
THE CANVAS

With so much uncertainty and unease coursing through the art world lately, we decided to reach out to Andrew L. Schoelkopf, current president of the ADAA and co-founder and partner at Menconi + Schoelkopf to get his take on a number of topics on everyone's mind.

We discussed the ADAA's overall burden of responsibility to help struggling galleries, his thoughts on the fair costs debate and whether The Art Show would consider making changes to its fee structure for exhibiting galleries, the association's decision to keep the fair on a separate week from the Armory Show in 2019, and whether the ADAA Code of Ethics and Professional Practices might apply to Paula Cooper's New York Times takedown of David Zwirner over the Joan Mitchell estate. Enjoy!

The Canvas: There's been a lot of conversations recently about the increased headwinds medium sized galleries are facing (rising rents for Manhattan gallery spaces, the increasing dominance of the major galleries, high fair costs, up-and-coming artists jumping ship to larger galleries etc...). Does the ADAA feel a responsibility to help its member galleries address some of these issues in any way? If so, can you speak to some of the things the organization is doing?

A: Yes, of course. Our purpose is to offer resources for our membership to be successful and to advocate on their behalf. We survey members to find out what they'd like to know more about, to guide our programming and resource development. We provide seminars and legal briefs to give guidance and advice on topics ranging from best business practices to legislation in Washington that may affect them. We have also just formed a New Initiatives Committee to specifically address the issues related to the pressure on the small and mid tier galleries and will begin rolling out those ideas for collaboration and knowledge-sharing soon.

Q: One of the suggestions that have been spoken about at length is the idea that larger galleries should help subsidize the fair exhibiting costs of smaller galleries. Does the ADAA plan to explore this idea for the 2019 iteration of the Art Show?

A: This notion speaks to a feeling among ADAA members generally that collaboration among the leading dealers in the United States has real benefit to the industry. Certainly, finding more ways to do that is core to the ADAA's mission, and it's great that there's a growing interest and focus on this within the field.

The Art Show was created in this spirit – with collaboration as the driving force behind the fair. The structure of the Art Show is by design more equitable than your typical fair structure: booth fees are equal for all members, and there are only two standard booth sizes to choose from. Galleries of all sizes and types are juxtaposed throughout the fair, and there is really no “prime” spot at our fair. The navigable scale of The Art Show allows visitors to give attention to every booth.

Q: Additionally, can you speak at all to the ADAA's reasoning for keeping the Art Show in late February (a week before The Armory Show) in 2019? While there was a general feeling that the quality of the booths in 2018 was very high, there also seemed to be an overall consensus that the fair received less international collectors...

A: We're focused on how we can maintain and foster the fair's strengths and the elements that make it distinct, particularly the extremely high quality and the intimate, navigable atmosphere that leads people to tell us, unsolicited, that The Art Show is their favorite fair. In order to meet this high standard

every year, we think it is important to remain committed to our annual schedule and to the other important elements of our fair that make it distinct, including the singular setting, location, and accessibility provided by the Park Avenue Armory Drill Hall and our longstanding partnership with Henry Street Settlement.

Q: Sticking to the fair theme for a bit, do you feel that we're currently experiencing a fair overload? Next season we'll see three iterations of Art Basel, three iterations of Frieze, three iterations of TEFAF, the ADAA Art Show, and the Armory Show, in addition to the numerous satellite and smaller fairs like Expo Chicago, FIAC, etc...? How would you like the ADAA Art Show to distinguish itself from other fairs?

A: Certainly the art fair calendar is full. As I mentioned earlier, The Art Show is already distinct within the fair landscape because it is organized by the ADAA to serve specific goals for our membership and community. We demonstrate the power and commitment of our membership to the greater community through the fair's support of an important non-profit social services organization, Henry Street Settlement, our partner for three decades now. Moreover, the members of the ADAA are the leading gallerists in the United States and throughout the world. Because we have unique access to the best art and the best content, we are in a preferred position to maintain and build on the many strengths of the fair. We also have a robust review process that involves the membership in evaluating proposals and ensures that we maintain a fair of outstanding quality each year. Our member exhibitors are known for creating mini, museum-quality exhibitions in their booths of both solo presentations and thematic group presentations.

Q: Paula Cooper very publicly addressed the recent move of the Joan Mitchell estate from Cheim & Read to David Zwirner in the New York Times, saying that it was "stolen away" and "It's about a lack of civility. It's about ruthlessness...". Does the ADAA feel that there should be guidelines in place for its members to help prevent this sort of thing from happening [the poaching of an artist or estate from one gallery to another and/or the public disparagement of one ADAA member by another in the press]?

A: The ADAA Code of Ethics and Professional Practices does advise that members exercise care in the comments made about other art dealers. However, I think it'd be nearly impossible to create a guideline for how artists/foundations should move between galleries. The reasons behind these moves can be very complex, and galleries are not the only players involved.

Q: The process for a gallery to be admitted to the ADAA is particularly discreet. It's by invitation only and subject to approval by the entire membership. Marc Spiegler of Art Basel has come out publicly and said that the fair won't admit any galleries as exhibitors if they don't have a physical gallery space. Is there a point in the future in which the ADAA might consider member galleries without actual gallery presences (i.e only a digital presence?)

A: The ADAA has members that have public spaces, as well as members that are private dealers. Both are welcome in our organization and both can apply for The Art Show. Among the major criteria for becoming an ADAA member is that a dealer makes substantial contributions to the cultural community beyond the buying and selling of art. That could include: offering direct experiences with incredible works of art from all periods and styles; nurturing artists throughout their careers; advancing scholarship and curatorial research; and supporting artistic projects. A physical gallery can be a major part of accomplishing this, but there are also dealers who do important work without a public space.

Q: Is the ADAA planning on further public events as we head into September? If so, can you elaborate on what they might be?

A: We just hosted the inaugural ADAA Chelsea Gallery Walk last week involving 30 of our members,

and will now look to apply this model to other neighborhoods here and farther afield. The ADAA Foundation, a distinct but connected entity fully supported by ADAA members, gives grants to museums with more modest operating budgets for exhibition research and development. We will announce this year's grant recipients in the fall. And while we are continuing our seminars for members, we are also in the process of developing a public seminar program which we hope to announce soon.