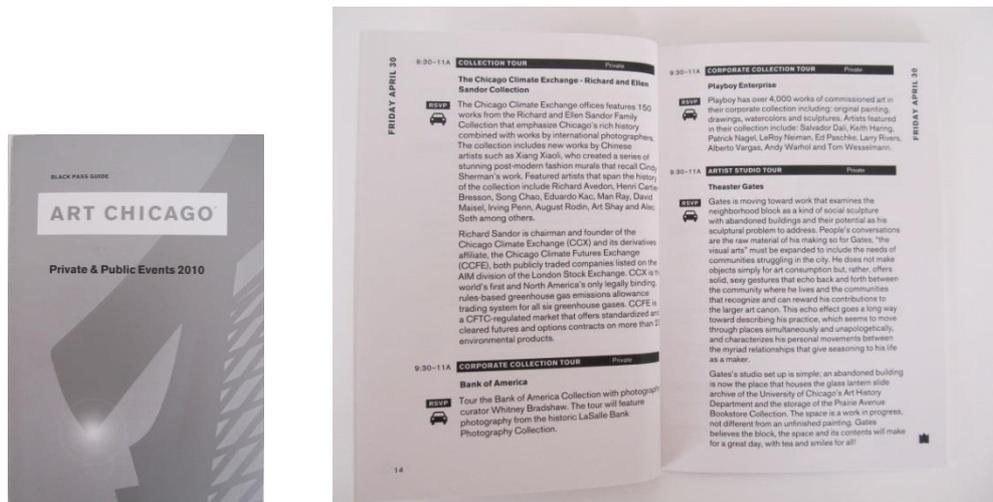


Figure 6: 2009 ArtBasel | Miami Beach Show Guide with selected program offerings for December 3 and 4



**Figure 7: 2009 Art Chicago/Next VIP Black Pass guide with selected program offerings for April 30**

### ***VIP benefits***

A component of each of these fairs, in addition to opening day and night activities, is a full programme catering to VIP collectors and curators (see Figures 6 and 7). Establishing the infrastructure to ensure success, the fair managements provide transportation between sanctioned events at different venues for the VIP collectors and curators. In Miami, collectors identified by the fair's management as having established reputations, both for their important collections and their traditional habit of spending a very large amount on art purchases, are given the extra VIP benefit of the opportunity to hire a car and driver from the fleet provided by ABMB sponsor Audi, while other, lower level VIPs can ride the luxury buses provided. In New York, The Armory Show also utilises luxury buses, while in Chicago, participants ride bright red, old-fashioned trolleys that line up at the Merchandise Mart every morning to transport VIPs to different locales around the city (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Trolleys for art excursions at Art Chicago/Next

### ***Private collection viewing and additional VIP benefits***

In Miami, the hired cars and luxury buses travel to the Wynwood and Design Districts in Miami, where several private collectors showcase their collections in private museums. These spaces demonstrate the embodied cultural capital of their owners, and, in their emulation of museums in their display and mounting of exhibitions, they create a similar habitus to those museum collections. For example, housed in a large-scale warehouse, The Margulies Collection has a raw feel. On permanent view is the majority of the collection, with a few new works rotated in every year. At another venue, to coincide with ABMB, the Rubell Family Art Collection pulls works together from the collection to create a thematic exhibition; in

2009, the exhibition *Beg, Borrow, and Steal* explored the influence artists have on each other and the sharing of ideas. In addition, to stand out from the other private collection museums, the Rubells always host an unusual breakfast that becomes an artistic installation in itself. This year, hundreds of donuts available for the taking were nailed on a wall.

When these private collectors open their spaces they draw large crowds of collectors, artists, curators and gallery dealers, as they are viewed as 'tastemakers' (Appadurai 1986). Thus, artists who are seen in these collections often become more sought after at the fair, and even for obtaining for a museum collection. These collectors demonstrate the shifting of power that has occurred over the last decade. The validation of one of these private collector 'tastemakers' can have more influence in an artist's career than the endorsement of a museum acquisition.

In 2009, one of the main topics of conversation at ABMB related to the new building dedicated to the Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz collection. With the grand opening occurring during ABMB, the 30,000 square foot gallery displayed works from their holdings of over 1,000 works of art. Previously only available for special appointment viewing by collectors, curators and dealers holding VIP cards at the de la Cruz's home, this private, three-floor museum is now a public venue. Filled with innovative art by young artists, along with works by well-established artists—many collected in depth to highlight the broad arc of their careers—it easily rivals the collections of contemporary public museums. For example, there is a small room of Ana Mendieta (American, born Cuba 1948-1985) works, and the third floor

exhibition is a sensitively thought out and installed exhibition drawing parallels between the works of Felix Gonzalez-Torres (American 1957-1996) and Jim Hodges (American, born 1957).

Lastly, CIFO (the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation) annually asks an internationally known curator to select works from the Ella Fontanals Cisneros Collection to shape into a thematic exhibition. The 2009 edition, *Being in the World: Selections from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection* curated by Berta Sichel, former Head of the Media Department of Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, highlighted video art from the collection that spoke to the way in which individuals navigate their way in a changing world. To open the exhibition, CIFO hosts an extravagant brunch for VIPs.

Each of these private collections emulates museum practices in terms of hanging, labelling and creating educational materials such as catalogues and brochures. While Miami has several museums that display contemporary art, including the Bass Museum, the Miami Art Museum and the newly envisioned Institute of Contemporary Art (formerly The Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami), their programmes are not as established as those of the museums in New York and Chicago. Thus, private museums such as CIFO, the de La Cruz Collection, the Margulies Collection and the Rubell Collection proliferate. In Miami, the confluence of wealth and the success of ABMB brought a new focus on contemporary art in the city. This illustrates not only how art fairs can take on a slightly different shape from one city to the next, based upon the existing art infrastructure, but also how much impact they can have in reshaping the city's identity.

Additionally, in Miami there are several collectors who are disenchanted with the museum offerings in the area; for example, prominent Miami collector Marty Margulies stated: 'I have no interest at all in the Miami Art Museum and they have no interest in me' (Harris 2009). While these private museums have strong collections, filled with works that, increasingly, are out of the financial reach of many museums, an interesting question emerges. Are these private museums competition for top works? In many ways, yes they are.

If in Miami the relationship to the museums is rather distant, in New York The Armory Show capitalises on its connections to the world-renowned public museums in the city. In addition, VIPs have the choice to visit the homes of over twenty prominent collectors. Also on offer during the fair were visits to embassies and consulates, such as the Austrian Cultural Forum, the Belgian Consulate, the British Consul General, the French Embassy and the Swiss Institute; and, as VIP passes were difficult to obtain from The Armory Show, entry to these events was available only to a limited selection of fairgoers: known collectors who often spent a considerable amount at the fairs, and curators from large and well-established museums.

Art Chicago and NEXT also invited VIP holders to visit private collections, and they also organised visits to various artists. One option on Friday morning was a studio visit to artist Robert Pruitt facilitated by Artadia, a non-profit group that gives out financial awards to artists (including Pruitt) in several regions. Hosting the visit was Artadia founder Chris Vroom and

Ute Zimmerman, the programme manager. The Saturday morning event demonstrated the link the fair had forged with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (MCA) by offering a brunch for curators, dealers and VIPs. While some visitors ate outside on the patio, others strolled around the galleries viewing the exhibits: *Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside-Out* and *Rewind: 1970s to 1990s: Works from the MCA Collection*. Midway through the event, Madeleine Grynsztejn, director of the museum, stepped up to a podium and said a few words in welcome, and highlighted the relationship between the museum and the fair (proceeds from the opening event benefited the museum). She then introduced Tony Karman,<sup>7</sup> Vice President of Art Chicago, who reiterated the rewarding relationship between fair and museum, as well as with other museums, citing that over forty museum groups were scheduled to come through Art Chicago. By doing so, both the museum and fair organisers emphasised and reinforced their relationship, thus creating an environment wherein participants were subtly reminded of the power structures behind the fair.

### ***Educational components***

Beyond the social elements of the openings and the parties that accompany the fairs, there are additional opportunities to connect people and enable them to form relationships. Each of these fairs caters not only

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Karman is now the President and Director of Expo Chicago, which replaced Art Chicago.

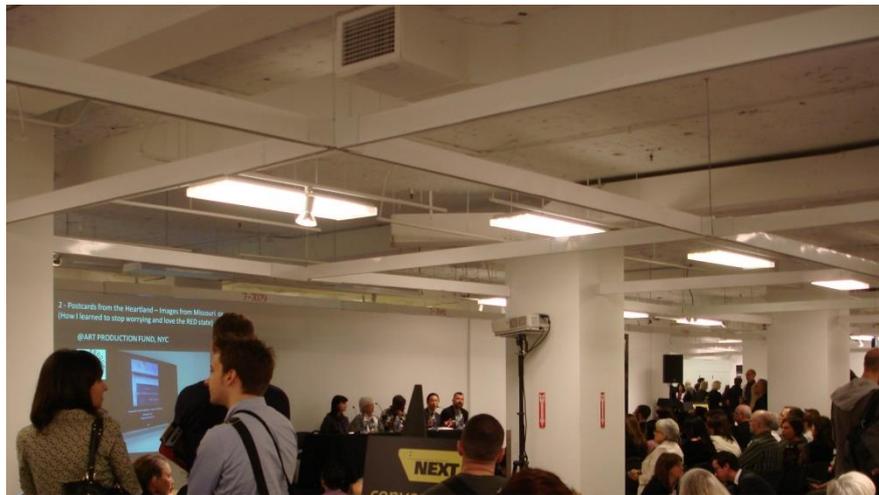
to collectors with money or economic capital, but also to a public eager to learn more about art. One tool to bring these diverse groups together is the programme of panel discussions organised by the management of each fair. These discussions present to the public curators, dealers, journalists and others invested in the field debating current issues in contemporary art. Not only do these panel discussions help to educate a potential buying audience, they function as a way to legitimise fairs—by hosting panels and symposiums in conjunction with the main objective of selling artworks, the management creates an environment that is more than merely retail space. Instead, the combination creates a system that embodies a knowledge market in addition to a commercial market. Furthermore, these gatherings provide an environment that can be looked at through the lens of Wenger's theory of a community of practice. As outlined by Wenger, for a community of practice to work, a situation must encompass the following components, all of which are integral to art fairs:

- 1) Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability—individually and collectively—to experience our life and the world as meaningful.
- 2) Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
- 3) Community: a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.
- 4) Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities. (Wenger 1998: 4-5)

At the art fairs, collectors, curators and dealers—particularly those taking part in the educational dialogues on offer—discuss meaning, practice, community and identity, all in the context in the art on view.

Delving into the most pressing issues of the art world, or linking curators and artists by way of informal dialogues, these talks broach a wide range of subjects and draw large crowds. Featuring well-known artists, curators and critics from around the world, these discussions give insights into various aspects of the ecosystem of the artworld: for example, an artist's working process, or the way that current issues impact on museums or curatorial practices. For instance, at ABMB the conversations included *Public/Private: Change in Generations*, a panel of museum directors discussing their vision for their museums in the future; *The Future of the Museum: The Portable Museum*; and *Collector Focus: Latin America*; along with panels on conservation issues and book launches. In addition, each day from 1-6pm, as part of Art Salon, hourly talks between artists and curators took place. 'Open Forum', The Armory Show's dialogues between curators and artists, covered a wide range of topics, such as: *Emergence of a New World: Collecting Contemporary Art from the Middle East*; *The World is not Enough: The Future of Biennials*; and *Outside In: The Socioeconomics of Contemporary Art*. Split between three categories—Art Chicago Speaks, NEXT Talk Shop and Converge Chicago: Contemporary Curators Forum—the discussions available for the public to attend in Chicago covered similar territory, while extending beyond the contemporary art world to tackle perspectives in outsider art, print collecting and social networking. Discussions that were more

conventional included one-on-one interviews between artists and curator and panels, such as *The Old with the New: Presenting New Works by Living Arts in the Museum* and *Collecting Now: Curating and the Expansion* (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Panel discussion at Next Art Fair**

These dialogues were literally at the heart of both ABMB and the NEXT Fair; positioned in the physical centre of each of these fairs, the management allowed ample room for audiences. In the case of the NEXT fair, the central location, with dealer booths radiating out on either side, allowed for most fairgoers to listen to the proceedings even if they were not seated in the spacious and comfortable discussion lounge.

In contrast, at The Armory Show and at Art Chicago these panels took place on the periphery. This illustrates an inherent disjunction between the fairs' aims. The fairs exist to sell art, yet there is an attempt to elevate

these events to something more than just a marketplace by adding panels, lectures and conversations among academics and professionals who are not directly involved in the selling of art. The organisers of ABMB and NEXT clearly understood the impact that the educational components bring to the environment, promoting and featuring them prominently and thus creating a fully rounded event. On the other hand, the organisers of The Armory Show and Art Chicago relegated these educational programmes to the background, and the fairs as a result felt one-dimensional, and solely about sales. In New York, the location for the discussions was hard to find, with confusing signage directing audiences. Tucked away in a temporary room on the modern pier, the lecture room seated about one hundred people, yet it was cramped and inadequate for the number of attendees. Many sat on the floor in the aisles, or stood in the doorway. Additionally, sound quality was poor: panellists had to share microphones, and the sound competed with the fair activities happening on the other side of the walls. At Art Chicago, the small stage for discussion and the seating for only forty were jammed into a corner near a snack café. Acoustics were particularly bad, as conversations at nearby dealer booths pervaded the space.

Nevertheless, whether they are an important element of the fair or offer only interesting diversions for patrons, the dialogues provide a way to arm fairgoers—both the general public and active participants—with a further awareness of and familiarity with current trends and issues in the contemporary art world. By providing these opportunities for gaining knowledge, fair organisers cater to those wanting to be ‘in the know’ about

these topics, while providing opportunities for entry into a closed world, and thus establishing relationships. Furthermore, they add an academic weight which helps to mask the commercial aspects of the fairs.

## **Mapping the Scene**

By studying the layout of these three art fairs, it is possible to determine the hierarchy of prestigious galleries, determining which hold the most power. The more established and well regarded the gallery, the more it generates sales and opportunities for its artists through commissions and exhibitions. Some of the factors influencing the status of a gallery are the relationships it has with certain artists and collectors. If a gallery handles 'superstar' artists and does business with 'super-collectors', this enhances its reputation. As evidenced in the various floor plans and maps of the fairs, much like the art neighbourhoods of Chelsea and Soho, prestigious galleries often have locations clustered near to each other, with less prominent galleries positioned at the periphery. In many ways, floor plans reflect a self-generating system: the more powerful the gallery is, the more likely it will work with 'superstar' artists, and the more likely it will sell works. As art by 'superstar' artists embodies cultural and symbolic capital, these are the pieces most in demand by those seeking to bolster their own capital. The galleries that work with these artists thus absorb this capital, gaining more power, and continuing to hold their place at the top of the hierarchy.

Many social geographers and architectural theorists reinforce the discussion by authors Kathleen and Billie DeWalt (2002) and Russell Bernard (1994), who state the importance of mapping social scenes as a way to understand social relationships. Pre-existing maps provided by fair organisers to help audiences locate particular galleries are extremely useful in the analysis of gallery placement. The pattern of every fair is somewhat dependent on the building that houses it, and the positioning of certain galleries has a crucial impact on the flow. As illustrated in Figure 10, in 2009 ABMB unveiled a new design, extending the square footage (from 385,200 square feet to 502,848 square feet), which allowed for larger booths and an increase in the number of galleries participating (from 260 to 265) (Ward 2009). Additionally, several aspects of the fair previously held offsite, including Art Nova and Art Positions, shifted inside under the same roof as the main attraction. At the heart of the fair was an 11,500 square foot cube divided into four triangular spaces, to accommodate two restaurants, the art magazine tables and the art salon. In many ways, this layout now resembles a luxury mall. At the outer rim of the cube are twenty-three emerging galleries participating in Art Positions, dedicated to installations by single artists or small, thematic group shows (seen on the map in pink). At the south end of the convention hall are sixty-four galleries, both established and emerging, that highlight up to three artists as part of Art Nova (seen on the map in blue). The rest of the fair is composed of 181 modern and contemporary galleries, with the majority of the modern galleries to the north side of the cube and the contemporary galleries to the south.



Figure 10: Floor map for ArtBasel | Miami Beach, 2009

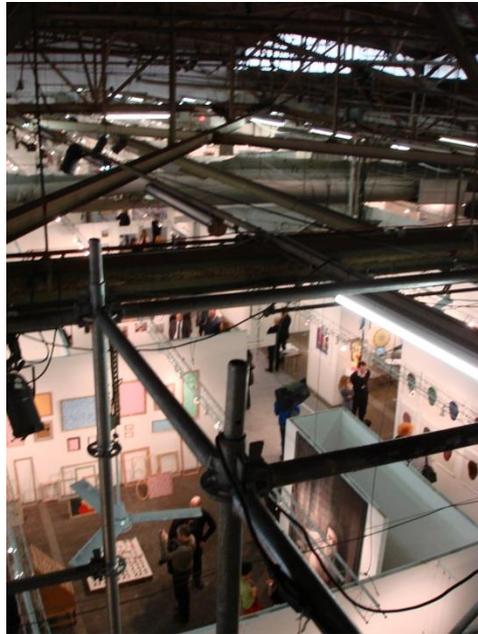
Established galleries are often near entrances and at the junctions of main aisles so that they have multiple entry points, yet some dealers complained about the special treatment some galleries received regarding placement. At ABMB, one ‘first-timer’ said ‘it was disenchanted to hear that there’s so much nepotism’, and suggested that the major players could negotiate the best locations ‘by promising to bring big-named artists in force’ (Ward 2009: 4). This, once again, illustrates the power systems at play within the art world system. These prime booth locations are also more costly; for example, at ABMB, and likely at the other fairs, a ‘surcharge of 5% is levied for privileged stand locations, such as stands in the entrance zone or ones located on central or window aisles’ (MCH Swiss Exhibition (Basel) Ltd. 2010). As the more powerful galleries often

sell more art, and at higher prices, based upon the status of their artists, it is not a financial hardship for them to pay these higher fees. Mapping the social relations of the specific gallery positions relates to the work of Edward Soja. In his theory of the 'socio-spatial dialectic', he concludes that spaces make people, and people make spaces. In the case of an art fair, the layout and the occupation of the booths by galleries at various intersections and junction points help produce the relationships between actors.

ABMB perfectly illustrates the correlation between high profile galleries and high profile placement. For example, anchoring the central cube at ABMB (see Appendix 5 for booth numbers) were Gagosian Gallery, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Matthew Marks, Barbara Gladstone and Cheim & Read, from New York; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac and Galerie Karsten Greve from Paris; and Galerie Max Hetzler from Berlin. Flanking the entry to the contemporary art section were Deitch Projects, New York and Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna. These galleries led into what one dealer termed the 'corridor of power', including David Zwirner, Luhring Augustine, Marian Goodman and 303 Gallery from New York; White Cube and Lisson from London; The Modern Institute, Glasgow; Galerie Presenhuber, Zurich and Air de Paris, Paris (Ward 2009: 4).

The Armory Show also incorporated dealers specialising in both modern and contemporary works of art, yet placement at the fair clearly defined the nature of these categories. Positioned on Pier 92 were galleries

exhibiting primarily modern art, and located on Pier 94 were galleries featuring contemporary art (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Overview of The Armory Show Pier 94 taken from overhead walkway connecting the piers**

The modern pier hosted an area dedicated to art publications, and had fewer galleries (80) than the contemporary pier (231). Comprising a straightforward layout, with gallery booths flanking two main aisles, this fair is a manageable size to view in an afternoon (see Figure 12). On the other hand, the larger Pier 94 had an overwhelming amount of art on display. Formed into a 'T' shaped pattern, the participating galleries filled their booths with a dizzying array of contemporary art for sale. Clustered in a group at the west end of Pier 94, at the bottom of the vertical bar, was a section devoted to galleries from Berlin. Armory Focus: Berlin showcased

22 leading galleries—both emerging and established—from the German capital as a way to focus attention on this growing cultural and artistic destination. To facilitate participation, The Armory management, Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPI)<sup>8</sup> subsidised booth costs and offered free shipping, adding up to at least a \$3,000 savings per gallery (Ward 2010).

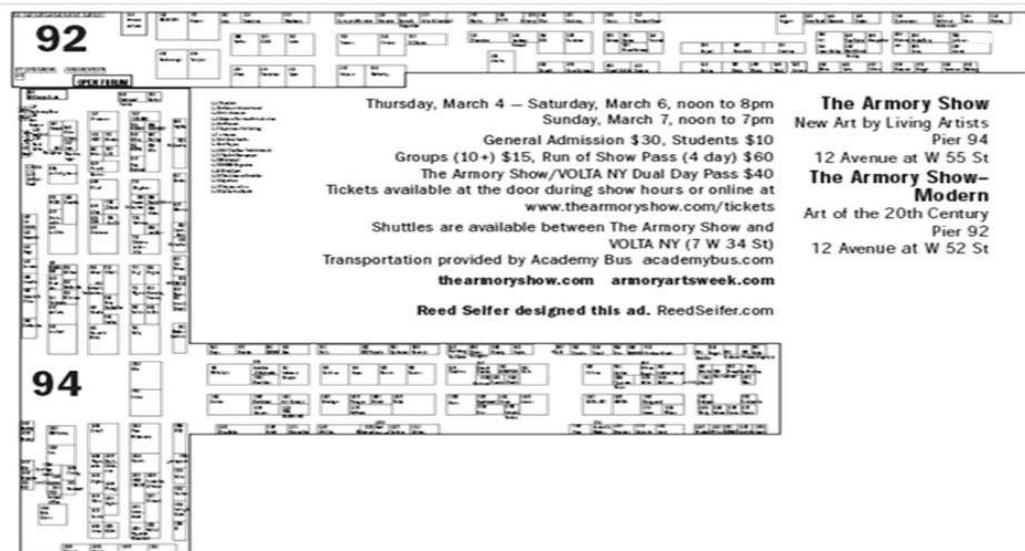


Figure 12: Floor map for The Armory Show, 2010

Again flanking the entrance were some of the most esteemed galleries that participated in the event: Victoria Miro and Lisson Gallery from London; 303 Gallery, Sean Kelly Gallery and PaceWildenstein from New York; Yvon Lambert from Paris; and Xeno X from Antwerp. Funnelling into the vertical base of the ‘T’ gallery booths led into a similar ‘corridor of

<sup>8</sup> Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPI), a Chicago-based company managing the Merchandise Mart building, owned Art Chicago, Art Toronto, The Armory Show, the Volta Show, and Art Platform Los Angeles. After the demise of Art Chicago, the company decided to exit the art fair business and put the other fairs up for sale in 2012.

power' to that found at ABMB. Surrounding the main aisle, in the largest booths, were galleries with an international presence: David Zwirner, Tonya Bonakdar, Lehman Maupin and Marian Goodman from New York; White Cube from London; Thaddaeus Ropac and Art: Concept from Paris; and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano and Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, among others. Many of these galleries also participated in ABMB and had prominent booth placements at that location. By being positioned in the 'corridor of power' in both fairs reveals not only that these galleries are well regarded, but also that they could afford these larger booths, which in turn indicates that they work with sought after artists. On the horizontal bar of the 'T', the booth sizes were smaller and the galleries were those with less of an international presence. Additionally, scattered throughout this section were several smaller, New York-based galleries. Many of these galleries were admitted to the fair because the organisers wanted to strongly represent the local scene.



Figure 13: Views of The Armory Show, 2010

Broader in scope than both ABMB and The Armory Show, Art Chicago showcased 146 galleries that feature modern and contemporary art, as well as crafts, outsider art and African art. Split into six long isles of booths, the large, rectangular space had a central row of elevator banks dividing the floor (see Figure 14). The main elevators opened into a spacious area outfitted with benches and surrounded by the most prestigious participating galleries: White Cube and Haunch of Venison from London and Chicago gallery Rhona Hoffman. Occupying the largest booths at the fair, these prominent galleries certainly enhanced and legitimised the fair. Yet, as there were so few galleries of this calibre participating, there was much supposition that these galleries received extra incentives, such as reduced fees, to attend. Fair management likely enticed these galleries to participate as a way to anchor and add more stature to the fair. As MMPI is the organising entity that puts together both Artropolis and The Armory Show, there may have been benefits to participating in both fairs for some of these big galleries.

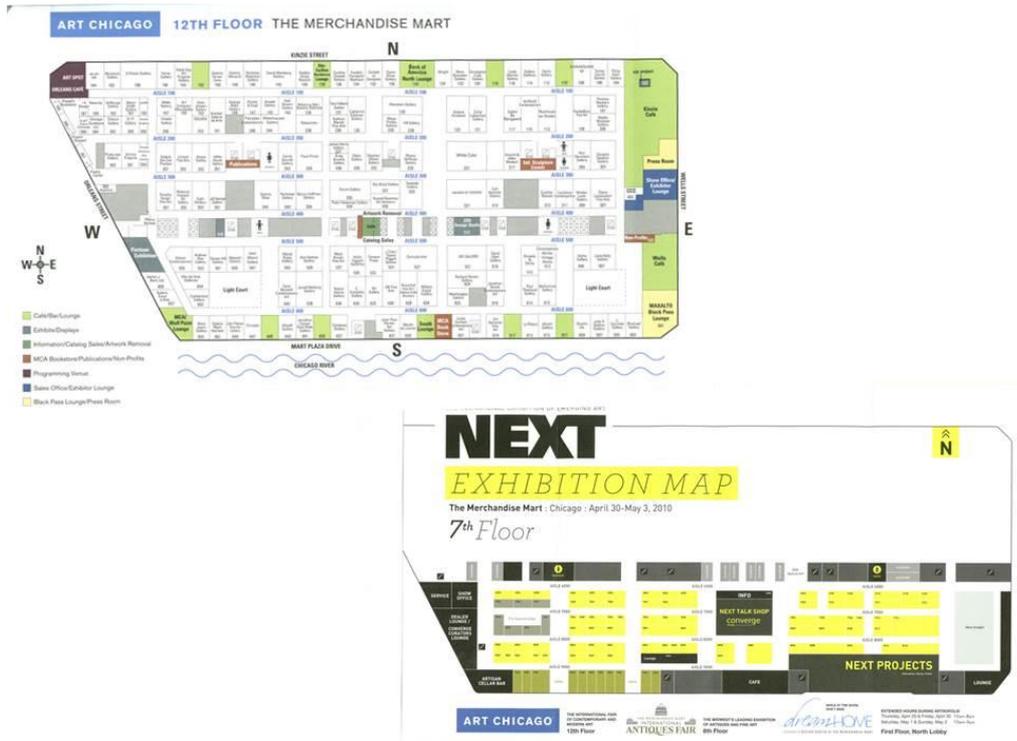


Figure 14: Floor maps for Art Chicago and Next, 2010

Moving from the 12<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to visit NEXT, the environment shifted from sophisticated elegance, with booths painted in deep and muted colours, to bright and airy. At NEXT, white painted booths with light-coloured carpet covering the floor were standard. Easy to navigate, with only 89 gallery booths radiating out from the NEXT Talk Shop into four rows, NEXT takes up half the floor space of Art Chicago. A local curator, Suzanne Ghez, formerly of the Renaissance Society in Chicago, was recruited to curate *New Insight*, an exhibition of promising Master of Fine Art students' work from around the country. This exhibition took up a large portion of the floor plan on the east end. Located along the south wall was Goffo, a curated section devoted to Midwest spaces, which deals with multiples, editions, artist books, prints and handmade objects.

These sections had a dual purpose. Not only did they add depth to what was on offer at the fair, but they also filled spaces that would otherwise be unoccupied, as fewer galleries participated than had in previous years.

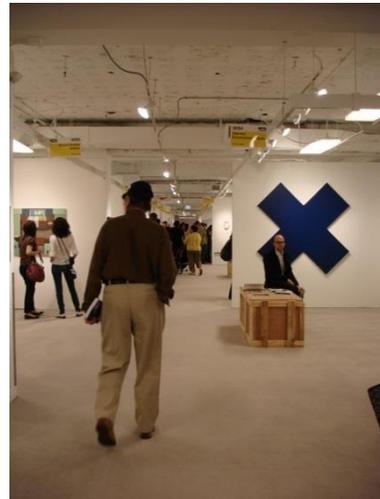


Figure 15: Views of Art Chicago (left) and Next (right), 2010

Anchoring NEXT was Kavi Gupta of Chicago and DCKT Contemporary of New York. Both of these galleries had multiple booths, to show a range of work. However, both were also involved in the organisation of the fair, and these larger, multiple booths were likely secured without extra cost and in exchange for their services in contracting other dealers' participation in the fair.

### ***Fair selection for participation***

Additionally, neither of these galleries—two of the more successful dealers at NEXT—participated in ABMB. Instead they both showed in Miami at satellite fairs. This demonstrates not only the status of the different fairs,

but also the nature of the jury selection for each of the fairs. The composition of the juries consists of a small contingent of top galleries who chose fellow dealers to participate in the fairs. The process can be very political; and it is most rigorous for ABMB, slightly more relaxed for The Armory Show and most open at Art Chicago and NEXT. Thus, many reputable and strong galleries that have not made it into ABMB or The Armory instead participate in the peripheral fairs in Miami or New York. The satellite fairs also act as a way to vet newer galleries and feed them into the ecosystem of the larger and more prestigious art fairs. For example, most consider The New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) fair in Miami to be a step up into the larger ABMB. In New York, Volta (the sister fair to The Armory Show) and Pulse Art Fair foster the galleries that may make the jump to The Armory. No peripheral fairs flourish in Chicago—another reason why Art Chicago and NEXT accept a wider range of galleries. Unfortunately, this air of inclusivity led to Art Chicago and NEXT's downfall, and it ceased operating after 2011. Many considered the quality of participants to be uneven, and thus collectors did not want to travel to it, being yet another event in the midst of a very busy art fair season. A subsequent art fair, Expo Chicago, instead courted prominent galleries, and opened with great success in 2012. This fair secured the participation of many high-status galleries which also take part in ABMB and The Armory Show. This emphasis placed on prestige in turn creates an environment of exclusivity in the art world.

## ***On view***

At all of the fairs, it is rare to see solo exhibitions except in designated areas (or at Volta, one of the satellite fairs which only presented solo exhibitions), especially among less well-established dealers. This is because, as one dealer (Gallery Dealer 9)<sup>9</sup> from Art Chicago put it, 'I'm afraid to put so much weight on one artist, because if I make the wrong choice I might not sell much work. If I bring a variety of artists I can appeal to a broader range of collectors'. What was on view was a range of works from both superstar and emerging artists. At one fair one can encounter museum quality works by Damien Hirst (British, born 1965), Jeff Koons (American, born 1955) and Andy Warhol (American 1928–1987); art by artists whose careers are just hitting their stride, such as Candice Breitz (South African, born 1972), Theaster Gates (American, born 1973), Julie Mehretu (Ethiopian, born 1970) and Kehinde Wiley (American, born 1977); and works by artists at the beginning of their careers. Each dealer carefully considers the works they bring from their artists, not only selecting pieces most likely to sell, but also works that best suit the gallery's programme. The display of the work and the sales take place in a small space, one that is often very far from the ideal conditions where the dealers normally display their artists' works.

It is important for dealers to bring saleable works, as engaging in art fairs is a costly endeavour: booth fees range in prices, but are a considerable outlay. Art Chicago and NEXT's booths are the most inexpensive,

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 6 for further information on these gallery dealers.

averaging \$8,500, whereas Art Basel's, the most costly, start at approximately \$605 a square metre. Thus, a basic booth of 600 square metres costs upwards of \$36,000 (MCH Swiss Exhibition (Basel) Ltd. 2010). Additional costs include special lighting, any enhancements to the walls (including painting any colour other than white), shipping fees for art works, staffing costs, transportation, lodging and meals. Some gallery dealers will easily recoup these costs through sales; for others, the increased visibility of their programme to collectors, curators and the rest of the art world balances their financial losses.

## **Art Fair Economics**

As previously discussed, there are many valid reasons for dealers to participate in art fairs. Certainly, solidifying relationships with collectors and curators increases sales and commissions, and secures exhibitions both in the moment and in the future. The main goal of gallery dealers participating in the fairs is to sell works and gain exposure for their artists. As such, the current economic climate plays a large part. While the general economy has experienced a severe downturn, the art market—while not as robust as in the early to mid-2000s—remains strong and sales continue. Furthermore, as the landscape of fairs continues to expand globally, the majority of art sales occur at these venues rather than in the actual 'brick and mortar' gallery buildings.

During the period of observation, it appeared that steady sales occurred at each of these three fairs. Several gallery dealers at ABMB indicated that they sold more in 2009 than the previous year, and that people had expressed solid interest in art which the dealers hoped would equate to sales. Yet they all felt that the tone of the fairs was more sober than in previous years, as the economy was still recovering. While sales were made to serious collectors, there was not the frenzy of speculation that reigned in the past, and one New York dealer (Gallery Dealer 1) mentioned that he was 'pleasantly surprised' with how well sales were going. At the 2010 Armory Show, one associate from a major New York gallery (Gallery Dealer 2) mentioned seeing 'some sales and that the fair is so much better than last year'. Reinforcing this, *The Art Newspaper* reported other responses, including that of Bruce Haines from London's Ancient & Modern, who was 'delighted' to be at The Armory, and reported sales including Paul Johnson's painting *Slow Burner* for \$7,000, but said, 'Everyone's pushing for discounts and it's difficult to decline because we need to make friends in New York' (Burns, Harris & Ward 2010: 1). Similarly, at Art Chicago, Gallery Dealer 3 from Chicago said that, 'Although "the big guns" don't come here there is a lot of money in the Midwest and those collectors come'. She likened coming to the fair to going to Macy's department store: 'You wouldn't go to Macy's and not walk out with at least a pair of shoes or something. These collectors come to buy'.

