



Alex Schlesinger

An Educator at Heart

GALERIE
ALEX
SCHLESINGER

Art Talk Magazine: Alex, you were recently elected to the board of the Swiss Gallery Association. Quite an honor, alongside running a successful Zurich gallery with an outstanding list of artists. What are your tasks in this new role?

Alex Schlesiinger: First, I would like to increase the number of galleries (currently 31) so that the association can appear stronger and more targeted to the outside world and gain more weight. I would also like to introduce the profession of gallerist to a wider audience. Unfortunately, many people have the idea that galleries are used to launder money and that gallery owners make pilgrimages from one Cüpli event to another.

ATM: The art world, like all other industries, seems to have evolved with technology at breakneck speed. First it was NFTs, NFTs, NFTs and now everything is AI AI AI. What is your opinion on these two topics?

AS: I don't have to deal with such phenomena in my daily work, but I observe them critically. In this context, it is interesting to see how little people talk about video art lately.

ATM: With technology has also come greater globalization, aided by social media like Instagram, which has exposed more artists than ever before. How do you use social media as a gallery owner? What advice would you give other gallery owners?

AS: I use social media (Instagram, LinkedIn) primarily to keep my customers up to date about the gallery's activities. On the other hand, I've already become aware of one or two artists via Instagram, which even led to me presenting him in a group exhibition. Some even quite successfully.

ATM: What do you think are the biggest challenges and opportunities for galler-

ies in Switzerland today?

AS: A program gallery like mine, which cannot count on a large, continuous collection of collectors (most of them are one-off sales after which you never see the customers again), means I am constantly dependent on reaching a new audience. That's why being present at art fairs plays a big role for me. They are places where you can reach a target audience, present your program and yourself. In addition, it seems to me to be important within the gallery to organize events in the gallery in collaboration with other partners, like you for example, in order to make new contacts.

ATM: With the ever-growing number of art fairs, both offline and online, have you noticed a change in the way your customers interact with you and the gallery?

AS: Since regular visitors to art fairs often have a broader horizon when it comes to the range, quality, originality of the works of art and prices than those who do not attend art fairs, it can happen that they are more demanding and demanding. For me as a gallery owner, such encounters are very stimulating.

ATM: Everyone talks about how the youngest generation GenZ and Alphas aren't as interested in visual art as they are in digital art, NFTs, etc. Is that your experience? What proportion of customers from these generations are in the gallery?

AS: Since I don't offer digital art in my program, I don't know this audience, or know them too little. But I can certainly say that younger people are also enthusiastic about painting (very traditional oil or acrylic on canvas). Maybe I can also reach a younger audience because of/thanks to my focus: figurative painting, urban life, architecture, etc. Topics that (critically) reflect their world and sharpen their view of today's times.

ATM: How do you think younger generations could be brought back to fine art? There have been certain collaborations, for example with the Van Gogh Museum and the Pokémon characters. Do you think this is a welcome development or just a gimmick? Is there a risk that the visual arts will be devalued by these "gamified" collaborations? An impoverishment of art and culture in order to attract visitors to museums?

AS: As an addition to my answer to the previous question. This question reminds me of the recurring horror news from literature. <Literature is dead.> No, it is not, just as the visual arts are not and never will be.

ATM: As a gallery owner and board member, how do you see the future of the art

world? What steps are you taking to adapt to new times, new shopping habits and new tastes?

AS: Always stay true to your own taste! Quality and originality are primary. Take the customer and his concerns seriously, listen to him carefully, enter into a dialogue. This is the only way to find out who he is and what he is/might be interested in. Always stay on the ball, observe developments, but question them critically and, above all, feel the spirit of the times. This comes to me after reading the impressive biography <Leo Castelli et les siens> by Annie Cohen-Solal remained and became the daily credo of my work as a gallery owner: <Il (Leo Castelli) avait le sens du Zeitgeist; c'était là son génie.> However, this is not the case for everyone.... :))

