



ARTISTS' IMPRESSIONS

Mayfair Times hosted a breakfast discussion
at The Arts Club and quizzed some of the
leading lights of the Mayfair art scene on
current hot topics

BY LORNA DAVIES



ABOVE: Svetlana Marich, worldwide deputy chairman, Phillips
RIGHT: James Roundell, director, Dickinson's modern department and deputy chairman of TEFAF Maastricht



BREXIT

Svetlana: The weekend after the Brexit vote was amazing for auction houses. We made a record for Kiefer for £2.5 million. It was the first time we had all the important Americans fly in for the auction, bidding very intensively. A year later, I think it's all pretty much the same, not too much difference for us.

Lorna: Obviously that is very positive, but it is the short-term result, and I am wondering if anyone is concerned about the future impact?

Alex: I am concerned about import tax, because that will make a big difference. We deal a lot with continental Europe and there is a feeling amongst our colleagues and many Italians with whom we deal, who also open galleries here in London, that we're sort of

mad. There has been a gentle loss of enthusiasm about London in a way, although there's also a feeling that nothing much will change because the art world is so international. But if we start having greater import tax, over the five per cent, that will materially harm our business.

James R: The question I think is whether the government will be bold and actually get rid of the tax. At the moment, we have 70 per cent of the European art market in the UK and we could probably take virtually 100 per cent of it if we got rid of import tax. There's a difference between the international market and the UK art market, so I don't think the international art market is going to be affected by Brexit in any way, because you're dealing with millions in foreign currencies by and large. We price in dollars, we don't price in pounds, so what the pound does is of no importance to us at all, so I think there are two different markets.

Mieka: The fair in September last year was a few months after Brexit. We found that American buyers were definitely here. There was an increase in visitor attendance and that did end up in sales that actually were turned around faster than they have in previous years, so sales for galleries that might have taken a

ATTENDEES

LORNA DAVIES, deputy editor, *Mayfair Times*

MATISSE GHADDAF, co-founder and director of art consultancy, *Atkya Art*

JAMES GREEN, director, *David Zwirner*

JAMES MALCOLM-GREEN, director, *Achille Salvagni Atelier* and founder of *Mayfair Design District*

SVETLANA MARICH, worldwide deputy chairman, *Phillips*

AURORE OGDEN, director of art, *The Arts Club* and co-chair, *Tate Young Patrons*

JAMES ROUNDELL, director, impressionist and modern art, *Dickinson* and deputy chairman of *TEFAF Maastricht*

MIEKA SYWAK, fair director and head of projects, *LAPADA*

KAREN TANG, artist and sculptor

ALEXANDRA TOSCANO, director, *Trinity Fine Art* and deputy chairman, *London Art Week*

CHARIS TYNDALL, director, *Charles Ede*

few weeks to confirm, American buyers were more confident to do that and take advantage of better exchange rates for them.

MAYFAIR

Lorna: Mayfair has changed a lot in recent years, with many galleries moving or moving up to first floor positions. I was wondering how important footfall is for galleries here? **Charis:** We have recently moved to Three King's Yard from Brook Street and we basically get no footfall at all, and that suits us really well because we can carry on; we don't have to have someone there watching the objects all the time. We have a wonderful place for display now and can host more events, so we have a lot more of that and that is helpful, but actually the majority of our business is done at fairs. Now we are doing three TEFAF fairs, so that's two in New York and one in Maastricht. We do get quite a lot of clients that we meet at those. When they come to London, they come in, but they practically always give you a call beforehand, and the same with museums. So interestingly, it doesn't seem as important, but it's great if that person does come in, you need a wonderful space to be able to display an object and show them, especially when you've had a really impressive stand at one of these fairs – it's good for them to come in and see that replicated in your gallery.

Alex: I would agree with all of that.

James R: It's changing patterns. If you go back to the 70s and 80s, Bond Street was full of galleries rather than fashion houses. People used to walk up and down and look, now there's nothing to look at, virtually.

Alex: Yes, and the relationship with the art dealer. Saturday mornings, lots of people were coming in to town, the galleries would be open, there would be shops, there would be a real relationship with the dealer, him or herself, and people of all walks of life would be collecting. The art collecting has changed, therefore the requirements we have as galleries have changed. Which is why we have to do exactly



ABOVE: Aurora Ogden, The Arts Club
RIGHT: Alex Toscano, Trinity Fine Art and London Art Week
BELOW: James Green, David Zwirner



that. We do lots of fairs: you have to have somewhere impressive, but not necessarily a shop.