Understanding how many sales are actually made at the fairs is difficult, as the art market is unregulated and social and business relationships blend

into each other. Often based on gentlemen's agreements or handshakes, many deals have no definitive records. At the fairs, no dealer wants to admit, in clear view of their colleagues' booths, that the work they bring in or the artists they work with do not garner the admiration of collectors. Thus, reportage of purchases is often not completely transparent, and may even be intentionally misleading. Generally, the use of red dots distinguishes sales, but at some fairs, dealers consider the display of red dots indiscreet. In fact, at ABMB and at several other fairs, prices are not readily available. Labels for art works, if on view, resemble tombstone labels common to most museums, listing only artist name and title and date of the work. The reasoning for this is three-fold: first, to elevate the fair from a retail space into a museum-like environment, wherein economic value is not as influential on a viewer's experience; second, to intimidate or discourage all but those who are seriously considering purchasing work; and third, to engage serious collectors. Once a dialogue begins, a dealer can ask why the art or artist is important to the collector. It is common to witness sales and negotiations taking place while walking around the fair, such as overhearing art consultants advising clients over mobile phones. Interestingly, where red dots are visible, they generally represent sales upwards of a hundred thousand dollars. All of this points to the secrecy that surrounds many gallery dealings. While gallery dealers do hold to an ethical standard, this air of opacity adds to the aura of exclusivity and competition for works of art.

Red dots are also a rare sight at The Armory Show. Yet, on my visit, sales did seem to be brisk for many galleries; several dealers had sold out their

booths. As sales are the prime purpose of the art fairs, the state of the economy was on everyone's mind, and conversations often turned to comparing the current business year with previous years. In fact, attesting to these many different feelings, Charlotte Burns, in *The Art Newspaper* cited a report, *The International Art Market 2007-2009*, by Dr. Clare McAndrew, stating that

New York has continued to dominate the international art market through the recession, with the US accounting for 30% of sales in 2009...In fact, despite experiencing one of the largest contractions since the recession of the early 1990s, the art market as a whole still made more transactions in 2009 than any year prior to 2006 and fared better in the downturn than many other sectors. (Burns 2010: 4)

Further to these findings, the mood at The Armory Show in 2010 implied that the art market was continuing to enjoy an upward swing. Exploring ideas on how the economy influences the art market, The Armory Show hosted a panel on the subject: *From Outside In: The Socioeconomics of Contemporary Art*. Moderated by writer Sarah Douglass, panellists included several key authors whose writings have informed this study: gallery dealer Ed Winkleman; Sarah Thornton, sociologist and writer on the art market for *The Economist*; Sergey Skaterschikov, business consultant and art market researcher; Marion Manfred, author and editor of *Art Market Monitor*, and Jud Tully, editor of *Art and Auction*. These six art professionals debated the complexity of the art world, with Thornton alluding to the cultural, social and symbolic capital embodied by art in her assertion that the 'art market is the least economic of all markets as it instead revolves around very specific artists' markets'.

Her view is that ‘Everything is both social and economic and that the quality [of a work of art] is a social construct’. Yet Manfred cautioned against viewing the art market as a unique and exceptional market, asserting its similarity to other markets, such as real estate. Furthermore, despite the collapse of the housing market, Manfred said he believed that the state of the market today is ‘shockingly strong’. Reinforcing this, Skaterschikov claimed that the ‘art market is becoming a global consumer market bringing in \$45 billion a year’, and that while prices for art went down during the economic recession, the market remained much more favourably placed to face the downturn than other markets. Manfred concurred, arguing that there is still surplus cash in all markets, with nowhere to go, and he argued that it goes into art.

The various viewpoints expressed all pointed to the sustainability of the art market—even if not at previous levels—partly owing to the importance of social relationships. The power of these relationships was in evidence at Art Chicago and NEXT while walking around with an independent curator and art consultant from Texas, on the hunt for works on behalf of a real-estate developer client. Looking for images that related to buildings for this particular client, she found some large-scale (approximately 40 x 30 in.) watercolours on paper, priced at \$7,500 each, at a New York gallery. When the art consultant relayed the information that she believed her client would spend no more than \$5,000, the co-director of the gallery (Gallery Dealer 4) responded that he could sell a piece at a 20% discount. Freely given, this substantial discount stemmed from the director’s prior amiable relationship with the consultant. While this particular sale did not

go through, it demonstrated the dealer's willingness to negotiate with contacts, as well as to make necessary adjustments to close sales in this tougher economy.

Interestingly, the other co-director (Gallery Dealer 5) of this particular gallery, when seen previously in New York, mentioned that the gallery would never take part in Art Chicago/NEXT again after their 2009 outing. When asked why she had changed her mind, she laughed and claimed that that is how she feels every year, but every time they work the fair in Chicago, a sale or a commission develops later, and this keeps them coming back. Additionally, she asserted that this particular fair is more affordable than the other fairs, so even one sale can go a long way to covering the gallery's expenses; also, the increased visibility is a value-added attraction.

Unlike at ABMB and The Armory Show, dealers do not seem to mind using red dots to indicate sales at Art Chicago and NEXT. Thus, it is somewhat easier to determine the level of sales activity. Here, several hometown galleries appeared to do extremely well while I was observing. One local (Gallery Dealer 6) mentioned he was 'content so far'; another stated that the space had facilitated a few small sales and leads on others. At a third Chicago gallery, the dealer sold one piece for \$26,000, and, after inquiries by collectors, confirmed that she had other pieces by that artist at her permanent gallery space for their consideration. She (Gallery Dealer 7) also confided that she had done very well at fairs the previous year with

this artist along with a few others, and thus continued to feature their works at the fairs.

Interestingly, red dots are not always a clear way to judge overall sales at the fairs. Two particular incidents illustrate the fallibility of assuming that works with red dots have actually sold. One gallery admitted that they put a red dot on an artwork that has not sold as a way to increase desirability for the object (Gallery Dealer 8). At another gallery, red dots supposedly indicated that four pieces by a particular artist had sold, but on speaking with the artist after the fair, she revealed that only one of her works sold; whether the gallery was duplicitous or, instead, the sale fell through is unknown. Not only does this speak to the fact that dealers, in the course of an open forum such as a fair, put up fronts to demonstrate their success, it also exposes the competitive nature of some buyers looking to obtain symbolic capital, who often only want works first vetted by other collectors. Dealers employ such tactics in order to operate successfully in the battle for power in an ever-changing field (Lipstadt 2003).

While red dots are not always indicative of actual sales, many do represent genuine transactions, and thus they are still a viable indicator of a high percentage of sales. Another way to gauge the overall health of the art market is to look at the transactions occurring at satellite fairs. In Miami in 2009, nineteen official satellite fairs accompanied ABMB. The strongest of these included NADA, Pulse, Scope, Art Miami and Aqua. With many established blue chip, modern and mid-career contemporary artists' works on view, Art Miami sales flourished, despite the slow pace of the crowds.

One Chicago dealer (Gallery Dealer 9) mentioned that she sold some works but, surprisingly, not as many as the previous year, and a dealer (Gallery Dealer 10) based in Scottsdale, Arizona claimed that, although it had been a tough year, things were finally starting to look up. Collectors purchased a number of works from her booth. Another dealer participating in the Aqua fair had an opposite experience, however: this new gallery from New York had had a successful first year in business, but at the fair the director (Gallery Dealer 11) indicated they did not perform as well as they had hoped. They were not sure if the reason was down to the particular fair they attended, or if they did not have enough established clients to seek them out in a new locale.

This observation, while pointing out a difficult problem for the dealer, illustrates some important elements of the system. First, the ecosystem of the art fairs is dependent on social and symbolic capital. As the dealer pointed out, perhaps their disappointing sales related to the fair they took part in. This may indeed be true, as with the glut of fairs that occur during this short time span, many collectors only attend the more prestigious ones featuring artists and dealers with the highest symbolic capital. Furthermore, the comment hinting at a potential lack of loyal clients also plays an important part. Without an established social network in play, collectors will not seek out galleries at the peripheral fairs, meaning that sales often occur by chance, made by collectors who take a gamble on emerging artists that embody little symbolic value.

The NADA fair, in a new locale, appeared to me to have the most energy and excitement. Sales here were numerous, and it became one of the most successful satellite fairs. At one booth, the director and chief curator of a Texas museum purchased a small piece by an emerging artist; at a sold-out booth from California, the dealer sold additional works via her iPhone and her Flickr site. This dealer (Gallery Dealer 12) mentioned that many other gallery dealers, in addition to collectors, were interested in buying the works. At the opposite end of the spectrum of the fairs, Verge, one of the smallest fairs (with eighteen participating spaces), set up in the rooms of the Catalina Hotel. Filled with gallery dealers of varying calibres, sales were few. However, at one standout Brooklyn-based gallery, very strong work was on view, drawing attention from various collectors. A noteworthy negotiation took place over one New York artist's painting. After asking for a discount, the client was initially offered 10% off of a \$2,500 painting; he wanted 20%. Finally, a 15% discount was settled on, but it appeared the client expected at least that. At these lesser fairs, then, unknown buyers feel empowered to ask for higher discounts, and younger galleries often concede in order to make sales in this difficult economic climate, further emphasising the complex power relationships at play in the system.

In New York, eleven recognised satellite fairs accompanied The Armory Show in 2010. The most established fairs included Volta (sister fair to The Armory Show), Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA), Pulse and Scope. At each of these fairs there was a flurry of sales activities.

Collectors swamped dealers at Pulse during the opening, and several

booths had sold out by the end of the VIP event. Two gallery dealers, both based in New York, separately reported that they were extremely busy, with established collectors checking in and making several sales during the event. Strolling through the aisles of Scope afforded the chance to observe two simultaneous deals at a European dealer's booth; here, the dealers pulled out several works from their storage closet and discussed pricing options. Affordable art was in abundance, as the majority of pieces sold at Scope were in the \$5,000-\$15,000 range. Artworks at ADAA carried higher values. This well-established fair caters to sophisticated and established collectors by featuring blue-chip artists' works. Several dealers had sold-out booths and works listed on price sheets ranged in costs of upwards of a million dollars. At Volta, booths dedicated to single artist presentations prevailed. Filled primarily with European dealers, this fair had a cohesive identity, setting it apart from the multiple other fairs, and certainly the affiliation with The Armory show brought out many established galleries, representing symbolic capital. Many collectors seemingly agreed, buying many works from a great number of the dealers. Gallery dealers also liked the design and management of the fair. A Texas gallery dealer declared that he preferred this fair over others. In the past he had participated in Pulse, but the management had attempted to curate his booth by limiting which artists he could show. For the dealer this was problematical since he could not bring his most saleable work. Why would management want to curate what dealers bring? They do this primarily because they want to control the fair's image. By asking dealers to bring artists from their stable who are the most well-known and have the

greatest name recognition, the management attempts to put forth a fair that can attract a higher calibre of collectors. It is a cyclical system revolving around who embodies the most capital to drive the market system—artists, collectors, or gallery dealers. At the art fairs, this dilemma becomes magnified, as each fair competes with the others to become the most successful and prestigious.

### **Museum Presence at the Fairs**

While sales and money are key elements of the fairs, the opportunity to expose works to museum staff and their patrons is also tantamount. Art fairs become a centralised place for curators to see a large number of artists' works in a short time. This is particularly beneficial in an economy where many museums, especially small to mid-sized institutions, make significant cuts to budgets, and where travel expenses for curators are sharply curtailed. Art fairs help fill the gap left open as a result of fewer studio visits and journeys to gallery openings and biennials. And although there is so much art on display that it is often hard to see it all, the opportunity to see a multitude of art works in a short period of time and meet with gallery dealers one-on-one is invaluable. Additionally, curators and directors often accompany and guide patrons, collectors and trustees, who often pay for this privilege of sharing the curators' network connections and knowledge.

For the accompanied ones, these visits are complete luxury packages. For one fee, all arrangements are taken care of: they receive VIP passes to special openings and parties, stay in deluxe accommodation and enjoy luxury transportation and eat meals at trendy restaurants; and each museum often orchestrates behind-the-scenes tours at other institutions, or arranges intimate studio visits or tours of private collectors' homes. Art fair organisers help facilitate these extravagant tours as a way to feed the ecosystem by fostering relationships with museums and their patrons—all potential collectors. These museum groups help boost attendance numbers and lend more prestige to the events. In fact, The Armory Show boasts that: 'Members of 600 international museums are invited to attend the fair. Museum guests are offered a private viewing on Saturday morning before the fair opens and free entrance at other times. The Armory Show also maintains relationships with young collector groups from institutions such as MoMA [the Museum of Modern Art, New York], Guggenheim and Whitney Museum' (Garcia-Fenech 2010a). Thus, although museums rarely purchase directly at an art fair, they are a crucial component of the system (see Figure 16). Museums not only bring collectors into the system and expand the networked market; by sending curators, directors and their patrons, museums help the fairs become more than just retail outlets.



**Figure 16: Structure of this networking market**

Furthermore, by taking the museum-organised trips, collectors and patrons delve into the community of practice, by sharing knowledge and gaining insights on contemporary art trends while accompanying curators throughout the fairs. Yet, despite the seeming emphasis on collectors, these trips are, in fact, also advantageous to curators. These tours offer the chance to groom patrons, educating them about, and guiding them toward, particular artists in the hope that works purchased both at the fair and in gallery spaces may become gifts to the museum—either immediately or in the future.

These gifts are tremendously important, in that they alleviate two major problems facing museums today. The first is the difficulty of raising funds for purchases amid shrinking acquisitions budgets. The second is the process itself: most museums have in place procedures for vetting curators' and directors' recommendations for additions to their collections. This involves presenting any given work of art and justifying its inclusion in

the collection to a committee. Often these committees meet quarterly or twice a year. This lengthy process can be a hurdle to overcome, impeding the potential for immediate sale to private individuals, especially in the setting of an art fair. For example, Gallery Dealer 8 discussed her decision to bring a particular artist's work to Art Chicago. Despite serious interest by a mid-sized Ohio museum, the dealer chose to bring the work to the fair because the museum could not give a firm commitment to presenting it, and their process was taking far too long. In fact, the watercolour painting was sold at the fair to a couple whom the gallery dealer had begun courting at previous fairs.

Visiting ABMB, The Armory Show and Art Chicago/NEXT afforded many glimpses of curators and directors exploring the fairs. Yet, questions arose: how many of these curators made purchases? How many were just shepherding patron groups? And how many were only on the lookout for possible exhibition prospects? Several curators at The Armory Show were taking pictures of the artworks and their labels for later reference—perhaps for acquisition or exhibition. Furthermore, several dealers at each of the fairs mentioned that they received great feedback about the works of art on offer from curators and touring patron groups. This is important, as the dealers can then introduce their artists to both curators and potential new collectors, and sales may materialise after the fair ends. At ABMB and at The Armory Show, patron groups were also easy to spot, trailing behind or in deep discussions with their curators from booth to booth. At Art Chicago, fewer of these groups were readily apparent. Present, however, were an impressive roster of curators and dealers,

including Bill Arning, Director of the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Kelly C. Baum, Curator of Contemporary Art, Princeton University Art Museum; Lisa Dorin, formerly Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Art Institute of Chicago; Matthew Drutt, formerly Executive Director, Artspace, Texas; Susanne Ghez, former Director, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; Paul Ha, former Director, Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis; Irene Hofmann, Director, SITE Santa Fe; João Ribas, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Boston; Franklin Sirmans, Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Charlie Wyle, former Lupe Murchison Curator of Contemporary Art Dallas Museum of Art, Texas. Yet, few, if any, patron groups accompanied these individuals. Instead, these curators and directors visited Art Chicago and NEXT in order to participate in panel discussions. Furthermore, it is likely that the fair reimbursed many of their travel expenses, as these individuals brought academic credentials that helped elevate the status of the fairs above a sales arena. Furthermore, by forging relationships with museum professionals, the fair management broadens the spectrum of participants while adding a layer of professional status to the event. Additionally, patron tours are expensive endeavours, and many curators prefer to travel to fairs where they can encounter the most prestigious galleries working with preeminent artists. While Art Chicago features many strong galleries, then, such curators and their patron groups generally focus their attention on the other two fairs where there are a higher percentage of top tier galleries (see Appendix 5).

## Conclusion

A close look at the system of art fairs, which is a microcosm of the larger art world, allows for the identification of key players. As seen, art fairs are a carefully constructed and complex system that embodies a selling platform along with social and educational components, such as visiting private collections and attending panels and lectures, which elevate the fairs into more than just marketplaces. These opportunities are carefully constructed. First, the galleries are juried in, meaning that organisers have some measure of control over the art on offer because it needs to be in keeping with what the accepted gallery usually shows. Second, the associated activities are supported through an infrastructure put in place by the fair management, which includes transportation to the various private collections and artist studio visits, arranged by the fair. These options are available through the VIP programmes, a fact which also feeds into the air of exclusivity that the fairs perpetuate. Yet, by bringing together multiple actors—gallery dealers, curators and museum directors, and collectors—and involving them in the programmes, which enables sharing of knowledge, the fairs become places that transcend this primary mission and instead become both networking markets and communities of practice (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Various categorisations of art fairs

This complex system is always evolving. With the advent of more fairs globally, it has become a competitive endeavour to become an important destination and so lure collectors. Those that are successful, like ABMB, cultivate an atmosphere wherein people who cannot attend feel that they are missing out; while at the same time the fair embodies the power to revitalise the city of Miami. The other fairs also have an economic impact on their host cities. The fairs function as the hub of the art world, bringing the actors together in a place that allows for the sharing of information, solidifying existing connections and forging new relationships. Fairs like ABMB provide extensive opportunities and put together full programmes, emphasising the importance of these elements in engaging both collectors and curators. Those fairs that cannot create the programmes that bring the top collectors are often not able to attract the most prestigious galleries either. This becomes a cyclical problem, and can lead to the demise of the fair, as is seen in the case of Art Chicago.

By examining the different programmes on offer, the system becomes clearer. For example, panel discussions lend an academic air to the fairs, addressing issues related to collecting along with other topics that impact on the art field. The involvement of curators and academics to this aspect brings a level of seriousness. Furthermore, the framework of programmes allows for those who want to become more fully invested in the system the opportunity to do so. However, the more enmeshed participants become, and the more power they gain, the less need they have for these particular programmes. For example, visiting private collections allows VIP holders to see what 'tastemakers' are collecting, and many of the works of the

artists found in these collections are 'on offer' at gallery booths in the fairs, reinforcing positions of power. However, once someone is elevated into the position of 'tastemaker' they no longer need to see what others are doing.

Furthermore, mapping the layout of the fairs reveals an additional layer of information. An examination of the clusters of galleries at entryways, at the intersections of rows, or occasionally at the heart of the fair, identifies the most important power positions and hierarchies within galleries. It is at the intersections and conjunctions of the most powerful galleries, in the socio-spatial dialectic, wherein the fair is activated most successfully. Fair management creates this placement deliberately to control the flow of the visitors and to create powerful art neighbourhoods within the fair. The placement of VIP lounges and areas for panel discussions further indicates the importance of both elements to the various fairs.

While the fairs exist to sell works of art, it is often difficult to assess how successful they are, demonstrating the oblique nature of the financial aspect of the art world. This is particularly apparent with the identification of the tactics that galleries employ to appear as if they are making sales, even if they are not. Tactics such as placing red dots on works not yet sold are ways that dealers manipulate the power 'game'. Certainly, no dealer wants it known that they have not sold their artists' work, as it can negatively impact both their and their artists' reputation if the works are viewed as undesirable in the marketplace. Financial success is of course only one way to judge the fairs, as they do function on a number of levels

beyond sales. However, the sales that do occur directly relate to existing connections between dealers and collectors. Thus, understanding the connections and relationships between actors is crucial in interpreting this system. For example, despite the fact that museum curators rarely purchase at the fairs, this environment remains very important. It provides an atmosphere wherein curators can cultivate their patrons, advise private collectors, help collectors to build their knowledge base in order to make informed purchases, and build relationships with collectors that may ultimately lead to future gifts of art to the museum.

Each of these elements come together to provide insights into the ecosystem of art world dealings. Studying the art fair system provides a way to understand the broader mechanisms of the art market, an insight into the 'game' as it is, and the power players playing the game. Stepping away from this broader view of the system of art fairs, the following chapter will analyse the realm of one of the key actors involved: the gallery dealer.

## Chapter 4: The Dealers

### Introduction

Gallery dealers hold a great deal of power in the art world, as a whole, but particularly in the subset of the art market. They identify and position artists within the marketplace, and it is mainly through their efforts that artists come to the attention of private collectors and museum curators. If dealers are successful, they can build an artist's reputation to the extent that these artists' works become sought after by the 'tastemakers', and, in turn, by other collectors. Dealers are, in essence, gatekeepers. It is through their individual efforts, power and influence that artists gain recognition within the art world and have success in the art market. Certainly, dealers hold power across a broad spectrum. Smaller galleries that work with emerging artists do not wield as much influence as mid-sized galleries that work with mid-career artists. Neither is as powerful as those which foster an artist through to establishing a career, or larger, established galleries that 'poach' successful artists from these smaller and mid-level galleries. In order to fully understand how the dealers operate, and their position in both the market and the larger art world, I conducted interviews with reputable dealers at established galleries located in New York. These interviews form the basis of this chapter, and it is from the information and anecdotes shared by these gallery dealers that a fuller picture emerges of the relationships that drive gallery business. All quotes

in this chapter, unless directly referenced, stem from the interviews. For additional information on the participants, see Appendix 7.

In this chapter, I first explore the role that dealers play in the marketplace and how they form relationships with other actors, such as collectors and museum curators. Second, I investigate the ways in which the economic downturn, the recession and recovery have impacted on their sales and, consequently, their businesses in order to assess the influence that financial markets have on the art market. Third, by looking at art fairs from the dealer's perspective I gained insight into the reasons why participating in fairs is important. As a corollary, it is clear that relationship building is a key component of business, so an investigation into the ways dealers cultivate connections with private collectors is essential.

Following this discussion, it is important to examine the reasons private collectors open private museums, and assess how dealers view these collections and the impact they have on museum collecting. Next, I explore dealers' motivations for working with museums, and how they establish relationships with curators and museum directors. After establishing the nature of these relationships, I consider the various ways that dealers assist museums in acquiring contemporary works of art. To do so, I first chart the length of time these sales take; then, I explore what accommodations gallery dealers offer to museums to aid in acquisitions. Lastly, I probe the different connections dealers facilitate between collectors and curators, in order to comprehend how these relationships

can develop into different partnerships that impact on museum donations and acquisitions.

## **Dealers and the Art Market**

As explored in Chapter 1, within the art world community there are three selling platforms: the primary market, the secondary market and the tertiary market (Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011; Robertson & Chong 2008; Winkleman 2009). The primary market consists of galleries and private dealers who take on the role of educating collectors (private and museum) about their artists through exhibitions, while also introducing new and original works of art into the marketplace. They build and shape their artists' careers by smartly structuring prices and strategically placing works in various collections. As such, dealers are very influential in raising the profile of their artists (Jeffri 2005; Robertson 2005c). In fact, the mission of most primary galleries is straightforward. When interviewed for this research project, Carolyn Alexander of Alexander and Bonin Gallery put it succinctly: 'We are an art business; we're here to make sales. That's our primary goal, helping these artists exist'. Each dealer I interviewed echoed this sentiment, citing the importance of creating meaningful exhibitions and publications as a platform to further their artists' market presence and place their work into private and museum collections both within the United States and abroad.

While building markets for the artists is important, the gallery business is

not purely about sales. Each gallery believes fervently in their artists' work, and the galleries have distinct profiles. For some dealers, the art needs to engage in politics; for others the art should explore the figure. Another dealer (Dealer 5) stressed the importance of working with artists 'who are somewhat on the edge or on the margins, but whose emphasis in the work has a sort of political [...] or a depth of inquiry that often goes into a cultural context'. As Jim Cohan of James Cohan Gallery stated,

[I] always thought it was important to create a kind of venue that represented my generation. I see that from a business point of view we can't just do that; you need to move in either direction, so whether it is estates or whether it is to continue developing relationships with emerging artists. But the core of what we do is [...] having a group of artists that are somewhere between 45 and 55.

Sally Morgan Lehman and her partner Jay Lehman of Morgan Lehman Gallery also explained that they draw attention to works of art with many facets:

[We] try to look at work that is visually stimulating conceptually. I tend to think we like work that is beautiful, but it can't just be pretty. I mean, there has to be something really interesting conceptually or intellectually about the work—or formally, there has to be something besides just the visual.

Lehman's point applies to all the dealers in the study in that it is important for each of them to support artists who create more than beautiful imagery. Each of the dealers aims to work with artists whose work they feel has depth and which engages with the world in a critical way. This type of work, they believe, is more likely to have continued relevance in the future.

Within the primary market this is particularly important, as dealers attempt

to position their artists within an art historical context. Once the work becomes part of the secondary or tertiary market, it has been accepted within this context because, unlike in the primary market, works of art for sale in the secondary market are no longer new to the market; the secondary market is essentially the resale of works (Graw 2009; Horowitz 2011; Robertson & Chong 2008; Winkleman 2009). Resale often happens as artists gain recognition and the prices for their works escalate. As such, working in the secondary market is often a lucrative venture. Some galleries focus exclusively on this sector, while others participate simultaneously in the primary and secondary markets. This study focuses on galleries that work principally in the primary market. Yet, all of the galleries I spoke with also occasionally enter the secondary market by reselling works by artists they represent. Serra Pradhan, Director of Marianne Boesky Gallery, explained: 'We've always done secondary market related to our artists and, as they have become more successful, a greater secondary market of course has followed that'. Wendy Olsoff of P.P.O.W. agreed: 'With all my artists I'll always do a secondary market. But I never want to buy an Andy Warhol'. For a primary gallery it is important to work within the secondary market on behalf of their represented artists and artist estates as a way to continue to try to control the pricing and placement of their artists' works. By doing so, dealers also hope to keep their artists' work from coming up too early at auction.

Auctions, or the tertiary market, focus on sellers who are looking to achieve the highest price. This arena perfectly illustrates how, as Graw

states, in 'the relationship between art and market, the concept of symbolic value is especially appropriate for the way it unites two concepts: "symbol" evokes cultural theory, while "value" refers to political economy' (Graw 2009). In the arena of the auction these concepts converge, pushing up prices. Yet works at auction often sell for far more than the actual or symbolic 'value', bringing in an amount based on what one person is willing to spend. Often the prices escalate through the competition of two or more sellers, or because the work resonates on such a personal level with a collector that he or she must own it 'at any cost'. No matter the eventual price, having a work appear at auction is a signal to the world that confirms and validates an artist's status within the marketplace (Velthuis 2005). When an artist's work begins to appear frequently at auction, it inevitably has an effect on his or her primary market. Pradhan addressed this:

I think auction houses have a very specific role here too. I mean, on one level [there are] concerns about a piece going before we're ready for the artist to have that up there. At the same time, the auction houses are a big factor in helping create the commercial, financial side of the artist market. You just don't want it to happen too soon.

This statement illustrates the significant role that auction houses can have on an artist's market. Auction houses wield a great deal of influence, and can manipulate this market through several strategies: first, by the choices they make about which artists' work to focus publicity on for any particular sale; second, by setting the sales estimates and expectations.

Furthermore, prior to any sale, auction house personnel work very hard to gain a sense of who might bid on a particular work and how much they are

willing to spend, and, if needs be, they can adjust estimates or reserve prices in order to ensure the best chances for success.

Several other dealers discussed the complex relationship between primary galleries and auctions. Most preferred not to see works at auction, highlighting the negative aspects. Dealer 3 stated, 'You want work to do well at auction, but at the same time you don't want it to do too well, so the collectors think, "oh my gosh, I bought this for \$10,000 and now I can sell it for \$50,000"'. Dealer 4 concurred, believing that when works sell extremely well it sets off a frenzy of collectors believing they can capitalise on the success. Dealers are wary of this situation, as the market generally will not hold up to a flood of a particular artist's work, which can occur when collectors rush to try and replicate the success of an artist's work at auction. Furthermore, over-saturation undermines the careful and strategic work that dealers put into building their artists' reputations if the work does not sell in this public market, and prices fall.

In a boom market, and in a market that has proven to be extremely resilient during the downturn, collectors that buy speculatively in order to 'flip' works (i.e. to sell at a profit after only a short time of ownership) are always a concern (Robertson & Chong 2008; Spiegler 2002; Thornton 2010). Also considered problematical are aggressive and predatory auctioneers, who prove that the actions of one part of the community can unbalance the performance of others within the system. Cohan stated:

In a way auctions can have some benefit, but the minute something sells really well at auction, the auctioneers are very transparent in

that they then see this as an expanding market. They go chase after every collector who owns one of those works, and they are going to use that sale as a hook to get the next thing. Obviously as a primary dealer, I have mixed feelings about that. I'd rather have my collectors come back to me.

Cohan's remark reveals how dealers wish not only to control the placement of the work, but also manage the risks involved in consigning work to auction. His desire to have his collector bring work back to him to sell directly, rather than at auction, speaks of his ability to resell a work on the private market, where sales prices are not disclosed to the public. Additionally, he can place the work with a different collector: one who is not buying for investment purposes or to 'flip' the work. Selling privately allows the dealer to control market prices for the work, stepping them up in a calculated way. Skyrocketing prices at auction rarely affect gallery prices to a great degree, but it can have an impact. Dealer 5 explained: 'I think galleries' prices on the primary market generally stay quite firm'. However, as seen, high prices have an effect in that they can cause collectors to flood the market with works by a particular artist, in effect creating some market instability. These high prices also make the work unaffordable to museums. On the other hand, when works do not sell, or only reach the low end of an estimate, there are consequences. Dealer 5 noticed the effects of low prices on collector confidence, stating that lower prices at auction are

One of the things [that influence] budding private collectors' opinions of what something is worth. They rarely will quote Artnet auction prices if they only see prices that are higher, but they will often quote the prices if they are trying to buy something and they see that they are lower.

This is one reason why protective dealers purchase their artists' works at auction; it gives them more control both over where the work is placed and over the artist's price structure. In discussing his reasons for doing so, Cohan said he bought '[b]ecause I wanted it, and on maybe one or two occasions just to make the market feel firmer'. Pradhan reiterated that while a gallery will occasionally buy a work from auction, it is common practice that dealers do so reluctantly.

You'll protect an artist. It's a strategy about their overall career. You don't want to do it because A) It doesn't necessarily make sense for us to have a public record that we bought the piece and B) sometimes it feels like you are rewarding the collector by rushing out to get it back.

Another strategy is to collaborate with other galleries or private collectors who are 'friends of the gallery' to buy the artwork back. In such cases the dealer approaches and coordinates with these 'friends of the gallery' to buy the piece without having the gallery name associated with the purchase. This strategy allows the work to establish a price at auction, but removes the dealer from the sale. By doing so, the sale stands on its own merits without the appearance of the dealer protecting the artist or their market.

Another way for dealers to try to control the market for their artists and keep their artists' works from auctions is to create agreements between themselves and collectors, ensuring first right of refusal in resale (De Coppet & Jones 2002; Horowitz 2011; Robertson & Chong 2008; Spiegler 2002; Winkleman 2009). None of the galleries I spoke with put these agreements in place in a formal way; instead, they preferred to rely on

what matters: their relationships with their collectors. Pradhan stated:

You just hope [the collector returns to the gallery]. I mean the reality is that legally, those aren't binding. I've seen many galleries that include those, and it's really more a courtesy and it's the right thing to do to give us a chance if they want us to continue working with you. People can sign all kinds of things, but once you own something, you own something.

Cohan agreed with this viewpoint and stressed that the relationship is of utmost importance in his dealings with collectors. Certainly it is true that the stronger the bond between a gallery and its collectors, the higher the probability that the collectors will return to the gallery to sell their work, rather than offering it through auction.

By not using agreements, dealers further reinforce the fact that many of the sales are born of established relationships, where trust builds between them and the collector. When these types of relationships are in force, it helps protect the work from placement in auction. As a result, dealers can slowly build the prices for the artists' works in a methodical way that does not reflect external conditions, including the hype and competition that auctions generate—or at least not to the same degree. As small and mid-sized museums can rarely compete in this tournament of value, and can only buy through the primary and secondary markets, they rely on dealers to protect their artists' price structures, as outlined above.

## **Riding the Economic Roller Coaster**

The gallery business is dependent on sales and, as such, economic shifts

have an impact. Conversations with dealers revealed the extent of this impact. Certainly, during the last decade, the art market has reflected the world economy, with incredible highs and devastating lows. The success of the years building up to the apex in 2008 was unprecedented in terms of rising prices for contemporary art. Horowitz (2011: 193) encapsulated this period:

These shifting tides [of unstable economic markets] did little to quell the art market's trajectory in 2007, which proved to be the record year for auction sales at \$9.4 billion worldwide. This was acutely apparent at the top of the market, with 1,200 works trading above \$1 million at auction (equal to the combined total for 2005 and 2006), and in the hottest market sector—contemporary art. Prices here rose by 85%, on average, from January 2002 to January 2008. For the first time, contemporary art became Sotheby's largest category in 2007 with sales of \$1.3 billion, an astonishing increase of 107% from 2006.

