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MULTIPLE ROLES Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld, in multiple exposure with Jackie Saccoccio's "One to One," at Sotheby's S2 gallery.

The Art World, Blurred

Auction Houses, Galleries
And Museums Step Into New Territory, Sometimes One Another's

By CAROL VOGEL

TUCKED on the south side of Sotheby's second floor is an all-white space that might as well be a gallery in the heart of Chelsea. Designed by Richard Gluckman, the New York architect who created Chelsea art galleries for dealers like Paula Cooper, Mary Boone and Larry Gagosian, this year-old space, called S2, is what officials at the auction house refer to as its "selling exhibition gallery."

On a recent morning, Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld — tall,

dark and 27, impeccably dressed in jeans and a perfectly tailored tweed jacket — was standing in the middle of S2 explaining "Hue and Cry," the exhibition of abstract art he has organized for the space. Surrounding him were paintings and sculptures by both established names like Albert Oehlen and the duo Allora and Calzadilla and younger artists including Francesca Dimattio and Angel Otero. Asking prices for the works range from \$24,000 for a year-old panel painting by the New York artist Wendy White to a 2004 painting by Mr. Oehlen for around

\$500,000. Several days after the show opened, Mr. Roitfeld said about a dozen works had sold.

A squib in Page Six of The New York Post took note of the chic crowd that attended the opening. Best described as fashion meets New York's downtown art scene, it was just the kind of group you'd expect from the son of Carine Roitfeld, the former editor of French Vogue who has just published CR Fashion Book, her own magazine, and joined Harper's Bazaar as its global fashion director. It's

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Lines Are Blurring in the Art World

also the kind of hipper audience Sotheby's hopes to woo.

"I started working in the art world three and a half years ago curating independent projects," Mr. Rottfeld said. This is the first time he has organized a show at a large company like Sotheby's. "It has been a great opportunity to expand my relationships in the art world," he added.

Taking the assignment seriously meant visiting dozens of artists' studios and meeting with dealers. "I never ran into an issue," he explained, when asked if any of the artists had a problem showing their work in an auction house, the kind of commercial platform that artists used to run a mile to avoid. "Everyone was very enthusiastic."

Not that long ago, auction houses concentrated on holding public sales and dealers put together their own shows, where the main point was to move merchandise. These days, the traditional conventions that once defined the art world seem to have evaporated. The auction giants Sotheby's and Christie's now run in-house art galleries and are increasingly selling art — just as a dealer would — privately. Teams of their experts are traveling the world trying to pair buyers and sellers.

Galleries are stepping up their game, opening multiple spaces around the globe to offer buyers the same kind of international reach as the auction houses. They are also calling on former museum curators and scholars to organize exhibitions with lavish curator catalogs. Often these shows have almost nothing for sale, and a surprising number of artworks are being lent by museums.

Artist foundations are going in new directions, too. The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts has been selling off its Warhol holdings for years. What's left has recently been put in the hands of Christie's to be at auctions, held mostly online. The Rauschenberg Foundation is using an old Chelsea warehouse to present the show "We The People," its inaugural exhibition on view through Nov. 9. Organized by Alison Gingers, an independent curator, and Jonathan Horowitz, an artist, it includes a disparate group of works reflecting in one way or another the American electorate.

Surprisingly, there is only one work on view by Mr. Rauschenberg himself. "We want to be experimental, try new things and see what happens," said Christy MacLear, the foundation's director, who explained that using other artists' voices helps to understand and connect with what Rauschenberg's work is all about.

"All the traditional boundaries in every part of the art world have changed," said William F. Ruprecht, Sotheby's chief executive. "The art world has grown tremendously. Our clients have gotten much more mobile. Besides travel, they also rely on the Web. Everybody is more informed than ever."

In the museum world, being an information provider has become a priority, so much so that museums are becoming online publishers. This month the Metropolitan Museum of Art introduced MetPublications, a resource that allows users to search more than 600 catalogs, journals and museum bulletins online by title, keyword, publication type, theme or collection, including, so far, about 140 out-of-print books. And the Met is not alone, as museums across the country are putting more and more scholarly content — along with lavish illustrations — online and available free.