James R: Mayfair needs art galleries. That is what gave it character and what made it desirable and a place where people want to come. If fashion houses move all

the art galleries out, the whole nature of the place changes, and that, to my mind, is a retrograde step.

James G: Speaking from a gallery that represents living artists, that visibility and footfall aspect is important, because we measure success on exhibitions, not only on the financial and critical response, so we need that space and visibility, and the footfall aspect is how we judge success in some ways as well because that is part of the bigger picture. It is getting harder and harder to do that in Mayfair.

Karen: As a living artist, it is important that your work is not just seen at fairs, due to the curatorial aspect, and I don't think many artists I know would want to be represented by a gallery who only shows at fairs; to have a space and critical responses is so important.

Alex: James is absolutely right, but that's why those who have moved up to first and second floors, these are galleries and no, we don't have people traipsing in morning, noon and night, and we do fairs, but we are galleries. So how do we get people up the stairs? That is what London Art Week has been trying to do in its various guises since 2000; to bridge that gap between the gallery that used to have a shop window and used to be a whole building, to a gallery that is a working,

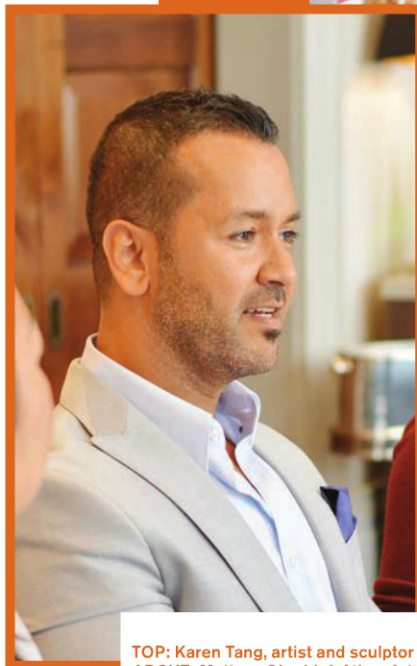
functioning gallery, yes by appointment sometimes, but we are there, and we do want people to walk in and to feel able to walk in.

James R: There is a different clientele for contemporary, than for other areas. You again go back 40 years, there wasn't a contemporary scene in the 70s. There was the Waddington and two or three other people and that was about it. The Tate Modern has really changed the landscape for London as a contemporary centre as well as the big galleries like Zwirner, and that's great. But your footfall would be a completely different people than an antiquity or old master dealer.

James M G: As a ground floor gallery in Grafton Street, about 25 per cent of our annual sales, bearing in mind we only opened two years ago, comes from walk-ins who previously didn't know about us, which is quite high I would say. Another proportion of our business comes from what we post on Instagram, which shows how much the market has changed. We will start to do art fairs next year, with PAD. The walk-ins we do have are mainly European and American, very few English. As James was saying, the old English market of collector might well have changed a lot.

Alex: With London Art Week, some people like increased footfall, some people don't because they think it is art tourism, and don't like it because it is too many people wandering in and out not buying anything. You can't have it both ways. If you're going to participate and be collaborative you have to be inclusive. All art collectors come in different shapes and forms and you have to be prepared that, in amongst all those people that might not be interested, there might be one or two that are.

Mieka: When I started this career in fairs, there was this concept of the "right kind of person". Do you even know who that is? Presumably you'd be selling everything all the time if you did. With LAPADA, when I took over six years ago, I had to really banish that idea. We opened it up, and our visitors went from 10,000 to more than 22,000 in five years. In American real estate terms, footfall equals sales, so we had a 40 per cent rebooking rate for our stands, now we have



TOP: Karen Tang, artist and sculptor
ABOVE: Matisse Ghaddaf, Atkya Art
RIGHT: Charis Tyndall, Charles Ede



a 90 per cent rebooking rate. The people who exhibit at LAPADA, they cannot afford to have a bad fair, they cannot afford to not sell anything, this is not a marketing exercise for them. A lot of people who come to visit are people who are just totally unengaged with the art world, they are based in this area, or we do marketing through Credit Suisse and different banks. They are delighted by the total breadth of the fair and the fact they can buy something for £500, as a starter. They might be worth £500 million themselves, but they can start there and feel like: "I get it and no one is trying to pull the wool over my eyes".