When the housing market crashed in 2008 there was a ripple effect across all financial markets. Initially, dealers had difficulties completing sales, but the situation was not as dire as in other realms. As author Iain Robertson explains, 'General price movements in the art market categories are determined by externalities, as is the case in the stock market, but 'sectoral' or art 'type' rises and falls are to a great extent manipulated by a consensus of opinion within art markets' (Robertson 2005). Thus, during this period, auctions remained strong and continued to have record-breaking sales. This can be explained by a variety of reasons. First, many collectors who participate in the art market were not impacted by the economic shifts as dramatically as traders in markets. Still wealthy, they continued to buy art, particularly at auction. Furthermore, as art prices

continued to rise, some buyers considered art to be a 'safe' investment. As these collectors and investors kept the market strong, this resulted in the 'consensus of opinion' referred to by Robertson, further strengthening the market. Additionally, art fairs continued to grow in numbers, despite predictions that this growth was not sustainable.

These positive indicators of the art market's success were also partly the result of the emotional and symbolic connection that art instills in its collectors. Unlike stocks, bonds or gold, art satisfies on multiple levels. Beyond being a way for those in the downturn who retained their wealth to safely invest money, collecting art also correlates with prestige, knowledge and culture. Furthermore, many collectors purchase works that not only interest them, but also those to which they connect on a personal level. However, despite the strength of sales at fairs and at auctions, dealers were particularly vulnerable to shifting market conditions. Many dealers interviewed spoke about the changes in their businesses over the past several years and where they are now. Dealer 4 contextualised the growth of the market over the last twenty-five years:

The art market has increased exponentially. The entire pyramid, if you will, is a much bigger, broader, more diverse art world than it used to be. It used to be a little more understated; there were fewer collectors, fewer galleries and fewer fairs. It has all become very, very big business. Even if you proportionately considered inflation the numbers have still increased exponentially. It's a much more confusing place, but some things are constant: people's love of art, people's desire to collect art, museums' focus, museums' commitment.

This love of art and the desire to collect helped to sustain the market during the volatile financial period beginning in 2008, yet that is not to say

it was an easy period. Alexander said, '2008 was really bad. Certainly, October 2008 it started to collapse and people stopped coming into galleries. For a full year it was extremely painful. [...] It was one really nasty year.' Olsoff summarised 2008 as 'dead, the art market was really, really, terrible and everyone was paralysed. I think people had money but they were paralytic about spending it'. Some of the strategies that galleries adopted to weather this period were to cut staff, remove exhibitions from their schedules, and scale back advertising efforts. Despite the difficulties many dealers faced, however, Dealer 5 commented on a surprising reality: 'I think what was very interesting with the recession was that it became very clear that the high end work, the expensive work was never really going to be a problem to sell'. Again, this reflects not only the fact that there will still many collectors who could afford the high-end work and sustain the market for them, but also that original works with art historical value made by a reputable artist remained sought after. Dealer 5 went on to state, however, that mid-career and younger artists had more difficulties:

It was a challenge with some of the younger artists. Before, I could have just picked up the phone and probably sold the work quickly, even online through JPEGs. Those artists were used to selling very, very regularly and suddenly a lot of those people weren't buying, and the younger artists really dried up quite a lot.

Although it is still a struggle, in the years since 2008 all of the dealers agreed that the market for both private and museums collectors is slowly strengthening. Dealer 3 suggested that, 'institutions are not collecting at

the level they were. It's a lot harder [for the museums] to acquire work now than it was four or five years ago.'

This indicates that to make sales, galleries must have more patience than in the past; and often, private collectors want further discounts. Pradhan remarked on how the downturn affected the buying process: 'On the collector level it changed the dynamic of where people had that urgency, you had to make a decision right away; now people are much more thoughtful, they take time. It is harder is to close the larger sales, million dollar sales. It is a much longer process'. Almost all sales, in fact, stem from relationships built over time, and this is especially apparent during a period of economic hardship. So, while sales continue, if not robustly, prices remain high for contemporary art. The fact that Pradhan still referred to million dollar sales, even though admitting they are not as frequent as in the past, demonstrates that acquisitions are still difficult for small and mid-sized museums, whose budgets are much smaller.

## **Art Fairs' Sales and Relationships**

All of the galleries involved in this study participate in a number of fairs every year for a variety of reasons. Almost all participate in Art Basel|Miami Beach, along with either The Armory Show or the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA), both in New York, and several take part in international exhibitions including Art Basel, Art Basel|Hong Kong, FIAC in Paris and the Zona Maco art fair in Mexico City, among others. Pradhan

explained:

Art fairs are definitely part of the business now. There are certain art fairs that are more prestigious and more in step that you really want to be a part of—Basel, ArtBasel|Miami Beach—and then there are others that you do for different reasons. We're doing Hong Kong for the second year with the sense that developing the Asian market was important.

While fairs are part of the business, as Pradhan mentioned, there is a hierarchy to the fairs, as discussed in Chapter 3. The more prestigious fairs bring in a higher calibre of collectors with more money to spend and higher profile collections. As a result, gaining acceptance as an exhibiting gallery becomes a competitive endeavor. Horowitz (2011: 138) explains that 'Art fairs, like the art market in general, are hardly democratic: gallery inclusion is determined by committee, participation and attendance costs are steep'. This often hinders all but the top-level galleries. Giving a personal perspective on this process, Olsoff, the owner of a gallery that carries both emerging artists and artists who explore social and political contexts in their work, summarised:

We don't get into the other fairs [Art Basel, Art Basel | Miami Beach] because the committees on those fairs make the decisions and we really don't know who those committee people are; [...] It is very political; and it's not about art, it's about business. It's about who you do business with and it's about who you know on the committees.

As gaining acceptance into some of the upper level fairs may prove difficult for many galleries, and is in any case not guaranteed from year to year, those that own or rent a physical space in a major metropolis have a distinct advantage; for them, the fairs are not as crucial to bringing in new collectors and making contacts. Alexander explained: 'I have to say we

have an advantage being in New York, just because of the quantity of visitors in the art world'. Furthermore, Alexander described the difficulties of constant travel that many galleries outside of art centres such as New York, Los Angeles, London and Paris face in order to participate in art fairs.

Horowitz reinforces the financial implications of fairs for galleries, indicating that 'fairs have certainly had an irrefutable impact on galleries' revenue streams: for some, fair sales constitute half, if not the majority, of annual earnings; one-third of annual turnover is common' (2011).

Certainly, bringing in revenue is a key aspect; as Olsoff put it, with amusement, 'Well, art fairs exist to sell art'. Deals and purchases happen quickly. It is 'event' buying, and Cohan, in his interview, related it to auctions, in that

Art fairs are the catalyst to make people make the decision. You know it's the emerging, it's the hip, and it's just an opportunity for dealers to create an environment that is closely aligned with auctions and it's that environment we are creating. Because it is, at that moment, that there is an impending event. That this isn't just an exhibition that you can walk into and casually meander around. There is no sense of urgency when people walk into a gallery from a buying point of view. It's more taking it in, and so the art fair is just a catalyst to make someone press the button.

In addition to selling work, every gallery that I spoke with uses art fairs to both form and solidify relationships with collectors (individual and institutional) and with their colleagues. Pradhan weighed the costs and the rewards:

Art fairs are a major commitment. You might do an art fair knowing that you probably won't do well but you'll at least break even. You don't want to do an art fair where you think you are going to come

out of there losing money because your shipping costs can reach upwards of \$100,000, and your booth participation can be another \$50-\$75,000, and then there is paying for your staff to be there and the time you are there means you're not working on things here [in the gallery]. All that being said it's also really important in terms of the contacts that you are making, meeting new collectors, exposing your artists to different environments.

Another dealer (Dealer 5) echoed the importance of building social connections, while adding: 'You always come away from an art fair with a book full of new contacts. Yes, it's not just about selling, but networking with other galleries around the world is very useful.'

Yet art fairs do not elicit the same testimony from all participants. Even though the opportunities for positive results such as sales and growing social connections generally outweigh the difficulties, Olsoff makes an important point about the potential of art fairs to generate future sales many years later. Thus, it is imperative to continue building and growing the connections established at the fairs into stable relationships. As seen in the previous chapter, fairs purposefully construct a social sphere. However, as many collectors return to a fair year after year, relationships between collectors and gallery dealers are able to develop slowly over time, ultimately culminating in sales. This social element is very important, not only for dealers to cultivate an existing audience, but also to develop new ones. Dealer 4 categorised the fairs as social events comprising parties hosted by galleries, collectors or anyone wishing to take advantage of the crowds the event brings in. Thus, dealers need to sell not only works of art, but also the *idea* of contemporary

art as being viable both economically and symbolically. This idea feeds into the notion that someone who appreciates and understands contemporary art holds a great deal of cultural capital. These are the collectors, with whom gallery dealers are most interested in cultivating relationships through social events.

While some of the more established galleries have a built-in collector base that visit their booth at every fair they participate in, younger dealers involved in emerging markets look at the fair model in other ways. One is to see it as an apprentice system, which aligns closely with what Wenger and Lave discuss as being the building blocks to forming a knowledge-stewarding community<sup>10</sup> (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002b). Lave & Wenger found 'that apprentices learned a great deal through "legitimate peripheral participation"; that is, by participating peripherally in a practice where there were opportunities to learn from masters and more experienced journeyman' (1991). This way of thinking bolsters the reasons why dealers often participate in supplemental fairs, which not only function as channels to the larger, more established fairs, but also incorporate additional benefits such as collectors looking for more emerging artists, helping dealers build their collector base. Morgan Lehman articulated another reason for participation. She saw the fairs as advertising. She stated:

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<sup>10</sup> Wenger et al. say that knowledge-stewarding communities are 'Like other communities, those that primarily steward knowledge host forums for members to connect, develop, and verify practices, but their main intent is to organise, upgrade, and distribute the knowledge their members use every day' (2002b: 76).

Obviously, it is expensive [...] but as opposed to an ad in a magazine it's a much more effective advertisement for the gallery artists in terms of how many people go through. It is a walking, talking advertisement for us and for our artists.

Her partner Jay Lehman elaborated; to him, the fairs '[a]lmost function like a conference—curators come, collectors come, dealers come, artists come'. Lehman feels that a potential downside is that '[i]t's almost like, and this is a horrible analogy, but like going to the mall'. Another dealer (Dealer 3) took this idea even further, stating that 'at the end of the day it is a trade show'.

In a weakened economy, it is especially important for galleries to participate in fairs as a way to demonstrate strength. Reinforcing this, critic Peter Schjeldahl states

that 'non-participation may be suicidal, risking losses not only of revenue but of artists whose loyalty depends on how gamely they are promoted'. The dealer Brooke Alexander said, 'The art world is so event-driven these days that if you don't take part in the major fairs you almost don't exist in the public mind.' (Schjeldahl 2006)

Thus, by not participating in the fairs, gallery dealers run the risk of falling off the collectors' radar. As many collectors have shifted to buying primarily through fairs, galleries lose the opportunity to connect with potential collectors; and if the physical location of the gallery is not in an art centre like New York or Los Angeles, a fair may be the only place to interact with these global collectors. Ultimately, as explored in the previous chapter, fairs provide an important platform for raising the profile of the gallery and the artists they represent. Non-participation can lead to a shift in the gallery's power position, lessening their realm of influence and

pushing it to the periphery. Gallery acceptance in fairs, particularly prestigious ones such as ABMB, is very competitive; once a gallery decides not to participate in a fair it is very difficult to reenter this system.

## **The Cultivation and Influence of Private Collectors**

As this chapter has established, fairs are where many dealers connect with collectors. Yet there are many ways dealers cultivate these relationship beyond the fair arena. To facilitate sales, both at fairs and at the gallery, dealers often offer discounts. This is primarily because many private collectors either expect or attempt to negotiate a reduction on the purchase price. As stated by Dealer 5, these discounts often begin at 10% off the purchase price, and sometimes extend to 15%. Pradhan insisted that 'all collectors want discounts', and Morgan Lehman concurred: 'People ask for 20%; everybody wants 20%'. Increasing discounts appear to be standard procedure in most galleries. However, it is interesting to note that dealers who work with younger or emerging artists, whose work is not highly priced, often extend larger discounts as a way to broaden the collector base for these artists. On the other hand, galleries that work with established artists, and in particular 'superstar' artists, often extend only minimal discounts or none at all, due to the high demand for the work. In any case, the dealers emphasised that larger discounts occur on a case-by-case basis and in special circumstances. Additionally, they try to reinforce to their collectors the understanding that it is not only about getting a good deal on an artwork, but that there are artists trying to make

a living.

A good relationship between collector and gallery might engender a higher discount, and if a collector shares their intention to gift the work to an institution that may also affect the rate of a discount. Pradhan explained.

You might give the collector a bigger discount if they say it will be a promised gift [to a museum] because part of it is truly a philanthropic feeling. I think most of us who are working in the art world, want art to be out there and not just hidden away in a private collection.

However, despite this philanthropic feeling, the gallery dealers' first goal is to build their artists' careers. A key aspect in strengthening an artist's reputation is getting their work into important and influential private collections; it is often the first step before public collections begin acquiring work, and discounts help facilitate this.

All the dealers in the study agreed that certain collectors have the ability to influence other collectors. Cohan explained that part of this comes from confidence built through seeing works in other collections, and becoming more and more familiar with the art. He explained that 'Everyone is very insecure about their visual taste, not everyone, but I think people are generally really intimidated about making decisions about why they like something. And familiarity breeds confidence if you see it enough.'

Dealer 5 agreed that this is often the case, lamenting the insecurity of many collectors. 'I think that it's a pity that people don't have the courage to make their own decisions or go with their instincts'; instead, he believes,

they rely on the validation of other collectors. This fosters an attitude of follow the leader, implying that collectors are buying not only because they love the work, but for additional reasons such as the prestige that comes from owning a particular artist's work and the additional social and economic value bestowed on works that have this validation. Morgan Lehman described seeing this phenomenon in action: 'There is the collector who will come in here with three people in tow and say, "I have this artist and I have this artist". And their friends will ask [me], "What else do you have available?"' People convey information about who the 'hot' artists are by talking to each other, and by seeing which artists the few risk-taking 'tastemakers'—as several dealers call them—follow.

The confluence of events that contribute to an artist gaining success is multifold. Pradhan described this:

It certainly helps reinforce for collectors that they are buying and collecting the right person when there is also museum support, and this is also the place where critics [matter]. It takes all three working together, because if a show gets a good review then everybody takes more notice and the whole thing [comes] together.

Ultimately, while it may take museums, critics and collectors all connecting with one another in order for an artist to gain art world success, some believe these three are not on an equal footing in this equation. Several dealers believe that collectors wield the most influence. Dealer 6 claimed that '[t]he collectors are the ones who have the finances to keep the machine going', and Olsoff agreed. She explained:

The collector has the most power. If a collector is influential and buys a piece, that will change the whole picture. They're the

trustees of museums and they talk to other rich people and they, they completely control everything down the line. It's the collectors.

Cohan concurred. 'Everyone's complicit in consensus building and it has much more power if it is a private collection that has a public venue'.

Several collections have this power to influence not only other collectors, but also the direction of an artist's career. In the early 1980s, collectors such as Elaine Danhauser, Charles Saatchi, Eugene Schwartz and Emily and Jerry Spiegel wielded a lot of influence. Names that came up repeatedly as the 'tastemakers' of today include Eli Broad in California; Beth DeWoody, Susan and Michael Hort, Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Leary and Sherry and Joel Mallin in New York; and Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, Marty Margulies and Mera and Don Rubell in Miami.

These 'tastemakers' invest in certain artists for a variety of reasons. They may feel an emotional connection to their work, or understand how the artist fits into the art historical canon. In all cases it is clear that they believe that the artist is important and has something valuable to contribute to art history. Once the 'tastemakers' begin to support an artist, others follow suit, beginning a cyclical process of reputation building, and expanding the market for an artist and their work. However, this consensus building begins with the gallery dealers and the particular artists that they represent, primarily at art fairs. Certainly, the most prestigious galleries consistently feed into this system. However, the collectors validate the system by further enhancing notions of symbolic capital associated with the artists and the works of art that they collect. As

theorist Jenn Webb explains, Bourdieu connects the symbolic with the social order of the art world through this consensus building:

Art [...] is not simply 'aesthetic'; it is a symbolic thing, and symbols, Bourdieu writes, 'make it possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order'. (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002: 155)

Thus, those collectors who have the most cultural and economic capital naturally rise to the top of the art world through their endorsements of, and connections with, highly valorized artists. These collectors can be split into three groups: those who ultimately support public museums through gifts of art; those who eventually pass on their collections to family members or sell them; and those who open up their own private museum spaces, as discussed in the following section.

### **The Proliferation of 'Art Barns'**

An intriguing aspect of the art world today is the growth of private museums, sometimes referred to as 'art barns'. Many of the influential collectors named above are now beginning to open up their homes, or are building private museums as a way to open their collections to the public. They do this for a variety of motives, some altruistic and some not. While the tax incentives from forming a non-profit organisation are often more attractive than those associated with donating to public museums, this only applies to larger private collections that pursue US Government tax exempt and non-profit status (501-C3). Other collections which do not

pursue this status to become private museums, but choose to open to the public on a part-time basis, do so as a way to introduce larger audiences to otherwise hidden collections. While placing works of art in these collections often pleases dealers, the transactions also bring up mixed feelings among them, as revealed in the interviews.

For some, the benefits certainly outweigh their concerns. First and foremost, many dealers believe that placing their artists' work in these collections is critical to the consensus building about an artist. Pradhan explained that 'there are just certain collections that are good for the artist because of how much exposure they get'. Dealer 4 believed that when private museums and private collections that open to the public purchase works, it creates excitement for art collecting. He pointed out that 'it allows work that has rarely been seen up to that point accessible to the public and accessible to art viewers and art lovers in general. It creates exhibitions. It creates excitement for art. I think they are all good things.'

Interestingly, these are all attributes that could also apply to public museum collecting. One difference, according to Dealer 5, is the point of making rarely seen work accessible. He believed that private museums are often the ideal repository for larger installations, and provided the following example:

A very difficult installation by Cildo Meireles will only be seen in a public museum in New York maybe once every fifteen years. If you can sell it to someone who will build a space for it, which is the case with Brazilian collector Bernardo Paz in Brumadinho, Brazil, where you can go see these works on view all the time, it's very hard to not sell it [to the private collector].

He went further to extoll the other advantages of working with a private museum:

With private museums, they are able to buy the work, they install it, and are able to do things with it that other museums, real museums, can't do quickly. It's refreshing to only deal with one person's taste, and one person's passion and one person's commitment as opposed to, say, a curator, one curator, five other curators then the assistant director, and the director of the real museum, only to then turn down a work that they've had on reserve forever.

This was a common sentiment among all of the dealers in the study. They noted that sales to public museums often took an average of six months, with some transactions taking up to two years to complete, often because of the need for approval on multiple levels. Private collectors, on the other hand, are able to make immediate decisions.

Despite quicker sales, several dealers noted some negative aspects of selling to collectors with private museums rather than to public museums. Certainly, one issue is that of the future of the artwork. In a public museum, there are guidelines and regulations dictating the disposal, or deaccessioning, of works of art. For private collections, the needs or whims of their owners dictate the terms of a sale. Dealer 5 articulated this concern:

I think it depends on what the owners wish to really do with their museum once they get older and realise that they have to do something with their legacy. I think you have less issue with things being deaccessioned from a real museum, an actual museum. But a private museum, obviously, is less controlled with what will happen to the work

Another worry is that, while public museums offer a wider vision of the way that contemporary artists fit within art history, and in doing so provide a

context for their work, private collectors offer only a single vision. As Dealer 3 explained, 'I think it's fantastic that they have the resources to do this, but at the end of the day it is one collector's vision versus a museum with curators and a director. So it's one story being told versus several stories'. This singular vision can be extraordinary, and several public institutions in the United States today can trace their origins to individual collections. However, for many private collectors an important element to creating such collections is the power that it brings. Dealer 2 suggested that for 'the people who have those kinds of public collections it is about power. They are power tripping'. However, as Dealer 8 explained, this is on many levels superficial.

Well, there is glamour to them and there aren't that many of them. There is the Saatchi Collection, the Rubell Collection, the Cisneros, the Hort Collection and Marty Margulies. It is something really sexy, but it's very designer. Definitely from a marketing point of view it's great, it's like a gift. It has always been that way, since we opened. Oh, Saatchi bought it. Oh, so and so bought it, and [that has brought in] more and more collectors and then public collections. Definitely, it is a name-dropping thing you can use and usually those collections are immaculately beautiful. I always think about, if you have a lot of money, like so rich, you would dress beautifully, right? You would go to Bergdorf's and all these cool boutiques. And these rich people have beautifully installed art collections. It is not because they are such geniuses or have such an amazing point of view or intelligence, they just have access. And they know how to do things in style with everything they do.

To reinforce this, Dealer 6 equated these large private museums, especially those in Miami, with vanity museums. For her, she felt that the private spaces that operate like museums are little more than ego boosters. She believed that with the money the collectors put into building both the collection and the building that houses it, they should collaborate with existing public institutions, to be more community minded. Alexander

bluntly echoed this sentiment, saying, 'I personally believe that it is more advisable for private collectors to support and, if necessary, influence their local museums and build that, rather than open their own private spaces'.

Many other dealers did not feel this strongly, instead exhibiting conflicting ideas about private versus public museums. Cohan stated, 'I love the idea of the competition [between public and private museums] but I think they're complicated and it comes with all sorts of problems. You know, if it's to the detriment of the public museums it becomes a little bit much'.

Dealer 5 put forth a proposition based on his belief that private museums are able to build collections of extraordinary work, whereas public museums do not have the vision to do so. He explained: 'I think that sometimes the museums may think that the private museums got the artist's work because they're wealthy, and the [public] museums can't do it, can't buy something for the good of the public, but often, I'm sure, they had the chance to do it.'

This Dealer's comments were particularly telling as they ascribed the difficulties that museums face in acquiring work to a lack of vision on the museum's behalf. In some cases this may be true; museums may have had opportunities to purchase select works of art prior to the value escalating to the point that it becomes unattainable. In many other cases, however, prices rise far too rapidly for the museum to even consider many of these works. By shifting the responsibility solely to the museum,

exhorting them to take more risks in purchasing before artists build their reputations, the dealer sidesteps his/her own culpability in this cycle.

## **Museum Relationships**

It is important to understand the value that dealers place on having a relationship with public museums, and how these relationships fit within their overall strategy for positioning their artists' works. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore how dealers view small, mid-sized and regional museums in comparison to influential private collections and art barns. As seen, dealers find much value in placing their artists' work within private collections, yet there is still significant benefit to having public museums collect their artists' work. Alexander explained the importance of working with a public museum:

We feel that is so important for the artist's career. It's part of the public realm. Even if they're not exhibited too often, it's a show of confidence and support for that artist's work that, of course, we, as the representative, want everybody in the world to know about. I mean, it is, when the Tate or the Modern or even smaller museums when they support an artist's work, it is something you really can work with. And that means a lot to the rest of the world and to the artist.

As such, many dealers cultivate relationships with the curators and directors of public museums. They do this in a number of ways: several dealers update curators and directors by sending information on their artists; others maintain relationships through contact at art fairs; and several feel it is important to travel to museums around the country. Cohan

said he believes the contact creates positive outcomes. Regarding travel he said, '[T]hey [the museums] love it. And they should. Because we make the effort to go see them, let them know what we are doing. I've never been on a trip where it didn't result in something [a sale or exhibition], never'.

Yet, despite the success of these visits, demanding schedules limit the time available for travel, especially to smaller and regional institutions.

Alexander explained:

I feel we haven't got out on the road enough. I feel I should be in Cleveland, I should be in Kansas, I should be in Toledo; I should be on the road more. And one of the problems for both of us [Alexander and her partner, Ted Bonin] is we have all these international artists. Once a year we go to their studios wherever they may be—that's a lot of travel. We believe we should go to their one-person shows wherever they may be. That's a lot of travel. So, you know, after all of that, and covering some of the big international exhibitions, there's very little time left.

With such constraints, attention often diverts to larger museums, especially those in urban centres. When asked, most dealers concurred that the ideal North American museums to collect their artists are the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art in California, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth, Texas and the Whitney Museum in New York. As such, smaller and more regional institutions do not receive the same amount of attention. While some dealers believe that the inclusion of their artists' work in any museum is important, our conversations revealed a bias towards these larger, more influential institutions. Dealer 2 put it bluntly:

You know, East Podunk is less interesting than a central, cultural capital, of course. And that's all about visibility. Seriously. Does Brad Pitt want to be interviewed by the Today show, or does he want to be interviewed in Kohler, Wisconsin, right? I mean he wants your efforts to be seen by the most possible people in the world.

Dealer 7 echoed this sentiment, saying, 'You know, I think overall for us we try to support both [i.e. regional museums and large museums in cultural centres], and obviously if an opportunity comes up for an artist to have a show at MoMA versus a show at a small regional institution, MoMA would be better'. Furthermore, not only do many dealers prefer larger museums in cultural centres, many also prioritise well-known collectors and their private museums over smaller, regional public museums—again, mainly for the visibility. Voicing a sentiment shared by several dealers, Dealer 2 clearly explained the reasoning:

I mean, if it's in Dubuque [Iowa] and it's that versus the Rubell's, I'd pick the Rubell's. No offense to the museum. It's just that if you imagine that an artist is only able to make x number of works a year, you want to get the most benefit for the artist, for yourself, for the world.

However, while many of the dealers in this study acknowledged that inclusion in the collection of a larger institution in a larger city may have more impact on an artist's career, they also acknowledged the importance of all museums—including smaller and regional museums—in the career trajectory of the artists; as Dealer 7 stated:

It is also really important and wonderful for there to be great collections elsewhere. I mean, you'll find some of the best collections in places you might not think. I think those great surprises are the Sheldon in Nebraska, in Des Moines [in Iowa], in Pittsburgh, or at the Kemper [in Kansas City, Missouri] etc. It's hard to say that specifically because one's [museum is] based in New York it should win.

Yet, despite this viewpoint, the reality is that sales to all museums comprise just a fraction of dealers' business, and sales to the smaller and regional museums make up an even smaller percentage. For example, Dealer 5 stated that of all of his galleries' sales, only about 10% to 15% were to museums, and, despite claiming to have good relationships with regional museums, when pressed he could not recall any recent transactions to smaller American institutions. Dealer 3 stated even more bluntly that they had not sold any art to smaller museums.

This is not the case across the board, however, and many galleries, including Marianne Boesky, James Cohan and P.P.O.W., have active relationships with smaller museums. In some ways, cultivating relationships with smaller and regional museums may prove to be influential later on in the life of a business or an artist's career. Cohan explained how fostering relationships with curators often 'carry over' from the curators' present position, and, as curators move to larger museums, they still rely on the dealers. He gave an example:

If we sell something to a curator when they're at the La Jolla museum by x artist and then they go to the Chicago Art Institute and that purchase worked out well at La Jolla, and that artist continued to go on [successfully] and that curator is into that artist then they are going to buy it again. And then if they go to another museum they're going to buy it again. So young curators are important people. You know it is just a relationship you build. And, that's great because artists have invested their energy and their time, and they've made a commitment to these artists and that's a personal relationship.

Thus, the benefit of working with a smaller and regional museums, and not just large, established museums, means gaining the opportunity to place

the artist's work into a broader range of museums, thereby making the work available to a larger audience across the country. Furthermore, it is an investment in a relationship with a curator who may move on to an influential museum and continue to collect.

Yet, despite this encouraging potential outcome, dealers still encounter difficulties with smaller or regional museums. Dealer 2 articulated some of the issues.

I think it's a chore, I think they have local politics which go along with you know, smaller communities, and they can't play to New York or to Berlin. It's a challenge as to how to keep that balance, to bring your audience forward and not alienate them at the same time.

For these reasons, not all dealers wish to work with small, mid-sized or regional museums. However, collecting by museums of any size is significant in that it instills confidence in the marketplace for an artist's work. Museum acquisitions function as an endorsement, elevating the artist's reputation and validating private collectors' decision to purchase works by these artists.

## **Length of Time**

Selling works to small or regional museums may have inherent difficulties, as Dealer 2 outlined above, but all of the dealers in the study expressed additional factors negatively affecting sales of works to museums of all sizes and in all locations that make them less attractive than selling to

private individuals. Chief among them is the amount of time involved in each acquisition. It is important to explore this in detail to investigate if the reasons for a lengthy acquisitions process inhibit dealer sales to museums.

Laughing, perhaps in frustration, many dealers cited instances of sales to museums taking up to two years. This is in contrast to private collectors, who have the ability to work quickly, as Dealers 4, 5 and 6 agreed. In fact, the process of a museum acquisition involves many steps, which I will explore in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Dealer 6 explained the difficulties, saying, 'You could have ten layers at a museum that you have to go through. So, to make a relationship, get something placed, to get paid, and get the artist paid, your turnaround time could be several years'.

Furthermore, even after several years of keeping a work on reserve for the museum, the museum's committee or board may decide not to move forward. Thus, the work has essentially been off-market during that time, unavailable for potential sale to another institution or private collector. While infrequent, most dealers experience this situation at some point.

According to most dealers, the length of time it takes to finalise a sale is, on average, six months. Chuckling when asked about this, Alexander stated that 'it varies enormously, and I would say the standard would be three months and anywhere up to six months, but most museums that take longer than that, it's clearly told, you are clearly told that in advance'.

Alexander admitted that she did not necessarily see this as a problem. In fact, in talking about a recent sale to a museum in the Midwest she

described an occasion where the sale took well over a year, as the institution used an outside consultant who worked with their curatorial team to make decisions. She said that ‘they operate quite slowly and very carefully and really think about what they are buying’. Alexander seemed to feel that such a strategy implied that the museum needed to make careful consideration of each acquisition in order to only acquire works of art that not only filled gaps within the museum collection, but would also stand the test of time—an important addition rather than something that might end up in storage.

It is for this reason—the sense that an artist’s work contributes meaningfully to the narrative that a particular museum collection tells—along with the prestige and validation that an artist derives from inclusion in a museum collection, that dealers are happy when the work enters a public collection, despite the lengthy processes involved. In fact, dealers make every effort to facilitate sales of artwork to museums, including working with them over a longer period, scheduling drawn out payment plans and making other accommodations, as explored in the following sections.

## **Further Accommodations**

There are different ways in which dealers support the collection and exhibition of their artists at museums. Dealer 7 explained how her gallery

aids in museum acquisitions, as she believed it is important for public museums to have holdings of her artists' works:

With institutions, we'll definitely go a lot further, whether it be an extended payment plan or trying to help in terms of some shipping costs or framing costs and things like that. For an institution, we will work hard and it might mean discounting more. Sometimes it is just really important, particularly with a young artist, to be in this public collection.

Dealer 2 concurred, stating, 'I think it's really smart marketing to spend your money helping get your artist have a public venue'. Speaking of a public venue, both Dealer 2 and other dealers felt that solo exhibitions of an artist's work can often lead to an acquisition; as Dealer 1 explained: 'Well, a one-person exhibition, they [the museum] almost always, they are kind of honor-bound to own the artist's work'. To that end, dealers often support museums' exhibitions of their artists' works on a variety of levels. For example, several contribute to shipping or to the production of a catalogue. Alexander stated, 'We sometimes make a direct contribution towards a catalogue, or what we prefer to do is spend a substantial amount of money buying catalogues from that museum. And they are usually thrilled; I mean, we will buy anywhere between 100 to 400 catalogues when they publish the catalogue'.

Perhaps the most significant way that dealers help public museums acquire work is by offering discounts on the purchase price. All the dealers in the study offered museums a discount at a higher rate than private collectors receive, as detailed earlier. On average, public institutions get a 15% to 20% discount, sometimes more. Generally, the higher amount is

rare, and the artist must agree, but it is often the case—especially with a younger artist—that having work enter into a museum collection becomes more valuable than the payment they receive.

Dealer 3 explained: 'I mean, if they say they want a \$10,000 work and don't have the budget for it, then you work with the artist. But I think both the artist and gallery ultimately want to see the work placed in a museum'.

Dealer 5 agreed, stating they would give as a discount '20%, maybe 25%.

If the artist will agree to share for the sake of the work going to a museum maybe we would take even less [of a profit]'. Pushing this point further,

Dealer 2 shared the information that while his gallery would work with a museum, the discount or the price should not be the focus. Instead, the acquisition of a work of art should make sense within a collection, and that inclusion of a piece is a commitment on behalf on a museum that goes beyond a purchase price. He pointed out that,

I think money is the least of it. [...] I think it is just getting the position, because it is never really about money. Museums, if they are interested you find a way to make the deal. [But] if it's about money it's the wrong deal. It just should not happen. If it's between you know, 5% and 15%, that deal doesn't need to be happening because then, it's a different decision. It shouldn't be; it's not an equal balance, you know, within a relative framework. It is a decision they are making about some notion of, in a hundred years will that institution be proud to have that work, or will it sit in some god-forsaken storage collecting dust. I don't think it's ever about money...it's about vision.

This insight points towards a new reality that many museums are dealing with. Given that financing with acquisition funds from the institutional coffers alone is often unfeasible, many museums find creative ways to fund purchases.

