

INTERVIEW WITH FREDERIQUE HUTTER

GALLERY DIRECTOR

Why did you decide to settle in Zurich?

Zurich has gained significantly in attractiveness as a global hub for art. Due to tax advantages and other legal benefits for art collectors and dealers that are not available in other EU-member countries, many international galleries have decided to open subsidiaries in Zurich or are even moving their entire operations here. As a consequence there is a substantial increase in high-quality art on offer, thus further solidifying Zurich's reputation as a leading art centre. Zurich's competitive energy works both as a challenge and as a benchmark for dealing in art within the more substantial price categories. Experience has shown that galleries working with a concise selection of international artists and that are developing a sharper profile have a clear-cut advantage.

At one point you organised an exhibition in a private apartment. How did this experience come about?

Shortly after leaving Haunch of Venison in June last year, I had the opportunity to put together an exhibition in a friend's apartment for a whole month. With the enthusiastic support of the artists and my friends I rapidly organized the "Salon d'art privé", resulting in a group show hosted in private rooms. The idea was successful and has found a lot of followers, proving that the combination of personal surroundings and an art environment seems to have been perceived as a good idea.

Could you list some artists who are active in Zurich and who have a special meaning for you?

Amongst the artists who mean something to me personally, I can separate them into two distinctive groups: the first is made up of Zurich-based artists that have already found international recognition and who I find great, such as Fischli and Weiss, Roman Signer, Ugo Rondinone, Zilla Leutenegger, Andro Wekua (p. 6), to name just a few; and the second is composed of lesser-known artists I know personally and whose work I admire, such as Claudia di Gallo, Florian Bühler, Brigitte Lustenberger, Huber Huber and the artist Brière. Just recently I bought a piece by Tanja Rosic at Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts; she was not known to me, but I fell in love with her work instantly.

On the one hand, Zurich offers a selection of famous galleries with a worldwide reputation, and on the other, there are some smaller players linked to Zurich's subculture, a very active scene indeed. Do you believe in the dialogue between these commercial and non-commercial approaches to contemporary art?

The unfair reality is that cutting-edge galleries are often the ones putting in all the hard work by discovering and fostering new talent in contemporary art despite all the risks. At the end of the day though, only a small portion of them actually profit from it all, particularly when they fail to grow along with their artists. So much effort goes into building an artist's career, and as the value of the art pieces is not so high in the early stages, the financial gains end up being quite small. However, once the artist is better known and his pieces start selling for higher prices, and the gallery's resources seem close to their limit, no artist can really be blamed for accepting offers from more established galleries in the end. In turn, these bigger players profit from the groundwork done by the smaller ones - those who originally believed in the artist - since they are capable of focusing entirely on the marketing aspect.

For the survival of the art-scene we need both, discoverers and established on-sellers. As a city with high standards in art and culture, it is imperative that this diversity is maintained, along with the preservation of sub-cultures and the framework for commercial cultural institutions. I believe that the present situation in Zurich where both - the subcultures and the commercial outlets - seem to be growing parallel to each other, is extremely attractive. Having said that, whether this can actually be called a dialogue is debatable.

What are the projects you are currently working on?

I was lucky enough to find investors to set up a gallery. I am now able to contribute with my lengthy experience in the art world and also create this project according to my views and ideas. We are right in the midst of preparations for the opening of our new spaces this fall and are aiming to inaugurate Katz Contemporary on Talstrasse 83, right in the middle of Zurich! Watch this space!

FREDERIQUE HUTTER ORIGINALLY JOINED THE ART WORLD OVER TEN YEARS AGO. AFTER A BRIEF INTERNSHIP AT CHRISTIES IN GENEVA, SHE STARTED AT GALERIE KUNSTSALON WOLFSBERG BEFORE JOINING THE GALERIE BRUNO BISCHOFBERGER. LATER SHE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY BOARD AT NICOLA VON SENER'S GALLERY (FORMALLY ARSFUTURA). SHE THEN PURSUED HER ART VENTURE TO HAUNCH OF VENISON AND IS ACTUALLY WORKING AT GALERIE ELISABETH KAUFMANN AS INTERIM-DIRECTOR. SHE WILL BECOME THE DIRECTOR OF THE NEW GALLERY KATZ CONTEMPORARY THIS FALL.