What follows is a more in-depth look at just how the unspoken art world lines have blurred:

Auctions: Beyond the Gavel

Private sales have become the fastest-growing part of the auction business. "Until recently, we mostly waited until something came to auction," said Marc Porter, chairman of Christie's in the Americas, who is also heading the company's international private sales initiative. "While we have been doing private sales as an adjunct part of the business for years now, we realize we're limited having basically just an auction channel. Private sales are not aligned to auction seasons, they are not dependent on a twice-yearly calendar, they can happen 365 days of the year."

In September, retailing met auction house in a surprisingly blatant fashion. During Asia Week in New York, Christie's clients were invited to what it called its "client lounge" where Gucci (whose owner, Francois Pinault, also owns Christie's) was showing and selling high-end merchandise in a boardroom overlooking Rockefeller Center. Clients were offered Champagne and nibbles and could browse (or shop) displays of Gucci handbags and trunks, dresses and shoes.

Sotheby's and Christie's have dabbled with dealerships for years. As early as 1996, Sotheby's bought the André Emmerich Gallery (which it closed two years later). It now owns the London-based Nootman Master Paintings, which it acquired in 2006. Meanwhile, Christie's took over Haunch of Venison in 2007, a contemporary art gallery with spaces in London and New York.

But recently both auction houses have opened their own private sale galleries on their premises. Sotheby's S2 is on the second floor of its York Avenue headquarters; Christie's space is on the 20th floor of 1230 Avenue of the Americas, around the corner but connected to its Rockefeller Center home. It too organizes exhibitions like one that ended on Saturday and was devoted to painting in New York in the 1970s. "It's dedicated to putting on several shows a year for private sale," Mr. Porter said on a recent fall day, as he stood



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TRADING PLACES John Wilmerding, above, a professor at Princeton, foreground, preparing "Green Gum Ball Machine" by Wayne Thiebaud for an exhibition at Acquavella Gallery. At left, MetPublications, on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Web site, is a portal to its publishing program.

cluding overseeing its S2 space.

"Private sales are another leg for us to stand on," he said. "We have the connections and the manpower; it's all about taking advantage of a bigger marketplace." And of course if something doesn't sell privately, these companies have the advantage of then giving a seller the choice of putting it at auction with a lower estimate.

At Christie's, Mr. Porter is building the business with a long-term view. "Within a decade, it's a very real possibility that our private sales will be equal to our auction sales," he said. "That's what we're aiming for."

Galleries: Not Just for Sale

Retrospective used to be a word associated primarily with museum exhibitions, but now commercial galleries are using it, too. A show at the Acquavella Galleries on the Upper East Side of Manhattan called "Wayne Thiebaud: A Retrospective," which opened Oct. 23, showcases the breadth of the 91-year-old artist's work. There are images of his signature ice cream cones and lollipops and goey cream pies. There are also his lesser-known landscapes and canvases depicting people. And, of course there are paintings showing rows of high-heeled shoes or sunglasses. Last year, when the gallery announced it would be representing Mr. Thiebaud, it also said it was planning an exhibition that was being organized by John Wilmerding, a professor of American art at Princeton University. Professor Wilmerding is a leading scholar of American art and on the boards of the National Gallery of Art in Washington as well as the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark.

On view are paintings, drawings and prints from the 1950s through the present. Many works are from the artist's studio and family but there are also loans from seven museums — major institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Phillips Collection in Washington, the Albright Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

"There hasn't been a major show of Thiebaud's work in New York in over a dozen years," Mr. Wilmerding said.

Although there are things for sale, Mr. Wilmerding sees the retrospective more as a scholarly exhibition that just happens to be in a commercial gallery. "I'm doing it because the artist is worth it," he said.

Organizing an exhibition in a gallery has its advantages. "They have the resources and are willing to put up the money," Mr. Wilmerding said. "You can do a handsome catalog in two months, not a year and a half, which is what it takes at most museums."