## Leaning on Private Collectors

One of the ways that museums are building their holdings is not particularly new. Fostering relationships with collectors and relying on them for donations is an age-old method of establishing collections. However, as this section explores, the relationships now triangulate to include dealers as well as private collectors and museums, and relationships are shifting to form new and inventive partnerships.

Dealers are often involved in arranging private collectors' donations to public museums. Alexander described a situation which, although it involved a larger museum, speaks of the opportunities for donations to all public museums:

Just recently a collector said that she wanted... first of all she was going to put it up at auction; I said you can't do that, this particular artist doesn't have an established auction market. [He is] a very strong artist with a huge career, lots of museum collections but people do resale, [they] don't put his work up at auction. And she said well, I'd be just as happy to give it to a museum. I said, well, who do you suggest? Because there's a lot of them that would be interested. If you want to do it through a New York City museum because you are local I think the Metropolitan Museum would be interested, because I know they are interested in his work and they have his work and this was something different from what was already in their collection. And then the collector said, well actually I have a relationship with MoMA, and I said go right ahead. I said if it doesn't work with MoMA because they already own a number of works by this artist I'll give you the name of the person to contact at the Met. And that was a very good solution and I was thrilled it didn't come up at auction.

While this was a very direct solution, dealers occasionally become even more involved, perhaps requiring collectors to contribute to a museum's

collection as a condition of a sale.<sup>11</sup> Dealer 5 described just such a situation:

Or in some cases we will actually find the donor who will contribute to the acquisition. It happened with one of our younger artists: the collector wanted to buy two paintings from the show. And we didn't put a gun to his head, but I said, because the artist is popular, I'd feel more comfortable with you having two paintings if you are able to make a contribution for a museum to buy the big painting in the show. And he did, he put a third of it down and we gave a discount to the museum and the museum didn't have to pay so much really and then everyone was happy. The collector got his two paintings, the museum got theirs, and the artist sold three works. I think sometimes the gallery is a broker trying to work out how to do that as best as possible. [...] I think regional museums, or museums that need help for the moment, rely heavily on its benefactors.

As institutions rely on their benefactors, they are also relying on dealers to provide the introductions to these collectors. In many ways, then, dealers become matchmakers, as Pradhan explained: 'Galleries, to a great extent, hang out behind the scenes and help facilitate things, to put the right people together, and certainly we'll help where we can'. Collectors also on occasion initiate these relationships, as Alexander detailed: 'sometimes the collectors will say, let's say it's a collector in Los Angeles, if MoCA or LACMA are interested in this artist's work please feel free to tell them that we will to help. Sometimes it comes from them. Sometimes it's us who suggest it'. At other times, the dealer initiates the connection and the donation, as Morgan Lehmann illustrated:

Absolutely, if I have enough interest from a curator in a specific piece and they said, I love it, I love this artist but I can't do it, I would get on the phone in a second and figure out how to make it happen. Many of our artists, their work is not that expensive because they

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<sup>11</sup> Recent changes in tax laws no longer provide the same benefits and incentives to private collectors to donate to institutions and thus, this practice is not as frequent.

are more emerging. If a museum wanted a \$5000 piece, I'll get right on that, I'll get that donated.

## Partnerships

In the case of some acquisitions, it is not a matter of a straightforward donation. Instead, partnerships between institutions or between collectors and institutions are now becoming a new model. Dealers can aid in these relationships as well. Regarding two museums cooperatively purchasing a piece and sharing ownership rights, Alexander explained, with an example:

We're in the position to say, so and so at this museum has also mentioned this why don't you two get together. That has been happening more and more. A major installation piece of Victor Grippo's, the Philadelphia Art Museum wanted to buy it and they said, "We need a partner". And I said, "You know what, you should talk to James Rondeau at the Art Institute of Chicago", and it happened. It took a long-time, endless legal documents, but it happened.

Alexander went on to detail another form of partnership: between a collector group and an institution. She described a situation at the Dallas Museum of Art, one that I will detail further in Chapter 6:

The perfect, to my mind, example of how it should work is Dallas. In Dallas there are about five private collectors that have deeded their collections to the Dallas Museum. Everything they've already bought, everything they will buy. I'm not sure all of their agreements read the same way, but basically that's it, it's four or five of them. So when one of them comes to the gallery and says I'd really like to buy that piece, and it's a piece that Ted and I really would like to reserve for a museum we have no problem [selling to them] because we know where it's going to go. And you know, I think that's the way it should be. I do think it is a terrific idea. I think it is a great model, actually.

## Conclusion

Dealers are central actors within the art world and instrumental in sales of art, yet they function additionally as connectors between actors—museum curators and directors, collectors and critics. As such, while sales drive the gallery business, dealers are essential in many other ways. For example, by positioning their artists in gallery shows and at art fairs, and by facilitating sales to private collectors and museums, dealers contribute to a knowledge society that aids in consensus building. Furthermore, through these efforts gallery dealers start the chain reaction of building symbolic value for artists and particular artworks. They do so by strategically working with private collectors and museums to acquire works of art, often offering discounts to aid this process. As recognition grows for their artists, and the demand heightens, dealers are able to place the works in more and more prestigious collections—public and private. Once this occurs, a domino effect ensues: the collections validate and canonise the artists and artworks through association, and more and more collectors and museums become interested in acquiring the works.

As the consensus builds and prices for these works escalate, small, mid-sized and regional museums begin to encounter difficulties acquiring them. While many gallery dealers claim to want to continue working with all museums, and not only those that are larger or in urban art centres, the reality is that the smaller museums also face competition from influential private collectors. As such, museum curators and directors need to both solidify relationships with gallery dealers and develop other strategies for

acquiring contemporary art. The following chapter looks at these issues from the point of view of the museum curator.

# Chapter 5: Curators and the Process of Museum Acquisition

## Introduction

Museum curators occupy a different position than gallery dealers. As discussed, the dealers are the key actors in the art market, a division of the larger art world system. On the other hand, while museum curators (and directors) do participate in the art market, their power resides in the larger art world. Theorist Pablo Helguera likens the various actors to the pieces in a game of chess: 'The king (the museum director); The queen (collectors and/or museum trustees); The curators (the rooks); The dealers (the knights); The critics (the bishops); The pawns (the artists)' (Helguera 2007: 3). Following this analogy, we can say that curators hold more power in the art world than dealers, critics and artists, but less than collectors, trustees and directors.

Although curators, collectors, trustees and directors all have a role to play in the museum acquisition process, curators are generally at the forefront. They are instrumental in creating a legacy for the museum by researching and finding the pieces that fit into the collection. It is necessary to comprehend, on a more detailed level than the existing literature provides, both the process of acquisitions and how curators build relationships with dealers and patrons in order to collect works for their institutions. Once established, I can determine the difficulties small, mid-sized and regional museums face in regard to acquisitions, and discover the strategies they

employ to combat them.

To accomplish this, within this chapter I first examine the collection philosophies of the participating museums to determine what types of work they desire to add to their collections and their reasons why. Next, it is important to establish the variations in their specific acquisition processes, including how the museums engage in deaccessioning or building endowments, to see if I can generalise about the various ways collection-building occurs. I then investigate what ramifications the economic downturn that began in 2008 had on museum acquisitions, and whether it is still having an impact today. Specifically, I question what types of contemporary art museums are no longer able to afford through acquisition funds alone, and if there are any strategies for purchasing through auctions. I then proceed to a discussion of art fairs from the curators' perspective, to explore the ways these events function beyond purchasing works. Following that, I look to see how museums can successfully engage with collectors and if there are viable ways for museums to supplement their acquisition funds. Lastly, I investigate whether private collector museums, or art barns, become competition for public museums, and unearth some of the approaches that museums utilise to combat this, including how they work with various partners.

As interviews with curators form the basis for my analysis, where appropriate I have identified the curators directly. When it was necessary to preserve anonymity, I assigned them a code. All quotes in this chapter, unless directly referenced, originate from the interviews. Appendix 7

provides further details about the participants.

## **Collection Philosophy**

Prior to examining the necessary steps to acquire art, it is important to explore why museums select particular works to collect. Certainly, when adding to the collection by either purchase or donation, all of the curators in the study emphasised that the piece needed to fit within the larger collection. Despite the challenges of collecting contemporary art, the curators involved in this research project were all a part of museums that prioritised collecting programmes that embraced works from the 1960s to today. Even for those in an encyclopedic museum encompassing art from various periods, contemporary art was a priority. As Curator 3 described:

We are a general art museum with many different collection areas. However, historically, contemporary art has always been important to this museum, which is quite old for an American institution. The museum was founded in 1888, which makes it one of the oldest art museums in America. We do have collections in European Art, American Art. American is another area that's fairly active with photography, prints and drawings, and then my field is modern and contemporary. I would say the most active acquisition field is contemporary art, and that would be photography, painting and sculpture, installation art and video installation.

For several general art museums, prioritising contemporary art led to creating curatorial positions dedicated to the field. Rene Barilleaux, Chief Curator and Curator of Art after 1945 at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas, and Lisa Dent, (former) Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio,

both took on relatively new positions created in the last few decades.

Barilleaux stated:

Before, I was here I was preceded by one other contemporary art curator. Until the late 1990s there was not a curator who was expressly focused on contemporary art. [...] The institution made a commitment and hired their first curator of contemporary art [...] around 1999, 2000. So the focus on contemporary has been within the last decade. That means not only the acquisitions but also in terms of more focused exhibitions and programming.

Dent detailed a similar experience, saying, 'We didn't have a contemporary curator at the Columbus Museum until 1989, I think. It has really been in the last fifteen years or so that the [contemporary] collection has been actively looked at, engaged with, and shaped'. This is important to note, as by prioritising contemporary art and dedicating a professional position to it museums are taken more seriously by dealers and collectors, and in this way better their chances of securing significant contemporary pieces. However, museums that dedicate curators to contemporary art programming and collection still take different approaches to each other in the way they expand their collections and programmes. For example, Dent explained that she looks 'for artists that have proven to be dedicated and continued to do significant work that has [had an] impact on the cultural landscape over the years'. In that context, however, she pointed out that

Because of the size of our museum, we are never attempting to be encyclopedic in our sense of the contemporary. My predecessor and I really tried to determine in what way can we present contemporary that is an extension of the collection that we already have, and tell the story well as opposed to living outside it.

Barilleaux described a similar strategy:

I would tell you that one of the things we always talk about is building strength on strength. So looking at the areas we are strong in and looking to enhance those areas. Another strategy we use is to try to anticipate, sort of like some strategic buying, where we anticipate where the market might be heading, and buy in anticipation of the market. We can see that it makes sense to own something, but also pricewise, it works within what we can spend, but also it is ahead of the curve.

For these reasons, curators look to not only acquire works by artists who engage with their subject in an interesting or fresh way, but also to find pieces that build upon and expand the art historical context. Furthermore, they look for artists who are building a reputation by participating in exhibitions, and who are consolidating their status by creating works that are critically engaged with the world. Lastly, curators aim to find artists who show an engagement with their ideas in a way that continues to grow throughout a body of work. These are the types of pieces curators hope will remain relevant in the future; these are also the works that should ideally fit within the narrative of the pieces already contained in the collection.

Also important to note are the challenges museums face in collecting contemporary art. Scholar Bruce Altshuler outlines some of the issues, including storage and care of work made from ephemeral or new media, and agrees with author H. N. Fox that perhaps the biggest difficulty is collecting works that have not yet stood the test of time (Altshuler 2005; Fox 2005). Robert Storr tackles this subject bluntly.

Building collections of modern and contemporary art that have lasting value is a multigenerational enterprise that requires respect for the decisions of all involved. From all participants it demands both daring and commitment. Practically speaking this means a

willingness to take chances combined with a determination to stand by decisions that have been made even after those who made them have passed from the scene. In short, museums that enter into the field of modern and contemporary art collecting cannot do so half-heartedly, nor can they play it safe and succeed. Nevertheless they must operate on what would seem to be two opposing assumptions that over the long haul actually converge: on the one hand, they must be aggressively forward-looking in their strategies of acquisition; on the other, they should be extremely conservative in their deacquisition policies. (Storr 2005: 33-34)

What Storr advocates is for museums to be risk takers. To perhaps go against the grain, by looking past established and reputable artists to those who are still emerging. I believe this is an approach that is necessary for more museums to adopt; however, the risks taken need to be calculated ones. Curators need a solid knowledge base of the contemporary art scene in combination with a good eye in order to accurately target the artworks they need. The relationships they build with dealers can be very helpful in this endeavour, as dealers can introduce curators to a wider range of artists. All of these components are necessary to build contemporary collections that will not only have value today, but also in the future.

## **Acquisitions Process**

Despite the commonalities of the overall process from museum to museum, the curatorial interviews revealed individual approaches to acquiring art. Understanding the details of the process helps to understand what types of acquisitions museums are currently capable of securing, and if they currently experience any difficulties. Curator 3

explained his Midwest museum's procedure:

It is streamlined for me because I am the chief curator. I am the first step for acquisitions in the museum and I typically informally bring things to the director so he is in the loop, but he generally trusts me to make the decisions on acquisitions. He will question things, things that need to be questioned. And for most of our departments in the museum we have something called a sub-committee. We have support groups that raise money for the museum, particularly for acquisitions, and those support groups will have sub-committees, and the curator will present their proposed acquisitions to those subcommittees. The curators also do a proposal for the other curators of the museum once I've okayed it, but that's more of a formality. Then it goes to a collections committee, which is composed of trustees and other members appointed by trustees; this is a rather large group of thirty people.

Dr. Lisa Hostetler, former Curator of Photographs at the Milwaukee Art Museum, follows a similar process, and provided further details of the curator's role and the steps involved in presenting a work of art as a potential acquisition:

For photography, the process is that if I see something that I think is appropriate for the collection I'll show it to [the Chief Curator] and talk about it. If I get the go ahead I'll write up the proposal, which is basically this form that all the cataloguing information goes in, and the main point of it is two main questions. The first one is, basically, why this piece? What is so important about it, what is so great about it? And be candid to its strengths and weaknesses. The second question is, how does this fit into the collection? Each curator had to produce an acquisition plan based on an evaluation of the collection. So, those two questions are the lengthy ones, and then you do have to justify the cost. A lot of times, the answer is that it is consistent with the market based on auction prices and first sale or the primary sales market. I do that and then it goes to the photography acquisitions sub-committee, which is the group made up of people in the community, the museum community, and they all need to be supporters of the museum and have an interest in photography. A couple of them are artists themselves but others are collectors or just people who have been in the field for a long time and connected in some way with us. It goes to that group and it is approved by them, hopefully (laughing), and after that stage it goes to the acquisition and collection committee of the board of the whole museum. I make a similar presentation to them as I did to the

photography sub-committee, though hopefully somewhat abbreviated because all the curators are presenting. After that point, if it's approved at that meeting, it's considered approved and we can process all the payment paperwork.

As seen above, while the acquisitions process is multi-faceted and involves staff members along with committee and board members it is driven by selections made by the curatorial department. It is also born of research and deep consideration. Yet, the need for overall approval by various groups of people provides a system of checks and balances, ensuring that an individual curator is working in the best interest of the museum. Dent described the role of the committee:

Our committee's task is really to make sure that we are using our money wisely. I mean, it is a fiduciary responsibility, so rather than them saying well this does or does not fit into the collection, you know that's really the curator's job and we do that with our director and make our argument as to why it should be in the collection. When it comes to committee the conversation is really more about is this something that fits into our collecting plan, is this something that we can financially support right now. That we are not committing to something that is way outside of our acquisition budget. Then they are comfortable voting and signing off on it, and once it is accepted by our committee on collections then it needs to go to our board of trustees. The board of trustees looks at the recommendations of the committee of collections and either signs off on it or has us go back to the committees.

All of the curators interviewed collaborated with the committees to present artworks an average of four to six times a year. Additionally, the number of works entering the collection during a single year was not high, but was often proportional to the size of the museum. The smallest museum, a university art gallery specialising in contemporary art, has an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.5 million, and does not have an active acquisition budget. Instead, it is only able to purchase approximately one to two works per year, by generating funds through

patron events. Other institutions have dedicated funds for purchasing art. One institution that I spoke with, a general museum with an annual operating budget of \$8.1 million, purchases on average four to five contemporary works per year; another of similar size and budget bought ten contemporary works in 2010-2011. These two institutions fit squarely in the middle of the range in terms of budget and staff size of all the institutions represented in the study. The largest, a general museum, works with approximately \$14.1 million per year and averages fifteen to twenty contemporary purchases per year.<sup>12</sup> In encyclopedic museums, the money available for art is spread throughout various departments, and contemporary art is not always the priority. However, so as to be prepared for when funds became available for purchasing contemporary art, each curator I spoke with went through a process of creating a collections plan that they presented to the director. This allowed the museums to focus their energies and identify key artists or movements to build upon the museum's strengths or compensate for its weaknesses.

Following the collection plans, many of which are pre-approved by the board of trustees, means that recommendations for acquisition are never declined by the committee or board members. This demonstrates both the rigorousness of the process as well as the trust between committees and board members, and curators and directors. Curator 5 explained.

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<sup>12</sup> These numbers are based on annual reports found on the institutions' websites, and through the website Charity Navigator, <http://www.charitynavigator.org/>. In addition, these numbers pertain to the year 2011, the period when the research took place.

Honestly, I, I can't think of anything I've recommended that we haven't gotten. Actually, I really appreciate the checks and balances, because they are people who have a real vested interest in the museum and in the collection. They are interested and they are looking at all the six departments that are presenting, so they may be looking one minute at an African mask and the next minute at a piece of Wedgwood, and then the next minute a video. So, they're asking questions about provenance or condition, and it's the kinds of things that we need to be thinking about. But generally, if I can convince my boss and we can find the money, then that's it.

The point that Curator 5 makes about finding the money is key. As many museums face shrinking acquisitions budgets, funds for purchases need to come from a number of sources, including, in some cases, deaccessioning, or sometimes from endowments.

### ***Deaccessioning***

Deaccessioning is a controversial process of raising funds to acquire new work. It involves the permanent removal of an object previously accessioned and relocating it into a museum collection (Malaro 1997; Malaro 1998; Gabor 1988-1989; Association of Art Museum Directors 2007). Guidelines put forth by American Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the College Art Association (CAA) suggest that deaccessioning and disposal by sale of artworks should not serve to provide museum operating funds; instead, any proceeds from the sale must add to acquisition funds (Association of Art Museum Directors 2007). Over the last several years, the process of deaccessioning has become more frequent. For some museums, during the healthy financial marketplace from 2002 to 2008,

deaccessioning has allowed them to remove works of art that did not fit into their collection policy or mission and take advantage of the high prices available through auction. On the other hand, the recent financial downturn, beginning at the end of 2008, caused many museums to turn to deaccessioning to increase their budgets as, on average, museum endowments lost 25-30% of their funds (Jankauskas 2010).

Deaccessioning, when embarked upon carefully, is a necessary practice for most active collecting institutions. The thoughtful choice to sell works of art that no longer fit within a museum's mission ultimately enhances a collection by building funds for the acquisition of more relevant and engaging objects (Jankauskas 2010). Barilleaux described the reasons behind deaccessioning at the McNay: 'If it is a duplicate, if it's an orphan in our collection, it doesn't really have any roots in the rest of the collection or sometimes for condition issues, those primary things'. Going further, the Speed Museum is embarking on an aggressive deaccessioning plan.

Weaver explained:

About three or four years ago, Charles [the former director] was able to get the board to approve this deaccessioning project. We are evaluating 14,000 works of art in the collection and we are bringing in experts from the different fields—we brought in someone from the Met, we've brought someone from the Frick, we do have some old masters and then for me, it's been kind of hard. I do have photography with some potential, and I've had [some experts] come take a look at it, but I also had, for sculpture, Steve Nash and other people come. It's been an interesting process of thinking that way, and not thinking about [only] getting rid of things but how do you build a collection that really has something to say.

Weaver went on to specify that any funds gained from deaccessioning go towards 'exchanges, it will go into the same artist but a different type of

work. Or, it will definitely go back into contemporary'. A critical look at the overall collection with an eye towards deaccessioning, in combination with a well-thought collection plan, can enhance the collection. As mentioned above, in a market where prices for contemporary continue to rise, museums need to be more adventurous with the works they collect, and deaccessioning can help if mistakes are made. However, it is not a practice that all museums engage in. Of the curators participating in the study, only a quarter discussed deaccessioning as an active process at their institution. This is important to note, as it indicates that many museums are either not engaging in enough risk at the outset, or are not strategically culling their collection of works that are no longer relevant to their collection.

### ***Endowments***

In contrast, the building of endowments is an activity that all museums perform— some to greater effect than others. Generous financial donations from individual patrons typically fund endowments. These funds take a number of forms, from covering general operating expenses to funding directorial or curatorial positions, or, specific to this particular research project, providing funds for purchasing works of art. While endowments for operating expenses are often a combination of various donations, endowed positions and acquisition endowments generally come from single source financial gifts. Curator 2 described the situation that despite market conditions affecting the funds within the accounts, they

do have several endowments created by individuals with strong ties to the museum:

We do have several endowments. We have an endowment [removed name]<sup>13</sup> started by one of the founders of the museum. There is [removed name] an endowment specifically for photography from the [removed name] family, and we just recently started another endowment with a gift from a local family, the [removed name] for contemporary art. Depending on market conditions it really varies as to what we have access to every year. And for our museum, while I can't say exactly what it is, it is kind of in the low- to mid-six figures every year.

This curator went on to detail that one of the families that endowed funds began their relationship with their museum through a patron group developed to support contemporary art. They enjoyed the experience so much that they wanted to contribute in a meaningful way to the continued growth of the institution. This type of philanthropy by core constituents is essential to any museum, and demonstrates the importance of forming strong relationships with patrons and members of the community. It is these people who form the backbone of a museum and allow it to continue not only to operate but to grow in their exhibitions, programmes and collections.

## **Economic Outlook**

As museum operations and acquisitions are dependent on raising funds, it is essential to see how and to what degree the economic downturn that began in 2008 affected museums. Museums certainly were not immune

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<sup>13</sup> I removed the names to preserve anonymity for the curator and the museum.

from the economic challenges. Not only did their endowments lose money in the markets, but also individual giving fell. Weaver explained that their endowments 'were down 30%'. As a result, museums tightened budgets by cutting or shifting exhibitions, programmes and staff. Even prior to this recession, museums had difficulties raising money for contemporary art acquisitions. Cultural critic Lee Rosenbaum explains that 'Unfortunately, economics are challenging all that. Public collecting is endangered by a shortfall of resources, a decline in political support and even a loss of nerve that could cut off the flow of masterworks for the people' (Rosenbaum 2007b). Each of the curators who participated in the study echoed the belief that the state of economy impacted on their museums to various degrees. Curator 3 explained the practical but creative choices made in order to trim and focus their budget:

This is still a lean institution; the building was very expensive and the endowment didn't grow when the addition was built, so [...] we're entrepreneurial. We had to shave 10% to 15% off [our] operating budget, let some people go [...] , our decision was to keep the exhibition programme strong, and that paid off because our attendance was excellent throughout the recession.

For this museum, a strong exhibition programme helped financially because it charges for entry. By organising and bringing in exciting exhibitions that attract a wide audience the museum was able to generate solid funds through robust attendance, buffering the loss of funds from other avenues. However, this strategy only aids those museums that charge admission, and not all do.

Weaver also detailed the difficulties her institution faced. She outlined how

the museum not only made budget cuts but also changed its exhibition policy to focus less on mounting expensive temporary loan exhibitions and instead feature works from the collection. This was a way to protect its endowments when other funding sources became lean. Other museums experienced losses in their endowments as these funds were invested in the market. As Curator 1 explained, 'We don't have the same funds we used to have because the market hasn't done as well. So things that were based in investments were not doing as well. Those funds are not as good as they were'. Although creative and entrepreneurial strategies emerged, the economy had a significant effect on shifting collecting strategies and acquisitions policies. Certainly, new approaches to acquisitions were necessary for many museums. Describing the tightening of her acquisitions budget, Hostetler explained this shift:

There was a big change for me because the foundation that had been giving us annual grants for acquisitions—I mean you should never assume that they would necessarily give, but de facto we would get it every year—had less of a return in their coffers. But also, the museum had lower returns on its endowment and so for a couple, two or three, I think we are in the third year that this has happened, but the first time it happened they changed the grant to apply for the museum operating costs because it was so dire. That was disappointing. That meant I had no dedicated fund that was specifically for photography.

For other curators, acquisitions continued, but new strategies emerged, including combining resources of multiple departments and taking a more focused approach. Curator 5 pointed out: 'I mean, it's made us pool our resources more so we are not acquiring as many objects, but we are still able to maintain our ability to make major acquisitions'.

However, at the time we spoke, several curators felt the economic outlook was slowly turning in a more positive direction. Hostetler agreed that the situation was improving, but explained that the gains did not necessarily affect acquisitions since prices for works of art continued to rise.

It definitely slowed down. Now that things are recovering, it's getting better, a little. What I would say is, I still watched the auctions during that time, and I noticed that the sort of classic pieces, the kind of blue chip works, were getting the same prices. What happened was the mediocre material or the material that was by more obscure artists was bought in; they just didn't sell. What happened was that it was the same [high] prices for the best stuff.

Even though the economic outlook continues to improve, these factors demonstrate that museums are still struggling to acquire contemporary works of art. However, comments by the curators indicate their willingness to think creatively in order to still acquire works.

## **Priced Out**

The essential question of this study is to determine if small, mid-sized and regional collectors have difficulties acquiring contemporary art. Collector and museum patron Eli Broad believes they do. He shared his viewpoint on the matter, explaining the following to an interviewer: 'Most museums—with all their burdens to pay for exhibitions, administration and security—really don't have any money to acquire art, with a few exceptions' (Crow 2008). Art economist Olav Velthuis explains why this is.

Here is the math: Since the mid-[19]80s, the most expensive contemporary works of art—again, as defined by the aforementioned Art Market Research index—have on average

increased eighteen times in price. In the same period, the average per capita income in the United States, the richest country in the world, tripled. The most coveted works of contemporary art, in other words, have become six times less affordable, which is to say, the wealth needed to buy these works has increased dramatically. (Velthuis 2008: 308)

He continues: 'contemporary art is receding toward a kind of commercial sublime, barely accessible to all but a very few' (Velthuis 2008: 308).

Unfortunately, these few are often private collectors with unrestricted funds, rather than small and mid-sized institutions (Rosenbaum 2007a; 2007b). This is an area much remarked upon in articles, but little in-depth research exists. Donna De Salvo, Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Programs at the Whitney Museum of American Art, detailed the dilemma.

I am not in any way naive when it comes to thinking about the relationship between the museum and the marketplace. Our ability to acquire works of art—whether through direct purchase or gift—is linked to and influenced by the marketplace. As is the case in many institutions, acquisition budgets are limited, and the more popular the work, the more desired and expensive, the more difficult it is for us to acquire. (Cited in Weiwei et al. 2008: 299)

Interestingly, De Salvo works at a large institution in New York City with a large collecting base that supports its programmes and acquisitions. In contrast, the curators participating in this research project, while concurring with her statement, outlined the particular struggles that smaller museums face. Curator 5 explained that, because they are located out of major metropolitan area and have less funding, his institution falls further down the list of museums that dealers sell to:

I mean face it, if we just don't have the same kind of financial clout we're not going to be first in line for a lot of things; on the other hand, we can't afford a lot of the things. There is definitely, in a lot of people's eyes, a pecking order, and you just have to deal with

that and rely on the relationships you do have. And we're not making seven figure acquisitions.

He directly attributed the difficulty in acquiring some works to the amount of financial power his institution carries, along with the fact that many dealers are more interested in working with larger and more prestigious museums located in urban art centers such as Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. Instead, these smaller and mid-sized museums must depend on the financial power of collectors and donors willing to support their institutions. Curator 5's museum, along with the others represented in the study, does have an individual patron that is intellectually and financially invested in the growth of its programmes and collections. However, the reality is that smaller museums often do not attract the same level of encouragement and financial backing as larger museums. This creates a two-fold problem: not only are the smaller institutions often priced out, but also, when they can afford a work, they do not carry the reputation or level of prestige that is important to some dealers who prefer higher profile institutions when placing their artists' works. Curator 4 explained how, when attempting to purchase works, she found dealers occasionally placing her institution further down on the ladder:

They do that a lot with what they perceive as the medium weight institutions or the regional museums but they say, "Oh well the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] has this on hold", or the Getty or the Whitney and personally, that makes me go well then I don't want it (laughing). I mean, and some larger institutions have the benefit of the larger collecting community. And they can endow funds, or give funds every year which is nice. We have to maybe work a little harder at it. But I don't think that's a good reason for dealers to play us off against each other.

This reinforces the fact that the art world, and also the art market, is constantly shifting. Museums can move up and down the ladder of power for a variety of reasons. First, they can elevate their own position by forming strong relationships with dealers. This helps to keep these smaller museums on the dealers' radar, as large institutions are generally at the forefront. Second, working with patrons and donors that have existing relationships with the dealers also reinforces bonds between museums and dealers. Lastly, museums need to continue adding important works of art and building significant contemporary collections. If museums slow the number of acquisitions they add to their collections, or even stop entirely, it is very hard to begin again, as dealers do not then consider these institutions viable repositories for their artists' works. All of these factors, individually or in combination, have the power to impact on a museum's position in the hierarchy for the placement of work. Certainly, if a museum falls to the bottom of the hierarchy it can have far-reaching implications, as donors and patrons may no longer wish to be associated with a lower ranking institution, and so move their allegiance elsewhere. Thus, a cyclical problem ensues.

Furthermore, a smaller or mid-sized museum's acquisition budget is generally not as high as those of larger, better-endowed museums. Curator 2 explained that 'because we are sort of in the low six figures, mid six figures, it means there are certain things that are probably never going to be here and are just not going to be included [in the collection]'. Because they are 'priced-out' of acquiring most 'superstar' artists' works, museums need to be creative in building contemporary collections. One

solution is working with emerging artists, but this is an approach not universally taken. Cultural critic Rosenbaum explains:

One field in which curators who are confident of their connoisseurship can still make important purchases at relatively reasonable prices is recent work by artists who are not yet auction superstars. But the bellwether Met has publicly dismissed as “speculative purchases” the acquisition of “works by 30- or 40-year-old artists”, in the words of curator Gary Tinterow. The Met’s director, Philippe de Montebello, commented to the *New Criterion*: “There is plenty of time, if someone emerges as a major artist, to buy that artist 50 years from now”. (Rosenbaum 2007b)

While larger institutions can afford to step back and play the waiting game to determine the lasting legacy of an artist, many smaller institutions need to dive in and take the risk, relying instead on their knowledge and connoisseurship to find young and emerging artists whose work is still affordable. As the director of the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles explained, ‘The goal is to be financially savvy without sacrificing quality’ (Finkel July 8, 2007). She went on to note the reasoning for this. ‘Unless you have millions and millions of dollars at your disposal, the art market doesn’t allow an institution to put together a noteworthy painting and sculpture collection’ (Finkel July 8, 2007). Hostetler discussed the fine line between when to try to acquire works of established artists and when to go for lesser-known ones:

For example, it would be great if we could have a Richard Serra sculpture. But that’s something that is pretty much out of our price range, I mean multiple millions of dollars. That’s the other difficulty about the contemporary art world is, when do you trust your gut on emerging artists and buy them when they’re not expensive? And, when is it wiser to wait for them to have an established sort of track record?

This comment is particularly telling in that indicates a way of thinking that

needs to shift. When Hosteller or other curators identify wanting a piece by Richard Serra or other similarly positioned (established) artists, it demonstrates a singular approach to collecting: that of reaching for works by artists who have been fully integrated into the art historical canon. At this juncture, curators should move beyond the constraints of a system that dictates which artists are essential to any collection. For small and mid-sized museums this is crucial, in that with this mindset they are playing a game that they cannot win. Yet, as curators are embedded within this system it is hard to break free of this way of thinking, and change.

Some curators however, are changing the rules and finding new solutions, by taking more risks and focusing on more emerging artists. For example, Weaver went into further detail about finding creative solutions to building the collection while representing the story of contemporary art.

certain contemporary artists have just been priced out. [...] If it is at auction, forget it. I mean now it's so hard at auction. We're just hoping we can go after things that are maybe getting ready to be more well-known. It takes a lot more looking. I'm up in New York going to look at abstract, or geometric abstract, or minimal, but again, I can't get a Donald Judd [sculpture], forget it. But I can get a suite of Donald Judd woodcuts, and so we are working with Gemini and different places that we can get [...] magnificent Richard Serra prints that are huge and we have to be real creative. It's really hard for me even to think about, as I say getting established, mid-career, emerging artists that are working in the same vein. You know, a few years ago I bought a Mama Andersson for \$50,000 and I go into Zwirner [Zwirner Gallery] and it is \$250,000 now. I can't even do that anymore. [...] because of the market now, there are just certain artists that are just out of my price range. You've got to really look and talk to dealers and talk to artists, and continue to get out there and look and try to find those people who aren't quite on the radar that are doing really good work.

It is just this adventurous spirit—although done with consideration and specialised knowledge—that ends up feeding the system. Once artists' works enter into museum collections they become even more desirable, since they now carry the endorsement of the institutions. However, ultimately this ends up contributing to the problem, as once the work has the stamp of approval more private collectors become interested in the work, and as a result prices begin to rise.

This cycle of quickly escalating prices for artists who receive recognition certainly creates difficulties in a market where prices for contemporary art continue to escalate. However, these difficulties are surmountable, and creative solutions enable museums to continue to build collections. These solutions often start with finding new and emerging artists and building relationships with dealers.