DIVERSIFYING

James R: People are diversifying. If you look at the Maastricht old masters section 10 years ago and it was basically old masters, and now most of them have modern

or contemporary as part of the display. Arts fairs are a good place to look across disciplines. Some people need to realise the world isn't just contemporary art. **Alex:** It's not enough just to stick a couple of contemporary things on the wall and mix and match, in the way that in the beginning we, the old dealers, the dealers in pre-contemporary art, thought we've got to keep up, let's stick a couple of contemporary pictures on the wall next to our sculptures and hope that somebody will look at them and think it's terrific. It has to be done much more intelligently than that, and that is difficult.

James G: Auction houses are making an effort to try these created sales that span more of a time period as opposed to just sticking to the usual formats of contemporary sales and otherwise.

Svetlana: Yes, but I can't say it has been super successful in terms of lay out. In terms of sales it is fine, but practically it is difficult. It was a really beautiful experience with Moretti and Hauser and Wirth at Frieze Masters two years ago. After this, we tried to make something like that but I think we still didn't reach the level.

Aurora: Even just in the three years I have been at The Arts Club, the taste of the members has entirely shifted. It was always contemporary and so that is what I programmed, but now there is a cross-collection focus. We did a breakfast talk on medieval manuscripts the other day. One of the most popular events we organise is a Mayfair gallery tour. We've done it with Zwirner, Spruth Magers, Simon Lee, but now increasingly we are diversifying into different types of gallery. A lot of the overseas members come over here in July or August and that is when they do their art shopping and Mayfair, as far as they are concerned, is the epicentre of that.

REACHING CLIENTS

Svetlana: I wanted to ask, in our experience we have 70 per cent of sales by catalogue and mail, so it is interesting to hear about you?

Matisse: Our business does not have a gallery, but we have seen an exponential growth over the last four years, especially in London. We have a large portfolio of artists that we can't accommodate to have all of them in galleries, so we use catalogues or Instagram and online, and our growth has been quite significant.

Lorna: What are galleries' social media activity round the table?

Alex: It's not good enough. It needs a young mind, someone who is good at this kind of thing and it takes an awful lot longer than you realise.

James M G: There's nothing more infuriating than seeing something you like on Instagram and there not being enough information to work out what it is, where it's come from, where you can see it, who it is by, so I think it is important that you do it properly. For us, Instagram is important because, obviously we have some local collectors in London, but it allows



ABOVE: James Malcom Green, Achille Salvagni Atelier and Mayfair Design District
BELOW: Mieka Sywak, LAPADA



an international reach every day. We have people from the Middle East calling up and asking to purchase something they have seen on Instagram and we will make that transaction without them even stepping foot in the gallery. In terms of global outreach, it is a really important thing. We don't overdo it, I don't think we even post one image a day, probably two to three a week so you don't bombard people with information. Charis: Absolutely; it's like fair fatigue as well with your objects. You don't want to keep posting up everything – we have very limited stock. But it is very important for brand recognition so we post things we see and like at museums or other art fairs, because it is just reminding people of our presence and of our taste, even if it is not specifically for the objects, which in the end people like to see in the flesh anyway.

Matisse: Personally, I don't think we should look at social media as a threat to galleries. We should welcome it with open arms in terms of leveraging the power of social media in reaching the clients that you cannot see or they are not able to come to your gallery to see your artwork.

Karen: All the galleries I have worked with are very press-hungry so then they do all the social media. I am on Twitter, but I use it more to find out what people are saying about my work. It is not possible to run a business, including myself working in the studio, and to sit there on social media all day, so I think trying to leverage things through press contacts is a good way to do it. That's why they are constantly chasing the right contacts.

Mieka: Some of our dealers, they don't even have mobile

phones, but they do produce incredibly detailed, beautiful pamphlets, write a really heartfelt letter, send it to their client database of 2,000 people and they sell everything on their stand every year, and then others post on Instagram and sell off that, I think it is doing what you do well, and what you are comfortable with.

Alex: You've got to be versatile.

James G: Particularly when there's something anyone can do – post on Instagram. If you can do something not everyone can do – produce an exhibition, a beautiful catalogue, then that then becomes a strength so you end up focusing on those areas that elevate you beyond anyone else. That can be knowledge about a period, specialisms as well, being able to do things that are more unique. When there is so much that everyone can do, that becomes more and more important.