## **Auctions**

Auctions are another avenue for museums to occasionally acquire works. However, this way of adding to a collection occurs more infrequently than purchases from art fairs, from galleries or by patron gifts, and thus merits only a brief mention. Many of the same reasons that make art fair purchases difficult—timing, the need for board approval, high cost—can make purchasing at auction prohibitive. If circumstances are right, however, curators view purchasing at auction as a viable way to acquire work. The process generally begins with the identification of a desirable

piece, and then obtaining pre-approval for a 'not to exceed bid amount' from the board. As auctions often provide only a short turnaround time from announcement to sale, it may be necessary for board members to convene outside of regularly scheduled meetings or to garner consent through phone or email voting, as described by Curators 1, 2 and 4. If a museum's board approves funding, the process moves forward. Hostetler detailed one of her museum's few successful bids at auction:

So, after I had the chance to look at the [museum's] collection here and decide what we were missing and what would fit from that collection [at auction], then I went to the director and the chief curator and explained the situation and why that kind of material doesn't come up that often, and that the provenance is amazing. So then we made a concerted effort to raise money; a foundation gave us some money and then we raised money from private individuals and we raised about half a million dollars. We didn't spend it all because not everything that we bid on, we got. But I identified the lots that I thought would be appropriate and then went to the acquisitions committee spokesman and said, you know, these are the things I think we should target and basically got amounts not to go over.

This statement illuminates not only the process, but also alludes to the difficulties in bidding at auction, as prices can escalate very quickly.

Museums do not have unlimited funds, and purchases at auctions are only approved when a specific amount of money is in place. Additionally, an auction situation does not allow for payment plans or discounts, as dealings with galleries generally do. Furthermore, buying at an auction is not a straightforward negotiation. Often the person you are bidding against is unknown, as both private collectors and other institutions often work with someone to proxy bid for them, and you have no control over escalating prices. As Barilleaux states, 'it's sort of risky. [...] I like to have

a little more control of the process'. For all of these reasons, auctions prove not to be an ideal way for museums to acquire work.

## **Museum Involvement at Art Fairs**

As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, art fairs bring together members of the art world field of practice. Curators approach the fairs in certain similar ways as other actors, but also for different reasons. By looking at fairs from the perspective of curators, it is possible to evaluate the various ways in which curators work within this context. First, attending fairs allows curators to expand their knowledge base of contemporary artists for later consideration in exhibition and for acquisition. Second, these fairs provide the opportunity for curators to see a variety of art works from many artists in a short period, which helps to streamline travel expenses. Travelling to fairs also allows curators to both build up existing and establish new relationships with dealers. On occasion, curators and/or directors do purchase from these fairs, but for small and mid-sized museums this happens infrequently. Instead, travelling to fairs functions as a form of research, a way to involve patron groups, and a way to participate and be a part of the networking society that is the art world (Graw 2009).

Hostetler described the importance of this networking market:

I think one of the main things for those fairs is just to keep in touch with colleagues. It's such an important networking event. We have to be [...] you know you're not poaching other people's donors, but to connect with the dealers and other curators and see what

everyone's working on, I feel like the social component is important as well.

By attending art fairs and participating in this networking market, curators fully invest themselves in this system and become integrated players within the game. Even if they do not purchase works while there, they often, as Curator 3 explained, use art fairs instead as

an identification process. I am going there and looking at things I would like to acquire for the museum. Then I have to narrow it down to what I want most and what I think, in terms of price and getting through the various committees and boards, will have the best opportunity of succeeding.

While some curators use fairs to try to find works that fit within their collection plan to bring back to their boards, others go to see new works and take the temperature of the market. Barilleaux stated:

I use it to get ideas. I use it to take the temperature of what is out there. I use it to get a quick read on the scene. [...] You know, I will always come back and then start researching some artists that I find of interest that I didn't know. It helps me get a sense of the market. Seeing what things cost, seeing what the prices are like.

By identifying potential acquisitions and finding new artists, curators take advantage of the opportunity to see the range of what is on offer in the contemporary art marketplace. In particular, the top tiered fairs provide a great survey of works by mid-career and established artists, while the peripheral fairs showcase works by more emerging artists. Travelling to the fairs allows curators to keep abreast of artistic trends, and to learn about new artists. Curators also use the fairs to introduce their patrons to dealers, other collectors and artists' works. Furthermore, by taking collector groups to art fairs, curators strengthen the social ties to those

donors, while hinting to collectors the types of artworks the museum hopes to acquire. By being able to look at a great number of artworks in a short amount of time, curators can guide their collectors throughout the fair, finding works of art to compare and contrast and so help collectors develop their 'eye' and connoisseurship levels, improving the collectors' skill in evaluating successful works of art. Additionally, curators can provide insights as collectors build their own collections. In some cases, this guidance is purely altruistic; in other cases, aiding collectors is part of an overall strategy, with the hope that, at some later date, some of these works may be donated to their museum.

Because of the nature of the acquisition process and the need for approval by museum boards and committees, purchases by museums at art fairs, when they do occur, fit specific circumstances. Usually, the works of art purchased are smaller pieces that fall within the means of discretionary funds and do not need board approval. Curator 5 explained that 'If I do [purchase] it is something modest, maybe a small work on paper or something. When something is under \$5,000, then we have freedom'. By having a collection plan pre-approved by their board, Weaver explained the possibility for a more aggressive approach:

We purchased this last time from Miami Beach, Basel. We purchased a couple things, and we are gearing up, not this year, but next year, we are going to go to Basel [Switzerland]. I do believe we will purchase from Basel because I believe we will be more ready. We are going to be able buy, because...we'll have our collection plan approved by the board and we will have a clear idea. With the art fairs, I've been to the Armory and I've bought from the Armory and so forth, but then we will know what they [the dealers] are bringing [to Basel] and what we are looking for.

As demonstrated, in the right circumstances curators are able to make acquisitions during visits to art fairs; however, the interviews with curators revealed that this is a rare occurrence. Not only is it a difficult prospect, due to needing pre-approval, but also prices are usually prohibitive to allow museums to make spur of the moment decisions. Furthermore, several curators in the study mentioned that their small to mid-size museums did not have a large enough travel budget to send them to the fairs unless they accompanied a patron group. In such cases, their attention was not on buying work, but on cultivating their patrons and helping them acquire work—in the hopes, perhaps, that, again, some of those pieces might later be gifted to the museum.

### **Building and Cultivating a Collector Base**

At the heart of many museum acquisitions are relationships between collectors and patrons. Patrons are very often the lifeblood; by investing their time and financial resources, they enable museums to purchase more works of art. In addition, when curators cultivate collectors by forming relationships with them, museums' ability to garner significant donations is enhanced. Certainly, this is not a new development. In fact, the vast majority of museums in the United States outside of government-initiated museums, such as the Smithsonian, began from donations of collections by private individuals (Chong 2008; Johnson June 3, 2007). Because of this history—of beginning with a single collection and growing

through the donations of other collections—many refer to today’s museums as ‘a collection of collections’. For example, Curator 3 explained how the museum combines multiple collections along with purchases, while stressing the relationships underlying these donations.

We are a collection of collections, and a collection that is enhanced by museum driven acquisitions. The [name of collection]<sup>14</sup> for instance gives us the whole basis of modern art from the 1900s to roughly the 1960s, and that sets the stage for all the post-war and contemporary things. That is the best of the museum world, when you have major collections that are donated but also have the funds and the curators to go out and buy significant works of art. This museum actually has a wonderful history of directors and curators who have collected very well over generations to augment the collection of gifts. These things typically take generations to happen. So there are some collectors who were in touch with previous curators and directors where we will probably receive their gifts in the next few years [...] but it’s been fifteen or twenty years in the making.

This statement illuminates the importance of establishing meaningful long-term relationships with patrons who are involved and invested in the museum. Curator 3 emphasised this point, stating that ‘it boils down to individual relationships in the end. They have to be nurtured and maintained. But the nice thing for us [...] many of the people [...] they have such tremendous pride about this institution that there’s really no question about, you know, their support of the institution’. These ties often stem from a connection to the community in which the museum belongs, and these are exactly the collectors that museums want to foster relations with. Several curators found that that the donors of art works often have

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<sup>14</sup> Name removed to preserve anonymity.

some previous connection to museum or the town, and thus focus much of their energy on nurturing local and regional collectors. Providing an example, Dent stated:

There is a man who grew up in [removed location] who is living in New York, and he's lived in New York for about twenty, twenty-five years and we are working with him. He gave us four works of art last year and he will continue to give us work; he's really decided that rather than give his work to a collection like the Whitney, where he feels it like it would just be one of many, that he wants to give back to his hometown institution. [...] He was born and raised in [removed location] and went to the Museum over a period of years. That's his connection to us, and without that kind of personal connection it's difficult. I know a collector in Los Angeles who is very interested in donating to our collection simply because her parents met at [the local] University. So, this will all coalesce because it's important to her.

This is a particularly telling quote, as it speaks to the fact that people make sense of themselves through constructing stories that are meaningful to them. Both of these gifts are driven by personal connections and memories, and the museum has played, and still plays, a role in establishing identities. This again reinforces how important it is for museums to reach out to the community through programmes and exhibitions that resonate with local audiences. Furthermore, in many ways these gifts will make more of a difference at a smaller museum like this than they would in a larger museum like the Whitney.

The curators involved in the study agreed that the key to growing their collections in this manner is to connect and form relationships. As Barilleaux stated, 'They're also relationships that have some sort of long-term response rather than an immediate [one]. So it's sort of building this network'. To build these networks, curators encourage new collectors to

become involved in programmes and events at their museums, bringing them into contact with each other. Participation in these groups is attractive for many collectors as it is a way to meet other likeminded individuals, to continue to learn about contemporary art, and to become more invested with their local museum. Patrons often enjoy getting to know curators, and hold them in high regard for their position in the art world. They hope their interactions can provide an entry into this world, or solidify their position. Regarding her own process of building relationships with collectors, Curator 7 explained:

When people are either new to collecting, or it's a new relationship, I spend as much time as I possibly can to find out what they are interested in and to bring things to their attention that they might find stimulating, and to try figure out ways of getting myself part of their thought process.

Fostering these connections is step one in a larger strategy that museums employ to bolster their acquisition funds, as seen in Figure 18.



Figure 18: Ways curators augment acquisition funds for contemporary art

### *Patron groups*

These patron and collector groups are among the main sources of involvement in fostering a collector base that supports the museum. Nearly every museum involved in the study has some sort of support group in place, and they function similarly. The museum provides education and connoisseurship programmes, including arranging studio visits with artists, travels to see important art world events such as fairs and biennials, exclusive behind-the-scenes tours at museums and special invitations to view other private collections throughout the year. By engaging patrons both financially and socially the museums cultivate links with a group of people who feel personally invested in the museum. As they continue to learn about art, and begin to collect art or expand their collections, these patrons become more involved in other museum activities, and become ambassadors for the museum in the community. Furthermore, as the relationship between the patron and museum grows stronger, many of the pieces collected by the individuals may eventually be gifted to the museum. These patrons also become valuable resources for museums, as they implement creative solutions to expand their acquisition funds.

For example, Curator 2 described how they employ patron groups:

We definitely thought about The Contemporaries as a cultivation tool to potentially identify people interested in learning, [and] having more one-on-one interaction with the curators. And it is also a great way for us to get to know them and for them to get to know us. Those personal relationships become very important over the years, and how they feel connected to the institution is often a very personal relationship.

Often, the dues of membership-based groups help fund at least one contemporary art acquisition for a museum per year, and Chapter 6 details purchases made in this manner. Within the existing literature, there are few investigations into the structure of these groups. However, interviews with the curators revealed many similarities across various museums: members must pay general museum membership (on average \$150 a year), and then pay an additional amount to participate. These amounts range from as little as \$250 to as much as \$25,000. Some museums prorate the amount based on age, with those under forty paying less, and those older paying more. Additionally, the higher the amount, the more exclusive (in size and status) the patron group and the more perks involved. Most patron groups fall into the range of \$250 to \$500 plus museum membership fees and have, on average, 50 to 250 members. Other than covering a few administrative costs, the dues raised through these groups are allocated exclusively for art acquisitions. For a group with 150 members who pay \$250 to \$500 per year, a museum will raise between \$37,000 to \$75,000 for an acquisition. On face value that appears to be a lot of money, but in the contemporary art market, this means the museums often are able to purchase only one work of art.

For these collector groups, raising money is an important aspect, but the museum also organises events that help members feel invested in the institution while giving them a say in which works enter into the permanent collection.

### *Special events*

As previously discussed, curators not only interact and socialise with the members of the patron groups, but also provide educational opportunities for members to learn more about connoisseurship, contemporary art and the art market. They accomplish this by putting together events throughout the year, such as visits to artists' studios, trips to art fairs and biennials, travel to other cities, behind the scenes tours at their museums and so on, along with offering insights into how other people put together their collections. Perhaps most important is the acquisition event. Every museum that has a patron group puts together an event for purchasing works. For these events, the curators pre-select a group of works (generally three) that they feel are important potential additions to the permanent collection, and put the decision to the collector group members through a vote at the annual event. Wherever possible, potential acquisitions are works from previous exhibitions at the museum. For many curators this is a provision in their collection plans, and a way not only to represent an artist's work, but also, as Curator 7 stated, to 'reflect our exhibition history in our collection'. Becoming familiar with an artist and a particular work through an exhibition provides an opportunity for the community to connect with the work. The opportunity to add such pieces to other possible pieces of art to the collection is the primary purpose of these annual events and Chapter 6 illustrates the process in further detail.

While not every museum works with patron groups in the manner described above, most do find a way to utilise these groups in order to

increase acquisition funding. For one university museum, the only acquisition funds they have come from an annual event wherein a small group of people—generally no more than twenty-four couples—pays \$500 each for a ticket that counts as a single vote. Through this, the museum raises between \$8,000 and \$12,000 to buy a work of art. This event is similar to other patron group events at other museums; Curator 7 described it as

a totally fun event. We do it in a private home that people want to see; there is nice food that's donated by one or two members of the patron's committee and it's a really great opportunity for people to get in-depth information about collecting contemporary art and ask whatever questions they'd be embarrassed ask without glasses of wine in them. So yes, it is a very effective event and it's not hard at all. It would be hard to come up with a much larger pot because it needs to remain relatively intimate, both in terms of space and in terms of a conversation. That is the struggle; it is coming up with enough money and not having too many bodies to fit in the space. But no, that hasn't been particularly hard. It's not about raising \$100,000 in an evening; it's about raising \$10,000.

Acquisitions driven by patron funding are an important aspect of growing a permanent collection. As we have seen, however, the amounts raised provide limited purchasing power. Other ways of adding to the collection fund are crucial for any museum if their collections are going to continue to expand.

### *Donations*

Curators also work closely with collectors to build relationships that lead to donations of art—the primary way that works of art enter a museum

collection. While some museums have healthy acquisitions funds, many others, especially small and mid-sized museums, have limited or non-existent funds. Explaining the growth of their collection, Curator 7 said:

We don't have acquisition funds at all. (Laughing) We have none. So, when we acquire things, for the most part our collection has grown exclusively through the generosity of donors. And a lot of it is year-end gifts, and then occasionally, but really very, very rarely, we've asked a number of people to come together and buy something for us. We are probably getting at least 100 objects a year, and that's not a hundred different donors. In 2010, 309 objects have the accession number of 2010. [...] But the number [of contemporary art pieces] is probably about 50% actually, because a number of those are costumes and [...] historical materials

Other curators state that the number of donations equals approximately 75% of all acquisitions, with only 25% being purchases. Some of the donations are significant gifts, outside of the range of what a museum could purchase on its own or through patron group funding. For example, Curator 2 described a 2008 year-end gift.

The [removed name] family gave us an Agnes Martin painting from 1961 that we would never have been able to purchase on our own. It is exquisite, it is gorgeous, it's exactly the right time period, it's one of her earliest grid paintings. I mean it is just all you could hope for in an Agnes Martin. By having that it really helps us strengthen abstraction in the collection and tell that story better.

All museums are on the lookout for new opportunities to cultivate collectors to donate such works of art to the museum both in the present and in the future.

Counting on, or receiving, these gifts, while they are often a wonderful windfall, especially when the gift is beyond the museum's resources, can pose difficulties. These gifts can come with strings attached: donors

sometimes set restrictive clauses to their gifts, stipulating the way they are presented or requiring additional fundraising. If conditions cannot be met, the donation may fail to happen. Over the course of the last few years, another cause of donations of art falling through, or the number of gifts of art declining, is due to the emergence of private collectors opening their collections to the public rather than sharing their collections with established, public museums.

## **Art Barns Versus the Public Museum**

Curators and museums face competition from private collectors as the art market expands and prices for contemporary art continue to escalate. As a result, many important artworks find their way into private collections rather than public museums (Burcaw 1997). Privately owned art occasionally goes on view at public museums, as loans and donations do still occur; however, the chances of important works ending up in the collections of public museums continue to diminish. First, as seen, the incentive to sell works at a large profit can sway some collectors. Second, while donating to an existing public museum used to be a way for collectors to feel philanthropic, today many collectors secure their legacy in a different way, by sharing their collections in private museums open to the public. According to cultural critic Noah Horowitz, there has been an explosion of privately funded museums, foundations and exhibition spaces in the last ten years (Horowitz 2011). One contributing factor in this is the

changes in U.S. tax laws, which has removed incentives for donations. For example, the Protection Act (Pub. Law 109-208), which President Bush signed into law on August 17, 2006, outlined new rules for fractional gifts. The act requires that museums take full possession of promised gifts within 10 years, and that they also exhibit the acquired work of art within that same 10 year span. If this does not happen, tax benefits are forfeited and financial penalties are imposed. Predictably, this new law has had a profound impact on private donations to museums, resulting in a reduction of private donations by nearly 24% (Frey 2000). Instead, private collectors began opening their own private museums and foundations. These spaces function partly as vanity projects, feeding the egos of the collectors (Plattner 1996). Other collectors structure their spaces as non-profit and/or educational institutions that provide far more tax benefits than simply donating the works to an established public museum would.

Many curators have conflicting feelings regarding these spaces. For some, as Curator 3 explained,

[...] it just adds another voice to the contemporary scene and some of these collectors do an amazing job of collecting and presenting contemporary art. I have no problem with that and relative to the institutional scale objects there aren't that many of them that they're driving that market. So I think it's fine.

Curator 5 agreed, and believed these private 'art barns' are good for the community. 'If you think about how it might diversify the audience, how it might inspire others to collect, how that benefits the local arts economy including artists, there's all kinds of good there'. Other curators sat more on the fence, as illustrated by Curator 7's comments:

It's one of those things that is really case-by-case. Some of them are fabulous resources that contribute enormously to the community in ways that nothing else could, and in other cases, there are definite undercurrents of competing with the museums and taking stuff away from the museums. So, it is quite interesting.

Dent agreed that these private spaces are both interesting and problematic,

I think having seen so many artworks unavailable for public view over a certain period of time I find private collections that are in public spaces helpful, and the fact that they are available for all those things and reasons to be really interesting. I think that you can learn a lot from them. But it is, for me, a problem that the general public doesn't see the possible alternative; work that is not always aesthetically pleasing or interesting in terms of how it fits in to their lives, that maybe there are objects or artworks that are something unfamiliar and are challenging and difficult to discern right away and require extended views and those are the things that I don't think ever find themselves in private collections.

Other curators said they believed fully that that these 'art barns' do indeed compete with public museums, and that instead of creating a place that becomes a temple to one person's taste, they should use their resources to better the public museum. Weaver explained:

We reach a lot more people than they do in education, in programming. Why wouldn't you want to be part of that? This is what we do professionally, this is what we do, and this is our life. Why don't you help it out [if you have the resources]? It is a commitment that you have to your town and your history, and that would just make it that much stronger for everybody and we'd reach so many people.

As Weaver pointed out, the public museum has the capacity to reach a much wider public than the private foundations and museums do. Certainly, many private institutions employ professional staff, yet they often do not have the same number of staff members in various

departments that public museums do. However, one of the primary differences between public and individual private institutions is the perspective. Private museums often have a narrow focus that does not tell a full story, or contextualise how contemporary works of art fit within the trajectory of art history. Furthermore, they often lack the professional infrastructure of a public museum, operating under the tight stipulations of the collectors (Rosenbaum 2007). Conversely, public institutions take a wider view resulting from a vision carried out by multiple people, including the curator, the director and the board of trustees. The works of art entering a public museum collection thus go through a rigorous vetting process that reflects more than a singular point of view. This is important and ensures that a museum collection continues to grow and expand in a way that addresses a fuller view of art history. While private collectors select work based on liking a piece or feeling challenged by it, and may in fact be knowledgeable connoisseurs, the museum selects works according to a different set of criteria. Museums look at the art they collect more dispassionately. While considering a work that can draw people in may be important, it is not the first concern. Rather, curators and their museum committees are interested in selecting work by artists that they believe make a significant contribution to art history, and will continue to resonate with audiences in the future. Furthermore, they look to select work that is not only indicative, but also the best representation, of an artist's style. Lastly, they select work that fits within their existing collection, as few museums wish to own works that remain in storage; rather, they hope to exhibit it with other pieces from their collection.

## Partnership Collecting

As seen, museums often are reliant on patrons for gifts of art or funding sourced by patron groups to make acquisitions. Often, especially with smaller and mid-size museums, the amounts generated in this way still fall short of prices fetched for many established artists' work, particularly when those works come up at auction. To combat this, and to continue adding these types of works to the permanent collection, museums need to be creative in their acquisition efforts. Several curators outlined the various strategies that they currently employ, describing different partnerships. These strategies provide a model for museums as they go forward in shaping their permanent collections of contemporary art.

In addition to working with private donors to gift items, museums have started to work in partnership with other institutions to purchase a work together and share a piece. This practice is becoming more common and occurs both with contemporary art and art from other eras. One high profile case in the United States was the joint purchase of Thomas Eakins' *Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic)*, 1875 by The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2007. This shared acquisition occurred when the previous owner, Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, planned to sell to a private collector. Recognising the importance of this painting both in the oeuvre of the artist and with the historical ties to the region, the two museums brought together the community in a campaign to purchase the painting.

This successful, and very public, campaign garnered financial support from over 3,400 donors. More contemporary, and perhaps less visible, examples, include the joint purchase in 2008 of British sculptor Rachel Whiteread's *Untitled (Domestic)* (2002) by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This large sculptural piece presents shared storage and venue-to-venue shipping costs, but these considerations did not override the value of adding the piece to these two permanent collections.

This model of sharing a work of art came up in the conversations with the curators in the study, and many believed it to be a strategy for the future. In fact, several of the curators described it happening in their museum, or provided examples of cases known to them. Curator 3 spoke about the logistics of sharing works, as well as mentioning other institutions that had embarked on this process:

I recently proposed that concept with a video installation, because it is particularly easy to share. [...] once you have equipment and you set up the room to project the piece the only thing you have to ship is the disc, and it is not particularly precious in itself—if it were damaged it could be replaced. Also a video installation, increasingly, is something that contemporary collecting institutions are acquiring, but we don't have the space to show everything all the time so it really makes sense to share that cost, and there's certain institutions...SF MoMA now works very closely with the Tate Modern for instance. And the Cranbrook collected with a private collector, so, you know, you'll see more and more of that would be my guess.

Dent discussed how they are branching out, and not only working with other art museums but also involving other types of institutions, such as libraries. For her museum they had the opportunity to acquire journals and

sketchbooks by a well-known artist with ties to their community. As the museum is not set up with an archive or the ability to care for this type of material long-term at the proper humidity levels and in the right conditions, the curators collaborated with a local university library to make the acquisition. The library houses the journals and sketchbooks in the proper conditions for long-term preservation, and they are still available to the museum for exhibition. Collaborating with other museums is a strategy that is becoming more popular, and Chapter 6 explores into the details of this particular practice while examining other creative endeavours curators undertake to add to their museum collections.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the actual procedures taking place and the various ways museums generate funds for acquisitions, allowing for a deeper understanding of how works of art enter a collection while revealing the underlying relationships between curators and other art world actors. Currently, elevated prices for contemporary artworks make it more difficult for museums to collect in this area. In an economic era when many people and non-profit institutions are still struggling financially, museums must think creatively in their approach. In order for museums—in particular small and mid-size institutions outside our major metropolitan cities—to continue to add contemporary art to their collections by mid-career and established artists as prices continue to grow, curators and

directors need to adopt new strategies and form new partnerships with donors and other museums.

In their cultivation of patrons, curators involve collectors and those interested in contemporary art via a variety of programmes to educate patrons while allowing them to invest in the museum both financially and emotionally. It is through this investment that museums hope to foster long-term relationships that can result in both financial gifts and gifts of art over a sustained period. Certainly, strong relationships with patrons are essential, but curators also need to establish close connections with dealers as well. As detailed in Chapter 4, dealers are the conduits for attaining many acquisitions, and they have the ability to introduce new patrons to a museum if they know the curator, have great knowledge of the museum's collection, and can identify the benefits of placing their artists' work with the museum. As such, curators must actively work to establish relationships with the dealers, and this often occurs at art fairs.

While these types of relationships are at the centre of any thriving museum, this chapter demonstrates that, hand-in-hand with building these connections, additional strategies need to come into play. By highlighting some of the solutions that museums are now employing I argue that museums are finding ways to continue to add works of art to their permanent collections, despite financial constraints. From finding ways to augment acquisition funds through special events and collector groups, to collaborating with donors and other institutions, curators and directors are

thinking creatively to ensure a lasting legacy and to fulfill their mission, while growing and building collections that reflect the art of our time.

In the next chapter, I detail six examples where museums have employed some of the methods explored here, resourcefully adding contemporary artworks to their collection.

## Chapter 6: The Acquisitions

### Introduction

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, many curators and directors are forced to deal with shrinking acquisition funds and, even if they are successful in raising money to purchase art, the contemporary market is expanding in ways that often exclude museums. As such, they need to think both creatively and strategically to find ways to continue adding contemporary works of art to their permanent collections. Certainly, many museums have encountered the need for creative fundraising for acquisitions for a long time, and many of the strategies currently in use are not new. Yet at this moment, they are particularly necessary. This is indeed the case for small, to mid-sized, to regional American museums. In order to discover how museums are developing creative strategies to subvert the power systems that create high prices for contemporary art, I undertook in-depth interviews with two museums curators and one museums director directly involved with acquiring work for their institutions. Analysis of this research revealed that there are six key strategies at work in museums in the United States: foundational support for collecting; acquisitions with collectors groups; contemporary acquisitions as an institutional priority; co-acquiring with another museum; co-acquiring with private collectors; and the formation of a 'community collection'. In this chapter, I work through each of these strategies in order to assess the success of each approach, and to find out if these are approaches that

other museums could adopt in order to build new models of contemporary art collecting.

## **Foundational support for collecting**

When I spoke with Rene Barilleaux, Chief Curator and Curator of Art after 1945, at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas, he reiterated the importance relationships play in acquisitions, further emphasising the need for participation in the networked market of the art world. He has found that building relationships with dealers has helped in numerous ways; for example, he often receives larger discounts when purchasing from dealers he has worked with over a period of time. Furthermore, he pointed to several gifts directly attributable to his relationship with a dealer in California. This dealer has ties to a private family foundation whose aim is to facilitate museum acquisitions by providing the funds to enable the museum to purchase work from this particular dealer. Barilleaux explained how he began working with this foundation:

[The dealer] makes these overtures to various museums, to people he works with, and in some cases, they are not artists I have any interest in, or are not artists I have on my radar, but in other cases they are artists whose work I know or I've been interested in. I've been able to acquire three, four works through this process within a little over a year, a year and a half.

For Barilleaux, this way of acquiring helps tremendously in an era of limited budgets and resources, and is, for his museum, a new approach to collecting. Although gifts are at the core of any museum acquisition

programme, what is new in the situation he outlined is that the museum is working with a private foundation that does not give works of art, but instead provides the funding for the acquisitions. The only stipulation is that the funding is for purchases made through the affiliated commercial gallery. This is beneficial to all parties, in that the family trust makes philanthropic donations, and builds its social and symbolic capital through its generosity and through its association with the museum. Furthermore, the gallery's and the artists' reputations also grow once the works are placed into a museum's permanent collection, and the museum expands its collection with works it might not have been able to attain by other means. All of this is rooted in the existing relationship between the curator (in this case Barilleaux) and the dealer, clearly demonstrating the centrality of social networks in the collecting process.

These relationships and social connections do not always begin with purchases, but also with exchanges in forums such as art fairs. However, museums which have limited travel budgets for curators, as is the case for many smaller museums, or do not prioritise travel situations, are at a disadvantage as they struggle to build these social networks. This also signifies that many dealers are aware that museums face difficulties with contemporary acquisitions, and that they have a desire to find ways to facilitate other ways of working with the museums.

## Acquisitions by Collector Groups

Another way that many museums are raising funds for acquisitions is through collector groups. As noted in Chapter 5, the formation of patron and museums groups is one of the primary means of cultivating a collector base that supports the museum. Most of the museums involved in this study utilise collectors groups, and they are all similar in scope. Museums provide exclusive benefits for the members of these groups—i.e. benefits that are unavailable to the public. They include trips to art events and important exhibitions worldwide, studio visits with artists, opportunities to have sneak peeks at other private collections, previews of exhibitions, and access to special talks and lectures with curators and other art world professionals. For collectors and individuals interested in contemporary art, participating in a collector group grants them both social and cultural capital, while providing them with direct entry into the core of the unique field of practice of the art world. At the same time, these groups are advantageous to the museum as they bring forward engaged and knowledgeable patrons who then financially support the museum's education and collecting mission, give gifts of art, and share their own social capital by introducing their broader network connections to the museum.

Barrilleaux exploits such a group for making contemporary art acquisitions at the McNay Art Museum. The McNay's affiliate group, The Contemporary Collectors Forum, has made thirteen acquisitions over the course of its eleven-year history. For the first seven or eight years, the

money raised by member dues was the only funding available for purchases, which were made during their annual event. Now, and for the last several years, the Contemporary Collectors Forum has held a fundraiser to augment this, netting, according to Barilleaux, an additional \$20,000 per year on average—nearly doubling what the museum has to spend from dues alone. Although from year to year the number of members shifts, Barilleaux estimated in his interview that they currently have approximately 150 paying members, although only about 60 people actively attend the events. This group consists of people who either have an existing interest in art, or simply want to know more about contemporary art. The cost to join is modest: a member must pay a museum membership at the ‘Supporting Level’ of \$150 per year or above, and who also contribute dues of \$250 for the Contemporary Forum membership. Since these dues are reasonably priced, it fosters an air of inclusivity by welcoming a wider group of both new and seasoned collectors. By participating in the Forum’s events, as outlined above, members not only have the opportunity to learn how to build a contemporary collection, but also gain a support system of curators and other collectors as they embark on that process. Furthermore, the Forum enables members to interact with the museum in a more in-depth way. This builds an emotional connection between the museum and the individual that may play a significant future role when a collector is ready to donate works from their own collection. In the case of small, mid-sized and regional museums that may not have the allure or reputation of larger museums in urban centres, this connection is extremely important. Many

of the gifts (both monetary and works of art) these smaller museums receive are a direct result of the positive memories of the museum held by individuals. Thus, the more programmes and opportunities available to foster connections within the community, especially for those interested in collecting, the higher the likelihood that the museum will benefit in the future.

Collector groups are a particularly strong way of involving community members interested in art, and often add extra benefits for members. One of the most meaningful perks of membership in the McNay's Contemporary Forum, for example, is that each member receives two votes about a prospective acquisition presented at the annual event, View & Vote. This advantage affords each member a 'voice' in building the collection, strengthening community investment in the museum. It becomes a point of pride for many members to directly contribute to the collecting mission of the museum. Barilleaux thinks of this as an open process, and not exclusive. He explained, 'these are all paid members. Anyone can join; it's very democratic. If you join you get two votes at the event. In fact some people bring a friend that has nothing to do with what we do and they can vote'. Thus, even those loosely affiliated with the museum can profit on their involvement, gaining capital by saying that they helped purchase a work of art for the collection.

The annual View & Vote, generally held in October of each year, begins with a light reception during which Barilleaux shows the three to five works he has selected for possible inclusion in the McNay's permanent

collection. They are works that he has researched throughout the year, and which meet a variety of his requirements. On occasion, the artworks relate to an exhibition he is organising; in other cases they help fill gaps in the narrative of art history that the museum is trying to tell. Other considerations have a bearing on what he presents. He explained:

There are so many variables, in terms of how, or which works get picked to present. Budget is one thing, availability of the work, the willingness of the dealer or the artist to allow me to have the work for a certain period of time knowing that they might not sell it—so you have to put that matrix together to arrive at the work. What I generally do is start off with kind of a longer list and start exploring what's out there, and prices; it's kind of a wish list.

Each year, Barilleaux strives to present a diverse group of artworks. One year, he presented only works from a single artist, and, while everyone was happy with the purchase, he felt it was not a successful approach, as he found that the members preferred having a choice. As such, he now looks for works that represent a range of materials or forms; and aims for diversity in the ethnicity or gender of the artists. He has also learnt that it is important to present a group of works that are not too disparate, as disparity makes it harder for the Forum to make a choice.

Early in each View & Vote event, during the light reception of cocktails and appetisers, Barilleaux talks about each work; he explained that he tries 'to be as equitable about each one as possible and neutral. I don't want people to make that decision just based on what they see, but to have a little conversation about it, then make some decisions'. This is the first time that the members see the works; he chooses not to provide advanced information (including prices and discounts) as a way to deter any

preconceptions on the part of the voting members. After his presentation, Barilleaux encourages questions and conversation among the sixty or so attendees the event draws. A vote is taken and tallied, and the winner is announced. At that point, Barilleaux is willing to share information on prices and discounts. The evening culminates in a celebratory party.

In 2006, Barilleaux presented Chakaia Booker's *Position Preferred*, 2006 (Figure 19) to the Forum along with three other possible acquisitions. Born in 1953, Booker grew up in New Jersey. Referring to herself as a 'narrative environmental sculptor', Booker finds and manipulates automobile tyres to create her sculptures (Otfinoski 2011). For Booker, the tyres are a perfect metaphor for human diversity; her work also references other cultural issues such as race, economic differences, consumer culture, the environment and industrialisation. In particular, the patterns of the tyres allude to African scarification, textile designs, black identity and ageing. Her works are part of collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Newark Museum, among others, and she was the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2002 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005 (Otfinoski 2011).



Figure 19: Chakaia Booker, *Position Preferred*, 2006. Rubber and wood, 46 x 42, x 38 in. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds from the McNay Contemporary Collectors Forum. © Chakaia Booker

It was for these reasons that Barilleaux presented *Position Preferred* to the Forum. He summarised why he felt it was a good fit for the McNay's permanent collection:

The year that I brought Chakaia's work, everything that year was about sensitivity to certain materials. And most everything was sculptural. We have a growing sculpture collection, so that made sense. We have a very strong group of works by women artists going back to our founder, and also I was interested in the fact that Chakaia is African American, and I wanted put diversity into our collection, so those were some of the things I was looking at with that piece. Also, I was offered it at a very reasonable price and I knew that her prices were going to go up, she was at that time really starting to hit a stride and she was starting to work with a

major gallery and it was a point that I knew we had a good opportunity to buy at the time.

This quote reveals how the decisions curators make regarding works they want to acquire are often about developing a rationale that sounds feasible and also stands up intellectually. Curators need to defend their choices not only to their colleagues and the board but also to the community; thus they need to develop a language that clearly expresses and justifies their decisions.

That evening, the Forum voted, and selected *Position Preferred* by a fair margin over the other possibilities. Barilleaux recalls that this sculpture prompted a lot of enthusiasm, which he attributed to the mysterious quality of the piece. He shared his understanding of that:

People love the fact that at first they don't know what it is [...] it becomes much more intriguing when they realise it's tyres and they figure it out. It reveals itself and it reveals the materials. It's not made out of art materials, so you find that people really can relate to it because they all have a relationship to tyres, they all know what that type of material is and have dealt with it. It's abstract but it's not esoteric.

Since acquiring *Position Preferred* in 2006, the McNay has shown it frequently. The museum featured the sculpture when they opened their new building expansion in 2008; it was a part of two different survey exhibitions they organised, one on women artists and one featuring works acquired through the View & Vote process; and it is often on view in their permanent collection galleries.

Adding works like Booker's *Position Preferred* is the sort of positive outcome that results from the museum's cultivation of the Contemporary Collectors Forum. At the time the McNay acquired this sculpture it only had money raised from member dues to purchase it with. Barilleaux stressed that he was able to negotiate a good price with a fair discount from the artist's gallery. Furthermore, as revealed in the quote above, Barilleaux targeted this purchase while work by the artist was still in an affordable range. This demonstrates not only that curators need to rely on their instincts about the quality of works of art, but also need to have an active knowledge of the art market, to seize on works of art before the prices escalate beyond their range. This can be risky, and curators at times have difficulties getting their directors and boards to agree to purchases with more emerging artists. There is often a small window between the period when artists' works are affordable because they are emerging and the point when they jump into price brackets that not all museums can afford. While the McNay does have other sources of funds for art purchases, Barilleaux emphasised that the strength and dedication of his collectors group allows him to work with just such artists and make use of the money they raise to purchase contemporary art, freeing up other acquisition funds for other departments.

For Barilleaux, working with the Contemporary Collectors Forum is exciting because it allows him to add meaningful works to the museum collection that otherwise might not be financially feasible for the museum to obtain.

In addition, it is a valuable opportunity to educate and develop a core group of collectors within his community who not only want to build their

own collections, but also want to help the museum. In fact, through this process he is building his own networked market. By working through the process of the View & Vote event, Barilleaux believes he is constructing a group of committed individuals who are learning how to look at and understand contemporary art. Their involvement in the programme helps to develop their eye, making them better collectors who will continue to support the museum through later donations of artworks to the museum.

He explained:

Because the group is faithful and consistent, I am hoping we can help refine their way of looking at things. If you have to make harder decisions, based on one artist's work, it forces you to really look at things and figure out how you are making those decisions. This is about collecting, the bigger picture.

This process allows the participants to expand their knowledge, gain entry into a larger market; and as collectors align themselves with their community museum they begin to merge into the larger art world field of practice.

## **Contemporary Acquisitions as an Institutional Priority**

Similarly, The Birmingham Museum of Art (BMA) in Birmingham, Alabama relies on its five different affiliate groups for acquisitions. An encyclopedic museum, its holdings include both fine and decorative arts from around the world, dating from ancient to contemporary times. With six different departments—Asian; Decorative Arts; African; Pre-Columbian and Native American Art; European Art; and Modern and Contemporary Art—

acquisition funds need to stretch far. To augment existing acquisition funds consisting of several endowments, the BMA has several collector groups. The group for contemporary art, the Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art, began in 1991, with three passionate women who wanted to bring more contemporary art opportunities to Birmingham. They recruited likeminded individuals and others who thought it would be fun to learn more about contemporary art. Like the McNay's Forum, members pay dues. At the BMA it is \$500 a person, in return for which members can travel with curators who introduce the members to dealers and artists. They also travel to art fairs, and every year they use their funds to make an acquisition for the museum. Gail Andrews, R. Hugh Daniel Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art suggested why this aspect is so important:

It's building the museum's collection, but it's the fun of voting, it's seeing the material that's coming in and they want to be able to do that over dinner every year. The people who have been in membership recruitment say that, if somebody can't travel or take some of the trips throughout the year, it's the voting that they look forward to.

Like at the McNay, the BMA's Collectors Circle is an active partner in acquiring art, although the museum takes the leadership role by selecting works that are in the best interest of the museum. Furthermore, the group has developed into a knowledgeable partner which adds greatly to the museum and the community. Andrews stated that, 'the group itself now, well, they are tremendous collectors on their own'. The size of the membership varies; currently it stands at about 100 people, although at times it swells to about 150. Additionally, many of the members involve themselves with the museum in various other ways, as docents or board

members.

Over the years, the Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art has grown into a progressive and knowledgeable group of collectors that has made a number of exciting and important acquisitions. However, there are still works of art that are out of the reach of Collectors Circle, and that other acquisition funds cannot cover. To compensate for this, several years ago the BMA struck upon a new strategy: to focus on one acquisition as an institutional priority, combining funds from a number of sources, including collector group dues, individual donations and money raised from other fundraising, matched 50/50 with general acquisition funds.

This strategy arose after each of the curators presented a five-year collection plan. Andrews explained.

We have very little acquisition funds; we have two separate funds, and neither one is enough to do enough for all six departments at any one moment. They can't be conjoined for various reasons. [...] So the six departments did curatorial plans, five year plans [asking]: what are the priorities of the collection? What are the strengths? What are some areas of weakness where we really want to build? What are some private collections that we think will be coming to us where maybe we don't spend as much time? And we really continue to work with these collectors and encourage them to give things to us and bequeath things to us. Within that, everyone has these priorities, and never enough money to do all of them. So, "what if the six departments come together and decide as a group with Gail on institutional priorities?" which is what we did. And everyone put their top two or three choices with slides, [stating] this is what I'm looking for, and this is what I'd really need and why, arguments; and just us, not the committee on collections, just internal.

The first target of an institutional priority purchase was in 2010, when the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art brought forward Kerry James

Marshall as his top choice, and the rest of the curators, along with Andrews agreed.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1955, Marshall moved to Watts, Los Angeles as a child. Both locales had a profound influence on his art. He has stated:

You can't be born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1955 and grow up in South Central [Los Angeles] near the Black Panthers headquarters, and not feel like you've got some kind of social responsibility. You can't move to Watts in 1963 and not speak about it. That determined a lot of where my work was going to go. (Art 21 2001)

A recipient of the MacArthur genius grant in 1997, among other awards, Marshall explores black identity and issues of race through a variety of media. He is best known for his large-scale paintings that re-contextualise black subjects within the art historical canon, imbuing them with a sense of power. Marshall's work has been featured in international exhibitions, and many museums collect his work, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; among others (Jack Shainman Gallery 2014). The BMA first introduced Marshall art to its audiences in 2003 by hosting a travelling solo exhibition of his work, *One True Thing: Meditations on Black Aesthetics*. The artist visited and did workshops while the exhibition was on view. The success of the exhibition and the community response solidified the BMA's belief that it was important to add one of his large-scale paintings to its

permanent collection. Furthermore, as Andrews noted, Marshall's work addresses several key issues:

We have focused on buying work by African American artists, for about as long as I've been director. I think in the Kerry James Marshall area it just hit all those bells: collecting the arts of Alabama was very important, work by African American artists, and art that talks about the Civil Rights Movement—and while the beauty salon, *School of Beauty*, *School of Culture* doesn't directly address that, it does [address it] obliquely. So [because of] all of those things, it became the obvious choice.

While the BMA already had an important sculpture and several works on paper by Kerry James Marshall in its collection, the curators felt it was important to add a major painting. For several years prior to the BMA's decision to make this acquisition an institutional priority, it had tried purchasing a Marshall painting. Explaining the difficulties facing many museums as they attempt to acquire works by an in-demand artist, Andrews shared this insight: 'We always just missed it, everything sold out, or things were already committed, already promised. As it happened, several of us were in New York for the opening of the Kerry James Marshall show. We picked a painting and we loved it and it went somewhere else'. This type of scenario often occurs because few museums can make immediate commitments at an opening, whereas private collectors can. Furthermore, many galleries have waiting lists for popular artists' works, and presell works prior to the opening of their gallery shows. If a gallery is unaware of a museum's interest, or if the museum is not of the calibre of some of the private collectors, that museum might not even make it on the list.

After deciding that acquiring a major Marshall painting would be an institutional priority, the BMA's Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art began serious conversations with Jack Shainman, Marshall's dealer. Shainman offered to work with the artist and provide the BMA with the right of first refusal on Marshall's next painting. For the BMA this was a great opportunity, but one that required a new way of finding funds. Andrews explained: 'The price was a very generously negotiated price. If not half, really substantial, a substantial discount for us, which was just great for us, but it still was going to be a fundraising challenge'. It became feasible only through several measures that the new strategy of institutional priority envisioned. First, this acquisition drew on a policy already in place at the BMA for major purchases wherein half of the cost comes from their general acquisition funds, and fundraising covers the other half. What was new about this particular acquisition was the variety of fundraising efforts that took place. First, the curator and Andrews brought the possibility of making this acquisition before the Collector's Circle during their annual voting acquisition event. Like the McNay, members of the Collector's Circle have a vote on what acquisitions their dues, amounting to about \$50,000 that year, will finance. That year, the Marshall painting (presented in abstract terms since the artist had not yet completed the work) was one of three options, which included photographs by a Birmingham-based artist and Polaroids by Andy Warhol. Despite not having a specific work to vote on, Andrews recalls that the Marshall painting won by a substantial margin, and that people were enthusiastic about it. This was a popular event, and those members

unable to attend could vote online by proxy. In contrast to the McNay's process, information about each of the works was made available prior to the event for people to access.

However, the fact that there was no image to consider made promoting the possible acquisition of a Marshall painting an inherent challenge. Instead, the option consisted of voting for the first right of refusal for a work that did not yet exist. The fact that the group chose the painting was likely due to the fact that Marshall's reputation was growing, and that many wanted to be a part of bringing such a work to the museum. Furthermore, it demonstrated not only the faith the Collector's Circle had in the BMA's curators and directors, but also their progressive thinking and ambitious attitude toward collection building. This was typical of the supporters of the BMA. The funding necessary for the Marshall acquisition actually extended beyond the contribution from the Collector's Circle, and Andrews and her curator were able to find other sources that were also willing to take a leap of faith. Another affiliate group, the Sankofa Society: Friends of African-American and African Art, also decided to donate funds towards the acquisition. Nevertheless, raising the rest of the money needed was more difficult, and required asking individuals to contribute. The museum received several \$10,000 gifts and one of \$25,000, but Andrews recalled that it was not easy, and that

Fundraising had really slowed; I think we got to about \$100,000 and we needed more money, and we had a bequest from a wonderful woman who was a long-time supporter of the museum. She was a painter herself, and it just became so clear that she would have loved to have supported this artist [Marshall]; she loved contemporary art, she loved learning, she

was great. She was in her 90s when she died and she gave us a bequest to finish it off; that took us up over two hundred [thousand dollars]...

This bequest, alongside the other financial gifts, combined with general acquisition funds to secure the artwork. The process took over two years—about the length of time the artist needed to complete the painting, *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, 2012 (Figure 20). After its completion, the work first went on display at the Vienna Secession in Austria in 2012—adding to its provenance—and then debuted at the museum in early 2013, to great acclaim. Since that time, the painting has become a ‘community touchstone’ according to Andrews; in fact, *School of Beauty, School of Culture* inspired a pop-up wedding in front of the painting at the museum between a local barber and hairdresser. Andrews feels that the community’s embracing of the work demonstrates another reason why it was important for the BMA’s permanent collection. She stated, ‘For the community who may be walking into the museum for the first time this painting does exactly what Kerry James Marshall intends, with how he is putting people of color in major history paintings in museums’. She sees that including works like this in the collection and keeping it on view connects with many of the people of Birmingham: part of the museum’s mission. Andrews believes that it is important to show ‘our engagement with the public and how we really are committed to being open, we’re committed to being a community hub; we’re really committed to education and various initiatives’.



**Figure 20: Kerry James Marshall, *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, 2012, Acrylic and glitter on unstretched canvas, 108 x 158 inches. Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; museum purchase with funds provided by Elizabeth (Bibby) Smith, the Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art, Jane Comer, the Sankofa Society and general acquisition funds; 2012.57. ©Kerry James Marshall; Photo: Sean Pathasema**

Because of the cost of the *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, it was important for the museum to find creative strategies that allowed them to acquire this painting. Furthermore, the strategy they employed of making the acquisition of one work an institutional priority is one they will continue to use in the future. They found that this approach allows them to acquire works beyond their usually limited acquisition funds. In terms of contemporary works of art, however, this approach will only be needed every few years, so each of the different departments has an equal chance to acquire works in their area. Currently, another department is using this tactic for a Native American acquisition; and other departments will likely utilise this method before the museum attempts to do so with another

contemporary work of art. Andrews stressed the importance of this strategy among other initiatives:

I do think the prices are so difficult today that there are a couple of strategies. One, continue to court collectors, because they are so important to building our collection. Try to catch artists on the way up before they go crazy—and you will have some misses along with the hits. And, yes, I do think this is a strategy [that of institutional priority] that we will continue to implement; and also the strategy of taking half from the general fund and raising the rest. Because I think with some of the prices, and some things will be unobtainable for us. I think that this wrapping all of our acquisition funds around one purchase—it may take a couple of years. That is okay. I am much more about getting a singular great piece than getting ten things. It is not that we need more, we need the best quality, the best examples.

In the meantime, the contemporary department will look for other affordable acquisitions, working towards Andrews' idea of trying to 'catch artists on the way up' before prices for their work make them unobtainable. This is not always possible—and there are always regrets about missed opportunities—Andrews cited Carrie Mae Weems (American, 1953) and Kara Walker (American, 1969) as two artists that she wished the BMA had acted on earlier, but whose works are now likely to be inaccessible. As prices continue to escalate for contemporary works of art, for many museums these regrets may increase, persist and grow unless they implement new ways of thinking and approaching acquisitions like those of the BMA.

## Co-acquiring Art with Other Museums

Another strategy employed by the BMA, co-purchasing a work of art with another museum, is gaining traction among American museums. As referenced in the previous chapter, this approach works for acquiring both contemporary works of art as well as art from other periods. However, this solution is particularly suited for contemporary art and the various forms of media that it utilises, as it can blunt the high prices of individual artworks. One of the first examples of co-acquiring between several museums was the 2002 joint purchase of Bill Viola's (American, born 1951) video work *Five Angels for the Millennium* (2001) by three institutions: The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Pompidou in Paris; and The Tate Modern in London. Author Jason Edward Kaufman (2004) explains:

Co-ownership of works of art is a relatively new way for museums to buy artworks for their collection. With few major works available for purchase, and prices which are often prohibitive, it is something that is likely to increase. There are a number of good reasons for museums purchasing works of art jointly. Not only does it increase the fundraising capacity and purchasing power, and cement stronger links between institutions, but it also helps to ensure that the work of art is kept in the public domain.

The BMA decided to co-acquire a work with another institution for many of the same reasons. In 2004 Andrews attended the annual Association of Art Museum Directors meeting, held that year in Ohio, and visited Carl Soloway's gallery. On view was a photographic installation by New York artist Fred Wilson (American, born 1954). At a separate time during that meeting, Kaywin Feldman, then director of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art in Memphis, Tennessee (and current director of the Minneapolis Museum of Arts in Minnesota), saw the exhibition. Demonstrating that

even informal relationships are essential, over dinner one evening Andrews and Feldman discussed the piece, and at that moment decided to propose to their respective boards that they co-purchase the work.

Both directors had been fans of Wilson's work since his 1992 project *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society, produced in conjunction with The Contemporary, Baltimore. Wilson, a New York based artist, creates work that is an interesting mix of reinstallation, institutional critique and the reimagining of other works of art. His practice consists of mining a museum collection and re-contextualising objects to reveal the inherent racial inequity in the collecting and displaying of museum objects. Through his installations and works of art, Wilson questions the biases of cultural collections and exposes new truths through his reshaping of historical objects. Recognised for his inventiveness, Wilson received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1999, and represented the United States at both the Cairo Biennale in 1992 and the Venice Biennale in 2003 (Graham 2007; Pace Gallery 2014). Andrews described what excites her about his work: 'He was really on the vanguard of taking museums' collections and pairing them with contemporary issues; historical objects with contemporary issues in a really profound and moving, incredibly moving way'. The piece co-purchased by the BMA and the Memphis Brooks, *Untitled from Old Salem: A Family of Strangers* (1995), is an installation of twenty photographs (Figure 21). Wilson created the piece by photographing 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century dolls from the collection of the Museum of Southern Decorative

Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina that represent marginalised members of the community. The artist poses each figure in traditional, formal postures found in portraiture, and through the resulting images Wilson brings honour to those who did not have a voice.



**Figure 21: Fred Wilson, American, b. 1954, *UNTITLED*, from *Old Salem: A Family of Strangers*, 1995 (details); Color photographs; Artist's Edition, 2004, AP 2/3; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, TN; museum purchase with funds provided by the Morrie A. Moss Acquisition Fund 2004.12.1.**

Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art; museum purchase in honor of David Moos, former Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art, with funds provided by Lydia Cheney and Jim Sokol, Russell Jackson Drake, Howard Greenberg, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Marx Sr. and Edgar Marx Jr., John and Nancy Poynor, Amasa Smith Jr., Robin and Carolyn Wade, Julie and Jeff Ward, and members of the Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art. Images courtesy of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. ©Fred Wilson.

*Untitled from Old Salem: A Family of Strangers* was an important acquisition for both institutions. The piece is an excellent representation of the artist's work, and it was considered appropriate for their respective collections on multiple levels. Andrews explained: 'We each were strong in photography, we each cared a lot about works by African-American artists, this Southern subject matter was particularly poignant and relevant to us—around Native Americans and African Americans—and so that was a very

easy, kind of straightforward purchase'. Despite it being the first time either the BMA or the Memphis Brooks Museum had purchased a work of art with another institution, both museums' boards were excited about the idea of a co-purchase. In fact, Andrews recalled that '[o]ur committee on collections each thought it was a great idea. Though neither one of us had done it before. I don't remember any hesitation on the part of our committee on collections about the dual ownership'.

One of the reasons this particular piece is a great example of a co-purchase lies in the nature of the work itself. An installation comprising twenty photographs, it would be easy to divide the works should any conflicts regarding exhibitions or ownership come up in the future. If needed, the two museums could split the photographs evenly between them. However, each museum has worked well with the other to share equitably, with the entire installation having been on view twice at each venue since finalising the purchase. Furthermore, because the installation is photographic, the pieces cannot be continually on view for archival and longevity concerns in any case. Instead, the work needs to 'rest' between viewings, which negates the possibility of either museum trying to show them all the time. The BMA's former curator explained further:

It's a multipartite, conceptual photographic work and it works out very well. We have it when we want to show it and we are in touch enough to give them heads up. Another thing about a photograph, works on paper, you show them for not an extended period of time and then you rest them so we have to be aware of when each other is exhibiting them, so when we're planning to do so we work through that.

Working together to purchase the art, then continuing to work together regarding their exhibition schedules, strengthens the bond between the

two museums. Even if curators and the directors move on, there remains a tie between the two museums, fostering new relationships between employees at the different institutions. As a new practice, co-purchasing has the potential to offer new ways of working. It demonstrates ways of changing the system. By combining resources and banding together, museums are able to challenge the hierarchies and inequalities of the system in order to create something that is more sustainable. Merging funds allows institutions more leverage in the marketplace. Furthermore, this model allows for the sharing of resources that are not just financial. For example, when two museums come together for the purpose of an acquisition, one museum plays the role of 'connector', introducing the other museum to the dealer and facilitating a new relationship that will continue in the future. Additionally, when museums share a work of art, they may also join together in other ventures, such as educational programming, relating to their shared work of art.

### **Co-acquiring Art with Private Collectors**

Like the BMA, some museums are beginning to look outside of themselves, finding partners in their quest to acquire works of art. While many form partnerships with other institutions, others are establishing partnerships with collectors. There is security in the scenario of purchasing art jointly with a collector, unlike the long held museum practice of counting on promised gifts. Joint purchases alleviate the possibility of

donors changing their mind and selling the work privately, rather than gifting it to the museum permanently.

Certainly, in today's expanding contemporary art market, promised gifts are potentially in peril. The success of many works at auction can cause the reversal of promised gifts, as can unforeseen circumstances experienced by collectors, notably what many in the art world call the 'three Ds': death, divorce and debt. Financially, also, auctions in today's art market are a viable course of action, and the allure of extraordinary profits is enough to sway even those who bought with the intention of bequeathing works to an institution (Vogel 2007). The Post War and Contemporary Art auction of May 14, 2008, at Sotheby's New York, clearly illustrates this problem of promised gifts leaving museum walls and ending up at auction. That evening, more than twenty lots—including paintings by Mark Rothko and Francis Bacon—came directly from the walls of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld, Germany.<sup>15</sup> In the 1960s, Paul Wember, the museum's late director, used funds from collector Walter Lauffs and purchased works with the intention that they would become part of the museum's permanent collection. In fact, the works hung on the museum walls, and city funds helped to maintain the collection (Robinson, May 15, 2008). However after Walter's Lauffs' death, his widow and their daughters chose to sell the works at auction, raising more than \$96.1 million for the family. This extraordinary amount

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<sup>15</sup> At the time, both of these paintings set new record prices, providing Sotheby's with its most successful auction results up to that date.

is one the museum could not afford if it was to retain or replace the works, thus the pieces entered private collections and were lost to the museum's public.

Co-acquiring with patrons removes this risk, but it is a relatively new strategy that museums are just starting to implement. One curator, Suzanne Weaver, formerly Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, found that it is a smart way to secure a work for the museum while stretching acquisition funds further. For her, the process stemmed from forming a strategic collection plan. She wanted to add works to the collection that related to the exhibitions she organised; in effect this becomes a visual archive of the museum's exhibition history. Furthermore, Weaver had an interest in adding new media works, as she saw that as a gap within the collection despite the potential difficulties presented by possible technological changes and conservation and preservation issues. She stated:

We couldn't be like MoMA or anyplace else that got into [collecting new media] early in the game. I had to be strategic. I felt you have to have media because it represents such a major part of contemporary art. It's influential in all kinds of contemporary art. It brings in theater and performance, and you can speak to a lot of stories or a lot of issues and ideas in contemporary art through this medium. It is part of our culture and people relate to it.

Video work by artist Willie Doherty (Irish, born 1959) met all of her criteria. Born in Derry, Northern Ireland, Doherty explores the scars that run under the surface of the now dense landscape. Derry, the heart of the Northern Irish 'Troubles', is the subject of many of Doherty's works, as he investigates how memory and perception imbue territory and landscape

with meaning, revealing the underlying tensions that remain from a turbulent era. With his moody and psychological videos and photographs, Doherty has established himself internationally through solo presentations of his work, and as a result of his inclusion in several important exhibitions and biennials, such as the Carnegie International in 1999, Istanbul Biennale in 2003, Manifesta 8 in 2010, documenta 13 in 2012 and the Venice Biennale three times, in 1993, 2005 and 2007, as well as being nominated for the Turner prize twice, in 1994 and 2003 (Alexander and Bonin 2014). Doherty's work was on the rise and, through the many important exhibitions and awards he has won, his work embodies a great deal of symbolic capital. Weaver further explained the other reasons why she believed adding Doherty's work to the Speed's permanent collection was important:

Willie Doherty was an artist that I thought would be great for Louisville because he deals a lot with Northern Irish history. And the Irish founded Louisville—we even had a Bloody Monday here in Louisville in 1855. And his work deals with landscape, and we had a really great collection of landscapes from the 17th century; [the Speed] has some old masters that are really wonderful and [the video could] make those connections.

At the time, Weaver was organising the exhibition *Willie Doherty: Traces*, an exhibition featuring eleven photographs and two videos, including *Ghost Story*, 2007 and *Buried*, 2009. Originally commissioned by The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland, *Buried* (Figure 22) is an eight-minute poetic examination of what wars leave behind. Weaver believed that the investigation into landscape, history and memory would resonate with her audience in Louisville. Additionally, acquiring this piece tied into

her aim of adding to the collection through exhibition. Furthermore, installations of video work were relatively new to the Speed, and she used this exhibition as a way to demonstrate how to effectively show video. She stated:

I knew that I could do a really beautiful show and show people how video should be installed, which was in two rooms. It was very difficult to get people to understand how video should be, that there is a reason that the room has to be that size, that there is certain equipment that you have to use, and that certain sound, and the walls being gray and a certain carpet color, and all those things. But I thought he would be a great way to show this commitment to showing this kind of work.



**Figure 22: Willie Doherty, BURIED 2009; 8 minutes, colour, sound, single screen installation, edition of 3. Image courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York**

By organising an exhibition and pursuing an acquisition at the same time, Weaver had the opportunity to find a private collector to collaborate with on purchasing an artwork. Weaver believed Brook Smith was the perfect

partner. He was heavily invested in the Speed Museum; at the time, Smith was an active board member and had especial interest in contemporary art. Weaver knew that Smith, as a collector himself, was 'very smart and has great intuition'. For Weaver, a key component to a successful partnership is building a relationship. She fostered this relationship by meeting with Smith repeatedly, often over coffee, to discuss different artists and what they were each looking at and thinking about. The ongoing conversations allowed the relationship to develop and a dialogue about a possible joint acquisition to begin. The process took approximately two years of talking about various artists that they were both interested in, including Doherty's videos. Smith found Doherty's work intriguing, and he was able to see an exhibition of his work at Alexander and Bonin, Doherty's New York Gallery. Weaver gave insight into the process.

He liked Willie's work already, he and I were talking and he was willing to go in for half of it and buy the work because he felt it was the kind of statement we should make. So we bought the last edition of *Buried* and he supported the [exhibition] opening.

She felt that Smith's admiration of the work, and familiarity with it, were key to his willingness to support a joint purchase. Weaver mentioned that, financially, it was the most that Smith had committed to the museum to date, and that it was a significant investment. There were many reasons why this collector might have co-purchased this work even though it was a new experience. One, Smith clearly had a personal interest in Doherty's work, and he could see the benefit of *Buried* being part of the museum's collection and available to the public. Two, this experience allowed him to become a deeply invested stakeholder in the museum. Third, his

generosity in partially funding this work of art afforded him the additional benefit of elevating him as a power player within the field. He now had new connections with the dealer and the artist, and is currently regarded as someone who embodies philanthropic aims, a trait highly valued by dealers as discussed in Chapter 4.

Co-acquiring a work with a private patron is similar to the arranging of joint purchases with another institution. Both are legally binding agreements. In this case, the Speed and Smith split the acquisition costs for Doherty's *Buried fifty/fifty*, so they now each own half of the piece. Smith has promised the Speed that he will bequeath his half at a later date, and he could never sell without the museum's permission. Weaver also refers to this particular arrangement as 'co-tenancy', which alludes to another interesting aspect of the strategy. Generally, the piece resides with the Speed, either on view or in their storage. However, should the collector wish to show it in his home or borrow it for limited periods, he can. Weaver described how this complicated practice works:

It could reside with him if he wanted. Now, he couldn't do the whole installation, but he could always show the piece in the right setting at home. It depends on what it is used for. That's totally understandable if he wanted to show it at home and it's a single track in a decent light, it would be perfectly fine. If he wanted to build a room that would even be better. He could borrow all the equipment and everything.

This quote reinforces the aspect of the relationship that the work of art is shared. Although in most cases a collector who co-purchases a work with a museum will let it reside at the museum, there is the option for the collector to still show it in their home. However, as Weaver explained, for

this to occur, certain conditions need to be met. She mentioned that it would depend not only on the use, but also on how it is presented. While, it seems that a video would be an easy piece to share, in that the work is on DVD and most museums have an exhibition copy that can easily be replaced in case of problems, there are many other factors to consider in such a transaction. For example, if the collector borrows the equipment to show the piece, who is responsible should there be a malfunction? In contrast, if the shared work of art is a painting or sculpture, sharing the piece may be easier to facilitate. In all cases, this model of sharing can be based upon the loan agreements that museums use to outline shipping, insurance and care of a work when loaned for exhibition at another institution.

Doherty's *Buried* was the first acquisition that the Speed co-purchased with a private collector. It allowed the museum to acquire a work of art that otherwise was beyond their funding capacity, despite generous discounts from the dealer. The Collections Committee at the Speed embraced this plan enthusiastically; even those board members who were not that knowledgeable about video or contemporary art. Weaver believes that it is because the piece resonates with many people on various levels, as she pointed out:

It's just so beautiful, and people could understand that clearly, but I think it transcends a horrible situation, and the troubles of what is going on there all the time, so people could relate to that. Yes, this is a beautiful landscape that deals with memory and trauma and all that.

Weaver feels co-purchasing is a very successful approach that she will continue to employ as a curator tasked with building collections. This strategy offers significant new ideas for thinking about collecting and collections. It becomes a model wherein members of the public become actively involved in building a community collection. Museums are often thought of as community collections. That is because they are open to the public, and in some cases, with municipally run institutions, the work is indeed acquired with taxpayer funds; in models of co-acquisition, however, it shifts the dynamic. In such cases, while the museum still controls what enters the collection, the relationship with collectors and the community becomes more deeply entrenched. Finding new models of collecting such as this is, in today's marketplace, part of the curator's role. Weaver agrees, stating that she is always employing 'creative ways of finding money and building [the museum's] collection'. She finds that it is meaningful relationships that facilitate this kind of creativity. She stated that 'what it comes down to in this business is all the long-term relationships and connections; it just really matters'. Indeed, as seen in the previous chapters, relationships are a key component. In this case, the social networks and relationships allowed Weaver to work with others in the community to grow the museum's collection significantly.

Furthermore, this points to how curators need to become not only specialists in contemporary art, but also entrepreneurial. The role of curator has shifted: not just a scholar, a steward of the collection and an organiser of exhibitions, but also someone who works with donors and local collectors in an expanded way. Curators now must also now be art

advisors, fundraisers and the primary link to collectors. When this can be managed, and curators and collectors work together, new initiatives can thrive, to the benefit of both the museum and the community, as seen in the next section.

## **The Dallas Museum of Art's 'Community Collection'**

The strategies discussed in this chapter allow curators to bolster their acquisitions beyond their often meager acquisition funds and endowments and provide important steps forward for museums. Weaver, who was also formerly Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) in Texas, detailed an extraordinary situation at that institution that may become a model for all collecting museums, enabling museums of various sizes in regions across the country to continue to build contemporary collections in this era of extraordinary prices for contemporary art:

I was very fortunate to be there at that time when Jack Lane [the former director] came, and we had a group of collectors like Robert Hoffman, Howard Rachofsky and Deedee Rose as well as some others, and they decided to create this thing called the Contemporary Art Initiative, which is a spin down of several years that catapulted the museum; it was \$100,000 each for acquisitions and exhibitions. But the other thing that they did, and we all did, was develop a collection plan among us all, so that we thought about how it all worked together. We considered it a community collection. If there is a certain artist we want to collect in depth, is there a certain artist—you will get the drawing, we will get the painting? Always an ongoing discussion of how everybody's collection was growing and growing together. And early on, we bought things together, and they gave things along the way. And the bequest, the irrevocable trust between the three local collectors, which means when the

last spouse dies, whatever is in the collection [goes to the museum]. And with the knowledge that if anything is sold from their collection they will discuss it with the museum, which is what we would want in the future. So that takes a lot of commitment together in discussion and in a bigger picture. And we were fortunate that they didn't see it like other cities [collectors] where they are going to build their own museums. They saw that it was their museum for generations to come, and that's a different attitude.

Here, patrons and museums work together to create a collection plan that puts the future of the museum first, while still allowing collectors to enjoy the benefits that collecting can bring. In addition, this partnership allows for collectors to rally around an institution, benefitting a community in ways that single-collector private museums cannot.

Discussing the genesis of this incredible initiative, Weaver set the stage in her interview by emphasising that it was only possible through strong relationships built over a long period. Furthermore, the environment played an important part; Dallas is a city with many incredibly wealthy individuals, several of whom are very civic minded and have an entrepreneurial mindset. They enjoy creating and building innovative new programmes and initiatives to benefit the city. In fact, The Contemporary Art Initiative began with such a forward thinking man, Robert Hoffman. Weaver described him as 'an incredible leader. He was a great collector; he was involved in the economic development of the city, the planning of the city, and all kinds of art, cultural, and civic things'. Additionally, he was a leader at the DMA as a board member. Hoffman formed a group that involved several patrons also involved with the museum. Each collector gave \$100,000 a year, which granted the DMA \$700,000 a year to launch a

significant contemporary art programme of exhibitions and acquisitions. The fund became known as the Bridge fund, permitting the museum to add important works or art to its collection while still raising additional funds and future endowments. This became particularly important with the increase in prices for contemporary art. Weaver shared the following information: 'The prices are just outrageous. It's changed so much since when I started. I'm still just in shock all the time by how much things cost'.

Adding to the Contemporary Art Initiative dues, the core group of collectors from the Contemporary Art Initiative made an unprecedented gift of art several years later. During the DMA's centennial year, 2003–2004, a period of great fundraising, Robert Hoffman issued a challenge: if the museum reached its first level of financial goals through fundraising, he and his wife Marguerite would bequeath their entire collection to the museum, along with additional funding. Two other couples joined this challenge: Howard and Cindy Rachofsky, and Deedie and Rusty Rose. The DMA did meet its fundraising goals, and thus entered into this extraordinary partnership with these three couples, all community leaders. This gift included over 800 works of art and provided input into future acquisitions. As a whole, the gift brought depth to the contemporary holdings of the DMA that would not otherwise have been possible for the museum to acquire in today's art market. As the three couples focus on different art movements, time periods and artists in their personal collections, in combination they provide a comprehensive narrative of the trajectory of modern and contemporary art. Weaver described this in

further detail:

Each [collector] had different nuances to their collection. Robert Hoffman and Marguerite focused on blue-chip artists like Joseph Beuys, Marcel Duchamp, Willem de Kooning, Cy Twombly, Jasper Johns and Philip Guston, and they bought in depth. Howard Rachofsky bought mostly 60s minimalism, then he turned to Italian Arte Povera, and now he is buying Guitai. And the Roses: Deedee Rose largely collects Gerhard Richter, Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, Bruce Nauman, and she likes Latin American art.

In addition to the works from their collections, the Rachofskys made a promised gift to the DMA of their home, The Rachofsky House, along with an endowment to maintain it. Completed in 1996 by architect Richard Meier, the multilevel modernist glass and steel home includes several site-specific art works. Furthermore, the Rachofskys continue to fundraise for the DMA through their annual TWO x TWO, Art/amfAR (American Foundation for AIDS Research) benefit auction. According to Weaver, the auction grosses approximately \$4 million a year. Half of the proceeds go to AIDS research and the other half goes to contemporary art.

For these collectors, it is not about the gifts of art or other funds themselves. Instead, the bequest is one that continues to shift and grow, and allows the collectors to be an instrumental component of the DMA's future as an important museum for contemporary art. As such, this became a true partnership between the collectors and the DMA, based in close relationships. In conjunction with the group, the museum's director and curators had numerous conversations. Weaver shared details of what they discussed:

How you build a collection, and what is a really meaningful, worthwhile, collection. [The conversations were] a very strategic planning of building a collection. It was emerging art, established art, media, film, all those, and we looked at what would be the best we could do, not only with the money, but the ways to build this collection and make it an international and important and significant collection of contemporary art. We were in constant dialogue and conversation and when we built our collection we built it together.

She went on to state:

But, this group, we were not only building collections together, we also looked to see what these community collections would look like, and what the museum would look like in the future. Along the way, we found ways to buy works together. We do co-tenancy agreements, we bought works together, there are promised works, so there is always this relationship about commitment to the museum; buying and thinking about the museum. We had an active program of people promising gifts, buying gifts together, and are giving partial amount works.

To reach this point of commitment requires ongoing conversations between the curators and the collectors. They all travel together to see gallery shows, biennials and art fairs, and all work together to create a gift to the museum that is continually shifting and expanding. The irrevocable trust involved in setting up of the gifts of their joint collections was a groundbreaking arrangement. An involved and legally binding process of co-tenancy and promised gifts, as well as donations of additional funds, was carefully thought out. This agreement stipulated that, up until the death of the last spouse in the group, any of the collectors can continue to buy new works of art, or trade or sell any piece in the collection.<sup>16</sup> With the commitment the collectors made to the each other and the DMA, these

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the details of this arrangement became very public after Marguerite Hoffman sued a gallery and a collector for reselling a Mark Rothko piece via auction, thereby invalidating her confidentially agreement. She initially won her cases against the collector and the dealers. The case against the collector was overturned on appeal, while the appeal by the dealer is still not resolved.

decisions must be made to reflect the best interest of the museum, and arise through dialogue with each other. Since the museum and the collectors establish all of the goals for growing and shaping the DMA's collection through ongoing conversation, it allows both the museum and the collectors to seize various acquisition opportunities. For example, Weaver described a situation where she could use some of the additional funds set up by the collectors to fill a hole in the museum's collection.

Sometimes things came up and this [funding] gave us the ability to act on it. For instance, I was up in New York and I went by James Cohan's gallery and saw that he had the last major Robert Smithson installation. We had already had these conversations about what we were missing in the collection and we didn't have many major works by earth artists, process artists...but we knew we were looking out for something and when that comes up we could act because everybody is on board, everybody has talked about it.

In addition to having the funds to fill in the gaps, and with the amazing gifts promised to the museum, these collectors also helped to raise additional funds. Weaver believes that 'the key to fundraising is peer to peer'. These collectors are friends with each other and bring in other people that they know, and in some ways they become mentors to young collectors. These collectors build something so exciting that it entices others to be a part of it, providing social and symbolic capital to new younger collectors while expanding the field and the network of knowledge. Getting others involved is part of the excitement for the group, and they see themselves as models that, hopefully, others will follow. Marguerite Hoffman, one of the main contributors to the gift, and President of the DMA Board of Trustees, summed up some of their reasoning behind the gift, and the benefits to the

community and the museum:

The Dallas collecting community is exceptionally tight knit. We have looked for ways to collaborate with each other for the benefit of the city, the museum, and the people who live in our hometown and visit its cultural institutions from afar. For instance, when acquiring works by the same artist, we will often buy works from different periods because we've shared a vision of our collections going to the DMA. We also anticipate that other private collections of modern and contemporary art in Dallas will ultimately be given to the museum, and we're working together to build complementary strengths. (Dallas Museum of Art 2005)

While the Dallas Museum of Art is a larger, encyclopedic institution with more acquisition funds than most of the other museums in the study, this particular attempt to work with collectors can become a model for all institutions. The relationship building and cultivation of collectors is essential to success, but there are other factors involved. When asked whether she believed this strategy could be replicated at another museum, Weaver said she believes that, although difficult, it could be done. She emphasised that it would take a very specific combination of variables to be set in place for it to be successful:

I think you could do it but it's very difficult. You can do it in New York and LA, and there are a few cities. You have to have the combination; you probably have it a little bit in Minneapolis. It's going to be complicated with personalities and board members and the politics. It could be replicated in a small way, I think, in certain cities that have very sophisticated collectors and board members, very informed collectors and informed board members, the combination. It would have to more than one. Collectors open to building, collecting and learning, and taking chances and upping the ante and pushing each other to be more connected to the museum. I think it is a city that is an innovative, entrepreneurial city; it has to be a city with money.

This strategy may seem unattainable for smaller and mid-sized museums, especially those outside large metropolitan areas, as it requires meeting a

number of criteria for its success. In particular, museums may struggle to implement such an approach if they are in an area without much wealth, or do not have a community that is civic minded. However, the key components of this approach include cultivating knowledgeable collectors, something that many museums already engage in. The programmes that are already in place at many museums can become the building blocks for employing similar ideas in the future.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored six different successful strategies at use in small, mid-sized and regional museums that combat escalating prices for contemporary art. Certainly there will always be competition for works of art between private collectors and museums, as stated by Gail Andrews, above. However, as collecting for future generations is central to each of these museums' missions, they and other museums must seek creative ways to continue participating in this field. The analysis of these models—of working with patrons through collection groups and joint purchases, as well as working with foundations and other museums—illustrates just how important it is to rely on more than the museum's resources alone.

Instead, museums, especially small to mid-sized institutions, must look beyond their walls; by utilising their networks they can make purchases that otherwise would be out of their reach, and push their acquisitions budgets much further.

It is now clear that connecting both socially and professionally with patrons and other foundations and museums is the key to the success of these strategies. By fostering relationships, museums expand their resources. For example, as curators get to know dealers and foundations which in turn become aware of the limitations of the museums, they can often work together to find other sources of donations. Collector groups are a cultivation tool, enabling patrons to concurrently develop their own collections while becoming more invested and ingrained in the museum community. The third approach, institutional priority, demonstrates how museums are reshaping their thinking about acquisitions. By combining yearly budgets so as to focus on a single significant purchase demonstrates how museums are purposefully thinking of the best ways to utilise their funds. By considering their collections as a whole, and targeting what works are most important to acquire, museums reveal an approach that values quality over quantity. Additionally, when museums work to purchase art jointly, acquisition funds essentially double, while allowing museums to extend their reputation and networks. Similarly, joint acquisitions with private collectors allow museums to purchase work outside of their funding capabilities. As seen, these relationships prove beneficial for both patron and museum on a number of levels. All of these strategies become the building blocks necessary for museums to employ the model in place at our example, the Dallas Museum of Art. While the scale of the DMA model may not be possible at all museums, there are elements that all institutions need to strive towards implementing in order to combat the difficulties they face with acquisitions. These include finding

collectors who are civic minded, and who value the museum as a community resource. These patrons will fight for the museum's continued success by committing their time, energy, finances, art and community status to developing new ways to build a collection. In the concluding chapter I examine how these strategies of art acquisition fit within the broader art market and art world.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## Introduction

Over the last several years, as witnessed in the record breaking art auctions at Sotheby's and Christies in 2013 and 2014, prices for contemporary art rose more dramatically than any other period in history. While interesting to note, this fact has significant implications for a major sector of the art world: museums, and in particular small and mid-sized museums. This study has explored this impact, and addressed the resulting problem that many small, mid-sized and regional American museums face today—the difficulty in acquiring contemporary art in this overheated global market.

In order to discover what, if any, solutions museums employ to combat the problem, it became essential to dissect both the art market and the art world as a whole. Examining this environment as a Bourdieusian field of practice (Figure 1) provided a lens through which to view the art world as a delicately balanced system, a complex network or field of practice within which each actor and agency plays an important role. Looking at the art world in this way enabled me to not only focus my analysis, but also to develop a closer level of inquiry than other previous studies of the art world (Graw 2009; Haden-Guest 1996; Horowitz 2011; Robertson 2005; Stallabrass 2004; Thompson 2008; Velthuis 2005). This allowed me to ask questions about how the art world operates, and how, importantly, acquisitions are made. The aim of this was not only to get a close and

realistic understanding of varying acquisitions processes in order to understand the difficulties facing small and mid-sized museums, but also to discover the creative strategies they employ. Moreover, it was important to look at the art world, and the art market in particular, within the context of additional theoretical frameworks: both networked and knowledge markets (Graw 2009) and as a community of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002).

To do so, my chosen methodologies—exploring the field in action at art fairs, and adopting the qualitative approach of semi-structured interviewing with gallery dealers and curators—allowed not only for an overall understanding of the art world to be achieved, but also gave me insights into how and why both private individuals and museums collect contemporary art. As the art world is primarily a social construction, the qualitative methods employed were crucial to uncovering information.

## **Research Findings**

Each chapter looked at the art world from various points of view, and the related findings were summarised within the respective chapters: navigating the cultural ecosystem of art fairs; dealers; curators and the processes of museum acquisition; acquisitions. Overall, with respect to the research questions the study did indeed reveal that many small, mid-sized and regional museums struggle to make larger acquisitions. Several key reasons not explored in previous literature emerged from the data. First, I

discovered through the interviews that several curators had experienced shrinking endowments during the recent economic downturn, which significantly curtailed their acquisition processes. Second, through both participant observation and interviews I detected that much of the art market had shifted to selling through art fairs, a marketplace whose model is quite different from the more intimate, one-on-one atmosphere of the gallery. Galleries often bring their artists' best works to these fairs. As museums are often not equipped to make the quick decisions that purchasing at fairs require, I determined that museums have a difficult time, not only because of their restricted capacity to purchase at fairs, but also because they do not have the same range of work available to them as private collectors. Third, my interviews with dealers disclosed that, while in many ways gallery dealers want their artists' work to appear in a public collection, sometimes the allure of a more prestigious private collection outweighs their philanthropic aims. This was clearly illustrated by Dealer 2, who explained that if there is a choice between selling an artist's work to a small or regional museum or to well-recognised collectors with a private museum, he believed it to be in the best interest of his artists to have their work be part of the private collection. By recognising the art world as a complex system rife with politics and inequalities, I could identify the intricacies of the dealers' decisions. For example, dealers who successfully negotiate the system comprehend that if they are to do right by their artists, they need to place their work in high profile collections in order to give them more exposure and visibility. Thus, rather than being driven by a mission of public access by placing their artists' work in a

range of public collections, dealers instead are more concerned with the opinions and support of established and prestigious private collectors and prominent museums in urban areas. This illustrates the shifting nature of canon formation. In the past, academics, critics and, particularly, curators held the power to elevate artists into the art historical canon. Today, private collectors have taken on this role by becoming the tastemakers of contemporary art. As such, private collectors have become a source of competition for public museums that wish to tell the story of contemporary art through a collection that includes canonical artists.

The hypothesis that museums face difficulties in acquiring contemporary art through purchases was borne out through the study. Once this was established, I also discovered that many museums embark on different strategies to deal with the problem, with varying degrees of success. While there may be other approaches taken, I explored six: working with foundations to fund purchases; using collector groups to build acquisition funds; making one purchase an institutional priority; jointly acquiring with another museum; jointly acquiring with a private collector; and forming a true community collection with private collectors. This last approach in particular is unusual, and potentially has far-reaching implications for the museum sector. It shifts the model of museum collecting outside of the museum to its community. When community members become invested to the degree seen in the cases I examined, the museum's role in the cultural landscape becomes even more important. When collectors band together and share their prestige, money, knowledge, connections and art collections, both the city and the museum benefit. In addition, the

implementation of this strategy demonstrates the potential for power relationships to shift within the art world. Certainly, dealers recognise the importance of these types of alliances, and often want their artists to be a part of such an initiative, which in turn helps guarantee its success.

## **Research Implications**

The museum acquisition strategies explored in the research range from established to emerging approaches; and all aid museums in acquiring works that would ordinarily be outside of their budgets. The employment of patron groups is perhaps the most adopted strategy, one seen at many of the museums participating in the study. It relies on involving patrons in a way that makes them invested in the museum far more than just by donating money. The facility to be a part of a group and vote on what work becomes part of a museum collection allows patrons to make new social connections, learn more about contemporary art and become more deeply embedded in the institution. While the democratic nature of this arrangement is an advantage, however, the often low membership dues, set to attract a wider range of participants, may be a limitation. Yet in order for a group to be successful, and for the participants to feel important, it needs to stay somewhat small; this means that the dues raised might still not allow the museum to afford to acquire larger or more significant works. Nonetheless, it is a tried and true solution for adding to collections and supplementing museums' other acquisition funds.

Working with foundations that provide funding for acquisitions appears to be a new strategy, one that is entirely dependent on a networked market. Not all museums can take advantage of the opportunities that these foundations provide; it is only those who have a connection with such a foundation. This strategy emphasises the necessity for curators to travel and become acquainted with a variety of dealers. These linkages allow dealers to distinguish which artists and art works curators are looking to add to their museum collections, and allow for the potential for dealers to facilitate donations. Other models that rely on relationships are new museum partnerships. For example, co-collecting with private collectors and with other museums is an emergent strategy that has far-reaching possibilities. This approach shifts the dynamics of museum acquisitions, from the museum alone to sharing with partners. For example, co-acquiring with individuals can alleviate the problem of promised gifts being sold out from under the museum should a donor's situation change. Furthermore, this strategy transforms those collectors who participate into stakeholders in the museum in a more direct and lasting way. By working with the museum jointly on an acquisition, a private collector becomes invested in the process in a deeper way than just giving money to an acquisition fund or donating a piece of art. In such a case the collector becomes a partner whose experiences and knowledge are valued by the institution. In addition, this strategy has the potential to influence other collectors who want to have a more significant engagement with the museum. Regarding the strategy of co-acquisitions with other museums, this method not only defrays costs, but also allows for an even wider

audience to experience works of art. Sharing works of art also strengthens the overall museum community by placing cooperation above individual museum identities. This type of cooperation is often witnessed in other ways, such as in the organisation and touring of exhibitions. Co-owning works increases the capacity for museums to subvert the power positions within the system, while gaining them additional leverage. Another strategy is more inwardly focused: institutional priority collecting. Museums that engage in this method, of focusing on one significant piece by using both acquisition funds and fundraising efforts through collector groups and other sources, demonstrate creativity in augmenting funds.

The necessity for all of these strategies emphasises the changing nature of museum acquisitions and the impact that rising art prices have on the process. The benefits of these new strategies include alleviating the uncertainty of promised gifts, seeing acquisition budgets stretch further, and strengthening relationships within the community, and point the way to the future of museum collecting.

The study culminated with a discussion of one of the most innovative approaches to contemporary collecting happening in the museum sector today, that of forming a true community collection. As evidenced by the Dallas Museum of Art, a group of civic minded individuals with extraordinary collections worked in tandem with the curators and director of the museum to not only promise the gift of their existing collections, but also to target what new purchases would benefit the museum the most. This pioneering approach by collectors and museum professionals,

actively working together to form the collection, could be a model for other museums, as remarked upon by gallery dealer Carolyn Alexander.

However, as Suzanne Weaver suggested, it is a strategy that has some serious limitations. Museums intent on modelling themselves on Dallas' approach must meet numerous conditions. First, the museum must be positioned within an economically affluent area. Many smaller, mid-sized and regional museums do not have as much wealth spread among its patrons. Furthermore, there needs to be a group of patrons committed to contemporary art, with the financial ability to make purchases the museum cannot, and who also have strong connections within the art world.

Additionally, these collectors must be both civic minded and forward thinking. Certainly, such patrons exist in many museum communities, but often they are small in number, or do not collaborate within a group of like-minded individuals.

What is important in all of these strategies is that they create the building blocks to ensure that museums create not only collections that remain relevant in the future, but also new systems that are sustainable no matter what occurs in the art market. As we have seen, the market is cyclical, yet even in low moments museums can continue to struggle with acquisitions if they do not think creatively. However, with strategies such as the six explored in this study in place, not only do museums increase the likelihood that they can continue to acquire contemporary works of art, they also ensure that their patrons are even more invested in their success. This is because at the heart of each of these strategies are

relationships. When museums focus on growing and strengthening connections with other actors they safeguard their future.

On the other hand, some may question the need for small, mid-sized and regional museums to continue to try to collect in a market where prices are beyond their acquisition budgets. Certainly, some museums, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, in Texas and the new Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Virginia, have decided to not participate in the process at all. Instead, they were established, and still function, according to the model of a non-collecting 'Kunsthalle', which only exhibits work. Should more small and mid-sized American museums function in this manner? Why not let larger museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, for example, collect expensive pieces, and rely on loans to share the works they have with other audiences at smaller museums? In effect this does happen, to some extent, as these larger museums are able to compete with private collectors more easily, as they have bigger budgets and more prestige, and have forged links with the right people: specifically, dealers who want their artists' works associated with these large institutions. However, there are several issues with these types of contemporary masterpieces held exclusively at larger museums and relying on loans. As works of art become popular with local audiences, museums are less likely to lend, except for prestigious exhibitions at prominent museums. Also, for big, expensive sculptures, like Jeff Koons' or Richard Serra's work, for instance, the costs for shipping, insurance, and short-term installation are

cost-prohibitive for many smaller museums. Thus, smaller and regional museums need to continue to strive towards finding solutions, while reframing the possibilities. Otherwise, art only becomes available for those who live near larger museums in urban art centres, or for those who can travel.

The acquisition strategies examined within this study suggest new kinds of relationships between museums and their patrons that offer the potential to reshape the ways museums work. In today's marketplace, if museums do not think creatively they will not be able to continue to add significant works to their collections. In such an eventuality, museums will not remain relevant in the future, as their collections will have substantial art historical gaps. To avoid this fate, the option is to employ some or all of these strategies. By reaching outside of the traditional infrastructure for acquisition, and to forge new connections between dealers, patrons and collectors, small, mid-sized and regional museums can reposition themselves within the art world while combating rising prices for contemporary art.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was limited to discovering if indeed small, mid-sized and regional museums face difficulties, and if so, what strategies they employ to deal with this issue. Now that this has been established, there are additional avenues that future research could explore. For instance, the

practicalities of the Dallas Museum of Art's new model of collecting, as a community of collectors working in conjunction with museum professionals, is an area open for investigation by future researchers. This exploration could focus on those conditions external to the museum that need to be in place for such a strategy to work at other museums. This might require discovering what cities or towns foster civic mindedness, what areas contain a great concentration of wealth, and where contemporary collectors reside. Furthermore, do these collectors support their local institution, or do they follow and work with larger and more prestigious museums? If they are not invested in their local museums, what can their community museums do to change the situation?

My research has unearthed various approaches that museums currently use to supplement their acquisitions funds and combat rising prices for contemporary art. A longitudinal study of each of these approaches can better judge their success over the long term. Moreover, there may be additional strategies employed by museums that warrant further investigation; this study has focused only on those that the participants have used. For example, another strategy that some museums utilise is to work directly with artists by commissioning their works, often initially for exhibition, which then become part of the permanent collection. Artists are an important part of the art world ecosystem, and relationships between curators and artists are essential to any contemporary program. Fostering these relationships further can be an effective strategy for bypassing the marketplace and acquiring work. While none of the museums that participated in my study specifically discussed using this strategy, it is a

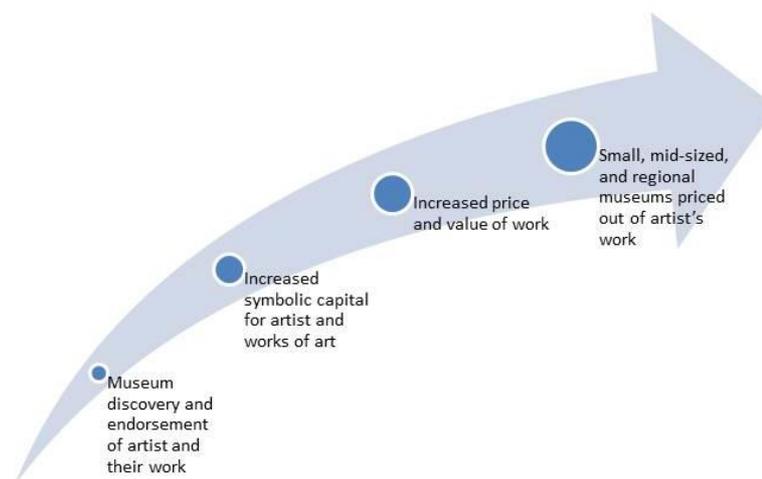
worthwhile way of collecting, which merits further research. Lastly, other researchers could follow the framework of this study to analyse whether these approaches could work for the acquisition of art from different time periods, as well as contemporary.

## **Conclusion**

All of these acquisition strategies stem from two issues. First, that prices for contemporary art are outpacing museum budgets, and second, a deeper issue of museums not taking enough risks. Jim Cohen summed this up in his statement that museums price themselves out of the market by not purchasing works by artists when they are still affordable. The difficulty with this is that, although curators often find exciting artists who they believe will be relevant to the history of contemporary art, it can be hard to convince acquisition committee members to take the risk. As artists' careers take off, museums may lose the opportunity to secure their work, proving the necessity for risk taking. Several curators demonstrated attempts to do this, seen most notably in Rene Barilleaux's achievement of adding Chakaia Booker's work *Position Preferred* to the McNay's permanent collection, just as Booker joined a new, prestigious gallery, and prior to her achieving another level of success in her career.

Interestingly, when museums are early advocates of an artist and champion their work by including it in an exhibition or adding it to their permanent collection, this helps build the artist's reputation, and bestows

symbolic capital. This begins a cyclical process that, in the end, makes it difficult for museums to continue supporting those artists, as their endorsement increases symbolic value, which in turn escalates prices. Thus, as Figure 23 demonstrates, many museums end up pricing themselves out of this market (Altshuler 2005; Belk 2001; Velthuis 2005).



**Figure 23: Process in which museums get priced out of contemporary art**

When museums cannot afford to continue to acquire these types of art work, they contribute to the art world in various other ways that can still be of benefit. By cultivating patrons through their various programmes, these museums educate and draw collectors into the art world system. By helping patrons build their own collections, and by involving them in knowledge and networked markets, curators initiate their patrons into a community of practice. These endeavours may ultimately benefit the

museum, as their patrons become more invested in their programmes, and the patrons' collections may be future donations.

The strategies explored within this study, in combination with identifying and acquiring works by artists on the rise, demonstrate that there are ways for small, mid-sized and regional museums to combat escalating prices for contemporary art. However, these strategies can only go so far; many works of art will continue to be out of the reach of museums, and will not become part of their permanent collections unless they are donated.

Inherent in this statement is another issue. Small, mid-sized and regional museums are less likely to receive those donations because the smaller museums do not carry as much prestige as do large museums.

By strengthening ties to their communities through various acquisition processes, museums solidify their footing in their locales, while creating plans that ensure their collections remain relevant, and that they contribute to the ongoing story of contemporary art.

# Appendix 1

## University of Leicester Ethics Review Sign Off Document



To: **JENNIFER JANKAUSKAS**

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: **jj91-efa8**

*(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)*

---

**06/01/2013 00:52:51**

### **Museum Studies**

Project Title: **Contemporary Art Museums and the Global Art Market**  
(working title)

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be complied with

- <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>
- <http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/>

The following is a record of correspondence notes from your application **jj91-efa8**. Please ensure that any proviso notes have been adhered to:-

Jan 6 2013 12:52AM

1. Your consent form has the item "I agree to the interview being recorded and my words being used in a student assignment only". I suggest you change this to "I agree to the interview being recorded and my words being used in a doctoral dissertation and academic publications, including on the Web" so that you do not restrict yourself". I appreciate that in the context where your observations take place, it can only be done covertly. However, you need to take care in the presentation of the observation findings, and make sure that as well as participants' names, you also do not disclose names of institutions, artists, artworks, etc. - anything that would could lead to the identification of individuals or institutions.

--- END OF NOTES ---

## Appendix 2

# Gallery Dealer Questionnaire

### Details

1. Name:
2. Position:
3. Gallery name:

### Context

4. How long have you been in business? (Please check one box)

- Less than 3 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 or more years

5. How many artists do you represent? (Please check one box)

- 1-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20 or more

6. What media do your artists work in? (Check all that apply)

- Painting
- Sculpture
- Photography
- Mixed
- Other (please define if other)

### Selling

7. Do you sell artworks to museums?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If Yes – go to question 8

If No – please can you say why you do not sell to museums?  
(questionnaire ends here...)

8. Is it an integral part of your practice to sell works to museums?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8a. Please can you explain your answer?

9. Please (where possible) list the last three sales made to a museum (complete in as much detail as possible)

Museum the artwork was sold to	Artist	Name of work	Approximate price	Date sold

10. Does your gallery have waiting lists for your artists' work?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

11. What are museums offered in terms of payment options for artworks, if anything?

- Payment plans
- Longer period for payment
- Other (please explain...)

### **Discounts**

12. Do you offer discounts to museums for artworks?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes – go to question 13

If no – please can you say why?

13. On average, how much of a discount do you offer to museums?

- 0-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-15%
- 16-20%
- 21-25%
- 26-30%
- 31-35%
- 36-40%
- 41-45%
- 46-50%
- Over 50%

14. Do you offer discounts to private collectors for artworks?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes – go to question 14

If no – please can you say why?

15. On average, how much of a discount do you offer to private collectors?

- 0-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-15%
- 16-20%
- 21-25%
- 26-30%
- 31-35%
- 36-40%
- 41-45%
- 46-50%
- Over 50%

16. Under certain conditions, would you be willing to give a larger discount to a museum for an artwork?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

16a. If yes, what conditions would those be? Please list as many as possible.

17. Are you more likely to sell an artwork to a private collector if they plan on donating the work to a museum?

- More likely
- No difference
- Less likely
- Don't know

Please can you explain your answer?

### **Impact re recession**

18. Has there been any difference in your selling of artworks in the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please can you explain your answer?

### **Involvement in further study**

19. Would you be willing to participate in a further study? If yes, please can you provide details of name and telephone number or email address?

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

## **Appendix 3**

# **Interview Questions for Gallery Dealers**

### **General questions about the gallery**

What is the mission or the goals of the gallery?

What role do you think galleries play in the contemporary art world, in comparison to museums and auction houses?

What role do art fairs play?

How does the gallery foster relationships with private collectors and museum curators and directors?

### **Relationships to gallery artists**

How do you select the artists that the gallery represents?

Is the gallery also active on the secondary art market?

What do you think is the best way to form and build an artist's reputation?

What factors impact on the prices of their work?

### **Relationships to collectors**

Does your gallery have waiting lists for your artists' work; if so, how is it structured?

What do you think is the role of the private collector?

Have you seen a shift in this role over the last few years (i.e. more influence, many private collections opening as museums) or do private collections seem to have taken on an importance similar to museums?

Do you offer discounts to private collectors for artworks? If so, what is the average amount?

Are you more likely to sell an artwork to a private collector if they plan on donating the work to a museum? Why?

Do you have agreement or contracts with collectors asking for first right of refusal should they want to sell the work?

How important do you believe it is for artists to be collected by well-known collectors? How does their inclusion in these collections affect the artist's career?

What are the most important/desirable private collections for the artist's work to be included in?

What do you think the impact is of private collectors opening their own "museum" space to the public instead of donating to existing museum collections?

### **Relationships to museums**

How important do you think it is for your artists' careers to be included in a museum collection?

Why is it important?

What are the most desirable museum collections for an artist's work to be included in?

What is the role of smaller museums?

Is it as important to participate in temporary exhibitions as it is to be a part of the permanent collection?

Do you offer discounts to museums for artworks?

If so, what is the average amount?

Under certain conditions, would you be willing to give a larger discount to a museum for an artwork?

If so, what conditions would those be?

Can you tell me about any incentives that you may offer to museums to acquire works?

Could you describe some recent works that have been sold to museums?

Do you find in the current economic situation that museums' purchasing has changed? What about private collectors?

## **Appendix 4**

### **Interview Questions for Museum Curators**

#### **The museum acquisition process**

What is the focus of your contemporary collection? What are some of the highlights?

What is the strategy for your collecting, i.e. types of work are you currently buying? Do you focus on a specific medium or type of work, e.g. abstract or realist, etc.?

What is your process for selecting an artwork to acquire for your collection?

How long does it generally take for this process? What are the reasons for that, e.g. committee approval etc.?

Where do your acquisitions funds come from? How large is your acquisition budget?

What measures do you take to supplement those funds for further acquisitions?

Does your museum deaccession work? If so, can you describe the circumstances?

Do your acquisitions stem from exhibitions of the artist's work at the museum?

What impact do you think it has on an artist's career to have their work featured in an exhibition at your museum, or to be in your collection?

How many acquisitions have you had in the last two years?

Do you ever purchase work during art fairs?

Do you have any collecting partnerships in place with other institutions or with a collector group?

Affiliation with a university—how does that impact on your collecting and programmes?

Travel budget?

## **Relationships with donors and patrons**

How do you cultivate and sustain relationships with collectors and patrons? Do you have special programmes for them, and if so, what are they?

In what situations do you accept donations from collectors? What is your process for that?

Do you have collectors groups that purchase works for the museum? Alternatively, do you work with individuals to fund specific purchases?

Do you ever work with collectors to secure a promised gift of work from their collection? If so, how do you do that?

What do you think the role of the private collector is, especially in comparison with to the role of the museum?

What is your opinion on collectors that have opened private museum spaces? What do you think are the differences between your museum and those types of spaces?

## **Relationships to galleries/auction houses**

What are your sources for purchases? Are there particular galleries that you work with repeatedly? Do you buy from auction houses?

When buying from a gallery, what sort of discount do you receive? Are there situations that affect the amount of the discount?

Has a gallery ever helped you to find someone to help fund for a purchase or facilitated a donation? What were the circumstances for that?

Has a gallery ever helped fund exhibition expenses, e.g. shipping, catalogues etc.? What were the circumstances?

Can you talk about some of your recent purchases from galleries or auction houses?

## **Economic impact**

Have the shifts in the economy affected your collections policy and acquisitions? If so, what has changed?

What difficulties did you have in attaining works you were interested in when the economy was strong? Do you still face those difficulties in the weaker economy?

What sort of budget are you working with to acquire works within the current economy?

Has it decreased, and by approximately how much?

Were there pieces that you wanted to acquire that were out of your price range? Were you able to find another way to acquire that work? If so, how did you do it?

## Appendix 5

### Galleries Participating in Art Fairs Visited during Fieldwork

Note: Listed alphabetically by country and gallery name

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
ARGENTINA	Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires	G16				
AUSTRALIA	Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne		1157			
AUSTRIA	Charim, Vienna	J28				
	Galerie Grita Insam, Vienna	E28	1154			
	Galerie Hilger, Vienna	E31				
	Galerie Marten Janda, Vienna	J38				
	George Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna		715			
	Korbath, Vienna	H26				
	Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna	F2	1017			
	Gallerie Mezzanin, Vienna	J12				
	Nikolaus Ruzicska, Salzburg		513			
	Gabriele Senn Gallery, Vienna	J33				
	Layr Wuestenhagen Contemporary, Vienna		642			
BELGIUM	Baronian Francey, Brussels		810			
	hoet bekaert gallery, Ghent		1125			
	Xavier Hufkens, Brussels	F14				
	Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels	C14				
	Galerie Van Der Planken, Antwerp				257	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
BRAZIL	A Gentil Carioca, Rio de Janeiro	J26				
	Luciana Brito Galeria, São Paulo	G6	1514			
	Galeria Leme, São Paulo	J49				
	Galeria Laura Marsiaj, Rio de Janeiro	J32				
	Galerie Millan, São Paulo	D11				
	Galeria Nara Roesler, São Paulo	J40				
	Galerie Luisa Strina, São Paulo	D15				
	Casa Triângulo, São Paulo	H16				
	Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo	E24				
	MENDES WOOD, São Paulo		1605			
	Galeria Marília Razuk, São Paulo	H28				
CANADA	Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto			446	120	
	Diaz Contemporary, Toronto	H25				
	Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver	J13				
	Landau Fine Arts, Montreal	B22				
	Newzones, Calgary				238	
	Pierre-Francois Ouellette, Montreal					6102
	Projex-MTL, Montreal					6030
	Nikola Rukaj Gallery, Toronto			543		
	Skew Gallery, Calgary					7045
	Alison Smith Gallery, Toronto			161		

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
CHINA	Boers-Li Gallery, Beijing		928			
	Fu Xin Gallery, Shanghai					8111
	ShanghART, Shanghai	H5				
	Vitamin Creative Space, Beijing	J4				
COLUMBIA	Abstractus, Bogota					7049
	Galería Baobab, Bogota					7050
	Galería Casas Riegner, Bogota	J8				
CZECH REPUBLIC	Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague		626			
	VERNON, Prague		745			
DENMARK	Andersen's Contemporary, Copenhagen	H3				
	Galleri Bo Bjerggarrd, Copenhagen	D40	1057		117	
	Faurschou, Copenhagen			310		
	Nils Staerk, Copenhagen	H30				
	Galleri Christina Wilson, Copenhagen		1156			
	Galerie Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen	J37				
FINLAND	Galerie Anhava, Helsinki		1613			
	Galerie Forsblom, Helsinki			228	123	
FRANCE	Air de Paris, Paris	F13				
	A.L.F.A., Paris			124		
	art: concept, Paris		1011			
	Cortex Athletico, Bordeaux		1119			
	Chez Valentin, Paris	H2				

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Galerie Chantel Crousel, Paris	G1				
	Galerie Envie d'Arte, Paris				657	
	Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris	H23	1404			
	gdm, Paris		625			
	Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris	G22	943			
	Galerie Husenot, Paris		1411			
	In Situ, Fabienne Leclerc, Paris		806			
	JGM Galerie, Paris			226		
	Galerie Jousse Enterprise, Paris		729			
	Yvon Lambert, Paris	G3	501			
	Loevenbruck, Paris		1316			
	Martin du Louvre, Paris				629	
	Galerie Maeght, Paris			426		
	gabrielle maubrie, Paris		1609			
	Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris	E1				
	Galerie Nelson- Freeman, Paris	B6				
	Galerie nathalie Obadia, Paris		607			
	Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris	G9	1306			
	Prax-Delavallade, Paris		1110			
	Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris	C10	919			
	Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris	C24		404		
	Galerie GP&N Vallois, Paris		707			
	Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris		1601			
GERMANY	Galerie Albrecht, Berlin				148	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	ARNDT, Berlin		1107			
	Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin	G11	1167			
	Galerie Anita Becker, Frankfurt				628	
	Borch Jensen, Berlin	C1				
	BQ, Berlin	J11				
	Bucholz, Cologne	C6				
	Buchmann Galerie, Berlin	E26	970			
	Capitain, Cologne	E6				
	carlier   gebauer, Berlin	G14	1066/535			
	Galeria Cinzi Friedlaender, Berlin		1075			
	COMA Centre for Opinions in Music and Art, Berlin	J14	974			
	Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin	E5				
	Galerie Crone, Berlin		1170			
	DIE GALERIE, Frankfurt			102	521	
	Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin	G5	1049			
	Galerie Giti Noubakhsch, Berlin		969			
	Gmurzynska, Cologne	B20				
	Galerie Brärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt	C21				
	Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne	D27				
	Galerie Haas & Fuchs, Berlin	B4				
	Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin	E7				
	Jablonka Gallerie, Cologne	D34				
	Galerie Michael Janssen, Berlin	J42	510			

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Johnen Galerie, Berlin		1168			
	Galerie Ben Kaufmann, Berlin	H7	1036			
	Kewenig Galerie, Berlin	B10				
	Kicken, Berlin	B18				
	KLEMM's, Berlin	D24	1171			
	Klosterfelde, Berlin	E4				
	Lausberg Contemporary, Dusseldorf				311	
	Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin		1173			
	LEVY Galerie, Hamburg	A7		108		
	Loock Galerie, Berlin		1175			
	L.A. Galerie-Lothar Albrecht, Frankfurt		520			
	Galerie Hans Mayer, Dusseldorf	B14				
	Meyer Riegger, Berlin	G8				
	Christian Nagel, Cologne	C21	968			
	neugerriemschneid er, Berlin	E18				
	Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin	C8				
	ph-projects, Berlin		972			
	Reception, Berlin		973			
	Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne		1054			
	Aurel Scheibler, Berlin		966			
	Esther Schipper, Berlin	F13	1067			
	Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin	F20	967			
	Michael Schultz Gallery, Berlin			424		
	Sies + Höke, Dusseldorf	H20	1103			

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Sommer Gallery, Berlin	J29				
	Springer & Winckler Galerie, Berlin			113		
	Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt		730			
	Galerie Thomas Munich	A18		213		
	Garlerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin	J7	1172			
	Van Horn, Dusseldorf		824			
	VOGES GALLERY, Frankfurt		531			
	Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin		1169			
	Wentrup, Berlin	J36	975			
	Barbara Wein Wilma Lukatsch, Berlin		1072			
	Wilde Gallery, Berlin				157	
	Eva Winkeler, Frankfurt	E9				
	Zink, Berlin	D29				
GREECE	The Apartment, Athens		1037			
	Bernier/Eliades, Athens	C15				
	The Breeder, Athens	H21	904			
	Koroneou, Athens	J10				
	Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, Athens		1416			
ICELAND	i-8 Gallery, Reykjavik	D20	1220			
INDIA	Chemould, Mumbai	J25				
	Nature Morte/Bose Pacia, New Delhi	J9				
	Gallery SKE, New Delhi	H22				
IRELAND	Blueleaf Gallery, Dublin				603	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Green on Red Gallery, Dublin	J17	1420			
	Kerlin Gallery, Dublin		916			
	The Molesworth Gallery, Dublin					8062
	mother's tankstation, Dublin		613			
ISRAEL	Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv		1136			
	Noga Gallery of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv		514			
ITALY	Artiaco, Naples	C13				
	Continua, San Gimignano   Beijing   La Moulin	D5	917			
	Galleria Raffaella Corese, Milan	J35	127			
	Massimo De Carlo, Milan	D8	507			
	G.A.M..Galleria d'Arte Maggiore, Bologna			210		
	Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, Rome		712			
	Magazzino, Rome	D38	1406			
	MONITOR, Rome		960			
	Galerie Franco Noero, Turin	F8				
	Giorgio Persano, Turin			313		
	Prometeogallery, Milan	J19				
	Lia Rumma, Milan	G17	923			
	Franco Soffiantino Art Productions, Turin	H31	500			
	Galeria Christian Stein, Milan	D26				
	Studio La Città, Verona		521			
	T293, Rome	D25				
	Venice Projects, Venice				261	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
JAPAN	G-77 Gallery, Kyoto				260	
	hiromiyoshii, Tokyo	J5				
	island + Venice Projects, Tokyo		1138			
	Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo	F23				
	Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo	E22	827			
	MEGUMI OGITA, Tokyo					8054
	Gallery Side 2, Tokyo		956			
	Taka Ishii, Tokyo	H14				
	TARO NASU, Tokyo		844			
LEBANON	Galerie Mark Hachem, Beirut				651	
	Galerie SFEIR- SEMLER, Beirut and Hamburg		1310			
MEXICO	antena estudio, Mexico City					9054
	KBK, Mexico City	J27				
	Kurimanzutto, Mexico City	D13				
	Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City	E11				
	OMR, Mexico City	D33				
THE NETHERLANDS	Galerie Akinci, Amsterdam		615			
	Galerie Anhava, Amsterdam	F22				
	Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam	E17				
	Annet Gelink, Amsterdam	H4				
	Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam		742			
	Slewe Gallery, Amsterdam	H29				
	Diana Stigter, Amsterdam		1410			

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam		926			
	Witzenhausen Gallery, Amsterdam				244	
NEW ZEALAND	Chosun Gallery, New South Wales				262	
	Gallery DeNovo, Dunedin				114	
	Starkwhite, Auckland		527			
NORWAY	Standard (Oslo), Oslo	J23				
PORTUGAL	Galeria Graca Brandão, Lisbon	E29				
	Christina Guerra, Lisbon	D3				
	Filomena Soares Gallery, Lisbon		1043			
ROMANIA	Galeria Plan B Cluj		946			
RUSSIA	Aidan Gallery, Moscow		828			
	Regina Gallery, Moscow   London	J43	814			
	XL, Moscow	G7				
SOUTH AFRICA	Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg		933			
	Michael Stevenson, Cape Town	H18	647			
SOUTH KOREA	Art Company Misoolsidae, Seoul				155	
	Gallery Bhak, Seoul				345	
	Kukie Gallery, Seoul	C5	1027			
	ONE AND J., Seoul		747			
SPAIN	adhoc galería, Vigo					7033
	Galeria Oliva Aruana, Madrid		1061			
	Galería Espacio Líquido/ Galería Raquel Ponce, Gijón					7030
	Galleria Ferran Cano, Barcelona				150	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Full Art, Seville					8035
	Galerie Helga de Alvear, Madrid	E23				
	Kreisler Galeria de Arte, Madrid				151	
	Galería Moisés Pérez de Albéniz, Pamplona					7040
	Galerie Pepe Cobo, Seville	H17				
	Distito 4, Madrid	J30				
	Galerie Elvira Gonzalez, Madrid	B24				
	Maisterravalbuena, Madrid	D23				
	Galeria Leandro Navarro, Madrid	A15				
	Nogueras Blanchard, Barcelona	D28	1320			
	Parra & Romero, Madrid		639			
	Jean-Paul Perrier Art Gallery, Barcelona				631	
	Poligrafa Obra Grafica, Barcelona	B2				
	La Ribera Galleria de Arte, Murcia				615	
	Galerie Senda, Barcelona		831			
	Galería JUAN SILIÓ, Santander					7029
	SKL, Palma					8031
	T20, Murcia					7037
	Travesía Cuatro, Madrid	J20				
	Villa del Arte Galleries, Barcelona				654	
SWEDEN	Andréhn Schiptienko, Stockholm		907			
	Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm		725			

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm		1161			
	Milliken, Stockholm		614			
	Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm			316		
SWITZERLAND	Galerie Guy Bärtschi, Geneva		739			
	Faye Fleming & Partner, Geneva		1409			
	Claudia Groeflin Galerie, Zurich		508			
	HAAS & FISCHER, Zurich		937			
	Hauser & Wirth, Zurich	E8	601			
	Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich	G13				
	Krugier, Geneva	A19				
	Mai 36, Zurich	C9				
	Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne	F21				
	Galerie Eva Prensenhuber, Zurich	F6				
	Jamileh Weber, Zurich	D36				
TURKEY	Dirimart Galeri, Istanbul		1215			
	Galerist, Isatanbul	J21				
UKRAINE	Mironova Gallery, Kiev				163	
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	The Third Line, Dubai	J24				
UNITED KINGDOM	Amstel Gallery, London				145	
	Ancient & Modern, London		1151			
	Danielle Arnaud, London	C11				
	Bischoff/Weiss, London	E16				
	Browse & Darby Ltd, London				515	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92)</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Jonathan Cooper Park Walk Gallery, London				641	
	Cynthia Corbett Gallery, London				136	
	Pilar Corrias Gallery, London	D21	955			
	Corvi-Mora, London		823			
	Alan Cristea Gallery, London			216		
	E & R Cyzer, London			312		
	Stephen Friedman, London	F18				
	Jill George Gallery, London				351	
	greengrassi, London		1206			
	HackelBury Fine Art, London			256	109	
	Hales Gallery, London		641			
	Haunch of Venison, London				321	
	Herald St., London		811			
	Hopkins-Custot, London	A14				
	IBID PROJECTS, London		922			
	Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh	J39	845			
	Alison Jacques Gallery, London	H15	1106			
	Mark Jason Gallery, London				653	
	Annely Juda Fine Art, London	C22				
	Simon Lee Gallery, London		1504			
	Josh Lilley, London		629			
	Lisson Gallery, London	F9	1701			
	Victoria Miro, London	F10	1700			

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	The Modern Insitute/Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow	F11	801			
	MUSEUM 52 LONDON, London		815			
	Paragon Press, London	A2	1019			
	Rokeby Gallery, London		1501			
	SEVENTEEN, London		941			
	Sims Reed, London			142		
	Stuart Shave Modern Art, London	H11				
	Sutton Lane, London	E12				
	Timothy Tayor, London	D4				
	White Cube, London	F5	901		221	
	Max Wigram Gallery, London	J48	711			
	Wilkinson, London		610			
	Woolff Gallery, London				643	
	Workpace Gallery, Gateshead		541			
	Zero, London	J3				
UNITED STATES	303, New York	F16	1500			
	Miguel Abreu, New York	E10				
	Acquavella, New York	B21				
	ADA Gallery, Richmond, Virginia					8105
	Adler & Conkright Fine Art, New York	B15		119		
	Jean Albano Gallery, Chicago				547	
	Alpha Gallery, Boston				148	
	AMBACH & RICE, Los Angeles		1512			

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	Ameringer   McEnery   Yohe, New York	A4				
	Angles Gallery, Santa Monica		1315			
	Antena, Chicago					9054
	ArtRouge Gallery, Miami				163	
	Artware Editions, New York			100		
	Atrium Gallery, St. Louis				613	
	Aureus Contemporary, Providence				115	
	Babcock Galleries, New York			450		
	Baer Ridgway Exhibitions, San Francisco					8069
	Balloon, Chicago					6106
	Andrew Bae Gallery, Chicago				553	
	Armand Bartos Fine Art, New York			335		
	Bayo Galery, Batavia, Iowa					8045
	Harlan J. Berk, LTD., Chicago				659	
	John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco	B19				
	George Billis Gallery, New York   Los Angeles				149	
	Robert Bills Contemporary, Chicago					6038
	Peter Blum Gallery, New York	C2	1033			
	Blum & Poe, Los Angeles	G2				
	Marianne Boesky, New York	H6				
	Tonya Bonakdar, New York	D17	1006			

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	Mary Boone, New York	D32				
	Jonathan Boos, Bloomfield Village, Michigan			158		
	Mark Borghi Fine Art, New York			452	537	
	Bortolami, New York	G12	1007			
	botax.gallery, Shelter Island, New York					7121
	Russell Bowman Art Advisory, Chicago				430	
	Roy Boyd Gallery, Chicago				331	
	Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco		1155		122	
	BROADWAY 1602, New York		517			
	Spencer Brownstone, New York	J34				8094
	Kevin Bruk, Miami	J18				
	J.Cacciola Gallery, New York				605	
	Cain Schulte Contemporary Art, San Francisco					7095
	CANADA, New York	D30	908			
	Cara and Cabezas Contemporary, Kansas City					6050
	Valerie Carberry Gallery, New York	A11		125		
	Turner Carroll Gallery, Santa Fe				106	
	David Castillo Gallery, Miami		724			
	Causey Contemporary, Brooklyn					6034
	Cernuda Arte, Coral Gables, Florida				527	

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	Charest-Weinberg Gallery, Miami					6070
	Cheim & Read, New York	E19				
	Cherry & Martin, Los Angeles	E15				
	CHINASQUARE NY, New York				108	
	Chowaiki & Co., New York			144		
	Club Nutz, Milwaukee					9029
	James Cohan, New York	G10				
	Concertina Gallery, Chicago					9052
	Contemporary Works/Vintage Works, Chalfont, Pennsylvania				513	
	Contessa Gallery, Cleveland			454	637	
	Lisa Cooley, New York		706			
	Paula Cooper, New York	E3				
	Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago				132	
	CRG, New York	E32				
	J. Crist Gallery, Boise, Idaho				531	
	Cumberland Gallery, Nashville				652	
	D'Amelio Terras, New York	D39				
	Dane, Nantucket, Massachusetts	E2				
	Danese, New York			432		
	Danziger, New York	D41				
	Maxwell Davidson. New York	A3				
	Douglas Dawson, Chicago				207	

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	DB Fine Arts, New York				630	
	DCKT Contemporary, New York		645			8078
	DC Moore Gallery, New York			219		
	Dean Project, Long Island City, New York					7111
	Elizabeth Dee, New York		910			
	Deitch Projects, New York	H25				
	Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., New York	A13		258		
	Dillon Gallery, New York				235	
	Lloyd Dobler Gallery, Chicago					9050
	Dorsch Gallery, Miami					6112
	Dunham Place Salon, Brooklyn					7106
	Linda Durham Contemporary Art, Santa Fe				621	
	EBERSMOORE, Chicago					7061
	Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago				135	
	Andrew Edlin, New York	E14				
	Egg & Dart, New York					8114
	Eight Modern, Santa Fe				353	
	Eleven Rivington, New York		936			
	Derek Eller Gallery, New York		958			
	eo art lab, Chester, Connecticut				164	
	Exhibit-E, New York					6088

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	Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc., New York		949			
	Ferrin Gallery, Cummington, Massachusetts				112	
	Peter Fetterman Gallery, Santa Monica				434	
	Peter Freeman, New York	B6				
	Zach Feuer Gallery, New York	J41	1149			
	Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia			132	233	
	Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee Fontana, Fontana, California	H9			137	
	Forum Gallery, New York			130	335	
	MARC FOXX, Los Angeles		1200			
	Foxy Production, New York		708			
	Honor Fraser, Los Angeles		1041			
	Fredericks & Freiser, New York		1209			
	Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco			246		
	Barry Friedman, Ltd., New York			240		
	Friedman Benda, New York		962			
	James Fuentes, New York	D18	1038			
	Gagosian, New York	D14				
	Gana Art, New York			356		
	Gavlak, Palm Beach, Florida	J31				
	Gemini, GEL, Los Angeles	B1				

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	Gering & López Gallery, New York		1216			
	Gillman Contemporary, Ketchum, Idaho				555	
	Laurel Gitlin (Small A Projects), New York		743			
	Gladstone Gallery, New York	F15				
	Robert Goff Gallery, New York					6066
	Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, New York			128		
	GOLDEN, Chicago				252	
	James Goodman Gallery, New York	F24		110		
	Marian Goodman, New York	F4				
	James Graham & Sons, New York			342		
	Alexander Gray, New York	H27				
	Richard Gray, New York	B7				
	The Green Gallery, Milwaukee					8068
	Howard Greenberg, New York	A17				
	Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York	A6	932			
	Greene Naftali, New York	H12				
	C. Grimaldis Gallery, Baltimore				634	
	Grizzly Grizzly, Philadelphia					7066
	Guerrero, San Francisco	J22				
	Kavi Gupta, Chicago   Berlin		942			8084
	Nohra Haime Gallery, New York			232	636	7100

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	Carl Hammer Gallery, New York				319	
	Jack Hanley Gallery, New York		1503			
	Harold Arts, Chicago					6056
	James Harris Gallery, Seattle				237	
	Harris Lieberman, New York	H1	1307			
	Christian Haye, New York	H19				
	Heaven Gallery Chicago					9053
	Lesley Heller Workspace, New York					7053
	Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica		1056			
	Hespe Gallery, San Francisco				253	
	Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan			244	228	
	Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York			430	217	
	Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York				339	
	Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago	E27	1120		229	
	Horton & Co (Sunday L.E.S.), New York		850			6062
	Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, New York				355	
	Edwynn Houk, New York	D37				
	Humble Arts Foundation, New York					8030
	Hungry Man Gallery, Chicago					9064
	Leonard Hutton Galleries, New York			208		
	Jacobson Howard, New York	A1		224		

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	I-20 Gallery, New York	J16	740			
	Rebecca Ibel Gallery, Columbus, Ohio				355	
	Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles					6096
	Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco		961			
	Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee				153	
	Venatia Kapernekas Gallery, New York					8098
	Casey Kaplan, New York	G8				
	Paul Kasmin, New York	C18	927			
	Kasia Kay Art Projects, Chicago				154	
	June Kelly Gallery, New York				507	
	Sean Kelly Gallery, New York	E25	701			
	Jim Kempner Fine Art, New York				619	
	Anton Kern, New York	D7				
	Leo Kesting Gallery, New York					7048
	Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York	G19	731			
	David Klein Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan			126	519	
	Knoedler & Company, New York	B11		114		
	Leo Koenig, Inc., New York		938			
	Kohn, Los Angeles	C17				
	Kopeikin Gallery, West Hollywood					6054
	Alan Koppel Gallery, Chicago			235		

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	David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles	E30	612			
	Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York	H8	900			
	KS Art, New York		1321			
	Greg Kucera Gallery, Inc., Seattle				336	
	LaMontagne Gallery, Boston					7108
	Allegra LaViola Gallery, New York					7112
	Margo Leavin, Los Angeles	B12				
	Lehmann Maupin, New York	F19	911			
	Galerie Lelong, New York   Paris	C19				
	Light Work, Syracuse, New York					8034
	Like the Spice Gallery, New York					8066
	L & M Fine Arts, New York	D35				
	Locks Gallery, Philadelphia			212		
	Lombard-Freid, New York	H32				
	Loveed Fine Arts, New York				255	
	Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts, Miami				307	
	Luhring Augustine, New York	F12				
	Holden Luntz Gallery, Palm Beach				309	
	LVL3, Chicago					9034
	Lyons Wier Gallery, New York					7062
	Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles					8070

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	Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York				236	
	Matthew Marks, New York	F7				
	Marlborough Gallery, New York	A16		402		
	Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Art, New York	B17		121		
	Thomas Masters Gallery, Chicago				107	
	Barbara Mathes, New York	A8				
	McCormick Gallery/Vincent Vallarino Fine Art, Chicago and New York			152	612	
	Jason McCoy Inc., New York			344		
	McKee, New York	D31				
	Anthony Meier Fine Art, San Francisco	B9				
	Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte			456	638	
	Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York	D22				
	Metro Pictures, New York	D12				
	Robert Miller, New York	B3				
	Yossi Milo Gallery, New York		838			
	Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York	C20				
	Mixed Greens, New York					7094
	MIXOGRAFÍA, Los Angeles	D2		348		
	Moeller Fine Art, New York   Berlin	B16				
	Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York					7070
	Murray Guy, New York		1115			

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	Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art, New York	C3		104		
	Helly Nahmad, New York	B13				
	Ann Nathan Gallery, Chicago				539	
	Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, New York	A9				
	Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles	J15	952			
	Carolina Nitsch, New York	A2	1021			
	Richard Norton Gallery, Chicago			162	624	
	Jonathan Novak Contemporary Art, Los Angeles				618	
	Jonathan O'Hara Gallery, New York			448		
	Claire Oliver Gallery, New York				130	
	Pace Wildenstein, New York	B8	1300			
	Pace Prints, New York				239	
	Packer Schopf, Chicago				147	
	Patrick Painter Inc., Santa Monica, California	C16				
	John Palmer Fine Art Gallery, Houston				649	
	Parkett Publishers, New York	D6	545			
	Franklin Parrasch Gallery/Nyehaus New York		749		134	
	Patrajdas, Chicago				246	8099
	Pele Prints, St. Louis					9038
	Peres Projects, Los Angeles	J6	813			
	Perimeter Gallery, Chicago				343	

<u>Country</u>	<u>Gallery</u>	<u>ABMB 2009</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW CONTEMPORARY 2010 (Pier 94)</u>	<u>THE ARMORY SHOW MODERN 2010 (Pier 92) 337</u>	<u>ART CHICAGO 2010</u>	<u>NEXT CHICAGO 2010</u>
	Gerald Peters Gallery, New York and Santa Fe					
	Friedrich Petzel, New York	E6	633			
	Photo-eye Gallery, Santa Fe				263	
	Pierogi, Brooklyn		1309			
	Maya Polsky Gallery, Chicago				230	
	The Present Group, Oakland, California					9048
	Simon Preston, New York		1212			
	Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago					6046
	Ratio 3, San Francisco	D19	1221			
	Christina Ray Gallery, New York					7046
	Redling Fine Arts, Los Angeles	E21	842			
	Red Truck Gallery, New Orleans					9049
	Reena Spauldings Fine Arts, New York	J47				
	Regan Projects, Los Angeles	F17				
	Daniel Reich Gallery, New York	J2	1040			
	RENTAL, New York		741			
	Cynthia Reeves, New York				313	
	Lora Reynolds, Austin		518			
	Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York			332		
	Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York			250		
	Riverhouse van Straaten, Denver				113	
	Thomas Robertello Gallery, Chicago					7101

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	Roberts & Tilton, Culver City	D42	502			
	Nicolas Robinson, New York		1060		146	
	Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston				140	
	Andrea Rosen, New York	D9				
	Michael Rosenfield Gallery, New York	A10		237		
	Rosenthal Fine Art, Inc., Chicago				628	
	Perry Rubinstein, New York	H10				
	Salon 94, New York	D10				
	Judy A. Saslow Gallery, Chicago				607	
	Ken Saunders Gallery, Chicago				209	
	Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago				243	
	Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles			230		
	Senior & Shopmaker Gallery, New York			116		
	Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho				143	
	Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York	C12				
	Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	G18	621			
	Shark's Ink, Lyons, Colorado				609	
	Sicardi Gallery, Houston	A5		358		
	William Siegal Gallery, Santa Fe				627	
	Altman Siegel, San Francisco		957			
	Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York	G4	721			
	Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York	G20		221		

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	Skarstedt, New York	C23				
	Skestos Gabriele Gallery, Chicago				139	
	Philip Slein Gallery, St. Louis				104	
	Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami	G15	1131			
	Gary Snyder Fine Art, New York			148		
	Sonnabend Gallery, New York	D16				
	Spanierman Modern, New York			150		
	Sperone Westwater, New York	C7				
	Stewart Gallery, Boise, Idaho				549	
	Allan Stone Gallery, New York	A12		308		
	The Suburban, Chicago					9039
	Swarm Gallery, Oakland, California					8053
	Swimming Pool Project Space, Chicago					9046
	Hollis Taggart Galleries, New York			140	535	
	TAI Gallery, Santa Fe				632	
	Tandem Press, Madison, Wisconsin				533	
	Tanner-Hill Gallery, Chattanooga, Tennessee				551	
	Tansende Gallery, La Jolla			234	329	
	Tayloe Piggott Gallery, Jackson, Wyoming				531	
	Team Gallery, New York	H13				

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	Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles		1210			
	Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco				614	
	THINKART, Scottsdale, Arizona				647	
	Threewalls, Chicago					9033
	Tilton, New York	D42				
	Cade Tompkins Projects, Providence, Rhode Island					6118
	Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York	G21	511			
	Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles	J44				
	Twelve Galleries Project: Quarterly Site #2, Chicago					9036
	Two Palms, New York	D1	819			
	Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York	E20	830			
	Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas				251	
	Allen Vandever Project Space, Chicago					8049
	Van de Weghe Fine Art, New York	B5				
	Verve Gallery, Santa Fe				156	
	Susanne Vielmetter, Los Angeles Projects, Los Angeles	H24	821			
	Volakis Gallery, Napa Valley				256	
	Wallspace, New York	E13	1121			
	Meredith Ward Fine Art, New York			340		
	Linda Warren Gallery, Chicago				116	6122

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	David Weinberg Gallery, Chicago				142	
	Weinstein Gallery, San Francisco				129	
	Mike Weiss Gallery, New York					8061
	Michael Werner, New York	B23				
	What It Is, Oak Park, Illinois					9062
	Scott White Gallery, La Jolla, California			444		
	Walter Wickiser Gallery, Inc., New York				206	
	Winter Works on Paper, New York			339		
	Amy Wolf Fine Art and Elrick-Manley Fine Art, New York			346		
	Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, New York		839			
	Worthington Gallery, Springdale, Utah				622	
	Wright, Chicago   New York				124	
	Timothy Yarger Fine Arts, Beverly Hills				357	
	Zane Bennett Contemporary Art, Santa Fe				642	
	Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston					8093
	Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago				121	
	Zorya Fine Art, Greenwich, Connecticut					7054
	David Zwirner, New York	F3	1001			
VENEZUELA:	Faría Fábregas Galería, Caracas	J46			428	

## Appendix 6

### Gallery Dealers Sharing Comments at Art Fairs

Anonymised code	Gender	Type of Gallery	Gallery Location
Gallery Dealer 1	Male	High-end contemporary gallery, works with established 'superstar' artists	New York
Gallery Dealer 2	Female	High-end contemporary gallery, works with established 'superstar' artists	New York
Gallery Dealer 3	Female	Mid-sized contemporary gallery, works with emerging and mid-range artists	Chicago
Gallery Dealer 4	Male	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	New York
Gallery Dealer 5	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	New York
Gallery Dealer 6	Male	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	Chicago

Anonymised code	Gender	Type of Gallery	Gallery Location
Gallery Dealer 7	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists, many of whom are photographers	Chicago
Gallery Dealer 8	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	Midwest
Gallery Dealer 9	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	Chicago
Gallery Dealer 10	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	Arizona
Gallery Dealer 11	Female	Mid-sized contemporary art gallery primarily working with emerging and mid-career artists	New York
Gallery Dealer 12	Female	Small contemporary gallery focusing on emerging artists	Oakland, California

## Appendix 7 Interview Participants

GALLERY DEALER NAME	INSTITUTION	LOCATION	INTERVIEW DATE	RECORDED	TRANSCRIBED	USE OF REAL NAME	USE OF INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION
Mark Hughes	Gallery Lelong	New York	2/21/11	YES	YES	YES	NO
Jim Cohan	James Cohan Gallery	New York	2/23/11	YES	YES	YES	YES
Sally Morgan Lehman & Jay Lehman	Morgan Lehman Gallery	New York	2/23/11	YES	YES	YES	YES
Carolyn Alexander	Alexander & Bonin	New York	2/24/11	YES	YES	YES	YES
Serra Pradhan	Marianne Boesky	New York	2/24/11	YES	YES	YES	YES
Jay Gorney	Mitchell, Innes, and Nash	New York	2/24/11	YES	YES	YES	YES
Dealer 3		New York	2/25/11	YES	YES	NO	NO
Wendy Olsoff	P.P.O.W.	New York	2/25/11	YES	YES	YES	YES

MUSEUM CURATOR OR/DIRECTOR NAME	INSTITUTION	LOCATION	INTERVIEW DATE	RECORDED	TRANSCRIBED	USE OF REAL NAME	USE OF INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION	STAFF SIZE	ANNUAL BUDGET (2011) Millions
Lisa Dent	Columbus Museum of Art	Columbus, Ohio	4/26/11	YES	YES	YES	YES	Approx. 30 f/t professional staff	8.1
Curator 3		Midwest, US	4/27/11	YES	YES	NO	NO	Approx. 100 f/t professional staff	14.1
Lisa Hostetler	Milwaukee Museum of Art	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	4/27/11	YES	YES	YES	YES	Approx. 100 f/t professional staff	14.1
Rene Barilleaux	McNay Art Museum	San Antonio, Texas	4/25/2011 and 5/23/14	YES	YES	YES	YES	Approx. 30 f/t professional staff	8.8
Curator 7		West Coast, US	7/29/11	YES	YES	Only if given chance to review before release	Only if given chance to review before release	Approx. 30 f/t professional staff	2.5
Gail Andrews	Birmingham Museum of Art	Birmingham, Alabama	5/28/14	YES	YES	YES	YES	Approx. 35 f/t professional staff	7.6
Curator 5		South, US	5/10/11	YES	YES	NO	NO	Approx. 35 f/t professional staff	7.6
Suzanne Weaver	Speed Museum of Art	Louisville, Kentucky	5/25/2011 and 5/27/14	YES	YES	YES	YES	Approx. 20 f/t professional staff	8.4

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