"Wayne Thiebaud: A Retrospective" echoes many other serious shows being presented both in New York and in other art hubs like London and Paris. Unlike museums where there are exhibition schedules to juggle and the traditional red tape that goes with large institutions, galleries are smaller, more nimble operations.

When the financial crisis hit in 2008, major museums pulled back, organizing fewer expensive loan shows and presenting more exhibitions using their own collections, which has left the field open for blue-chip galleries like Acquavella, Gagosian and Matthew Marks to step up their own programs.

In March, when it was announced that John Elderfield, the former chief curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, would join the Gagosian Gallery, he said he decided to make the leap not only because he admired the shows the gallery presents but because "things are so different these days as the worlds of museums and galleries keep getting closer and

closer."

Now Mr. Elderfield, fully ensconced at Gagosian, is juggling several coming shows, including one about paintings of artists' studios from the 17th century through the 20th century. Mr. Elderfield has asked his old colleague Peter Gassisi, the former chief curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, to organize a section of photographs within the exhibition.

Asked what he thought about working on an exhibition in a commercial gallery, Mr. Gassisi replied, "For 30 years at MoMA, I worked with dealers every day and a lot of them were more serious than museum curators, partly because they're putting their own money on the line."

When asked the same question, Mr. Elderfield paused and said, "I wonder at what point a gallery and a museum will do a show together?"

Museums: Publishers

There's nothing new about exhibition catalogs, but soon after a show closes, these beautifully presented publications are generally relegated to the graveyard of out-of-print books. And as museum's permanent collections grow, having up-to-the-minute, in-depth information available to the public has become impossible, at least in the form of a printed publication. Now museums, especially the larger ones, are fast becoming their own online publishers.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art and other museums are making out-of-print catalogs available online, along with related materials like reviews, illustrations and journals.

The Getty Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles have created what they call the Getty's Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative, a five-year program whose mission is to transform how museums disseminate information.

"Museums are definitely becoming digital publishers," said Deborah Marrow, director of the J. Paul Getty Foundation, who has headed up the initiative. It will bring together a group of institutions — the Art Institute of Chicago, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Seattle Art Museum, the Tate Gallery in London, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the J. Paul Getty Museum — to work together to catalog online projects using research materials, audio and video.

"Each museum is doing things their own way," Ms. Marrow said.

The Walker began putting essays from its new printed publications online and has been experimenting with print-on-demand titles. By early next year it plans to introduce the first phase of an online initiative that focuses on making artworks as well as actual moving images, photographs and ephemera drawn from its permanent collection available on its Web site.

The Los Angeles County Museum has a "reading room" on its Web site that makes available out-of-print books and related materials, which will grow over time. And through the Getty's program, LACMA is working on three catalogs of its collections, one devoted to Dutch paintings, another to European art and a third to South East Asian art. "Next year we will have 20,000 high-resolution images online, all free, so anyone can use them for a scholarly paper or put them on a T-shirt," said Michael Govan, director of LACMA.

If all its catalogs will be available online, will it eventually mean the end of the printed book? "Not at all," said Mr. Govan. "We find if we put out an e-book, it only increases print sales."

in the middle of the galleries, whose walls were filled with works by blue-chip artists like Elizabeth Murray, Ellsworth Kelly and Jasper Johns.

In addition to the public gallery spaces, there are more intimate, private viewing rooms where potential buyers can look at a painting, drawing or sculpture in a secluded environment knowing they don't have the now-or-never pressure of an auction. Christie's has a special private-sale gallery only in New York for now, but it is planning to open others in London and Hong Kong. Sotheby's, meanwhile, presents S2 exhibitions in Los Angeles and Hong Kong.

Already equipped with the infrastructure — experts and representatives based in all the major art capitals who make it their business to know the rich and about-to-be-rich, and comprehensive databases of information about collectors, what they own and what they want to own — officials at Sotheby's and

Christie's say they see the area of private sales as a natural extension of their core business. Sotheby's reported that during the first half of 2012 its private sales totaled \$513.6 million, an increase of 14.5 percent from the previous year. At Christie's, sales for the first half of last year were \$661.5 million, an increase of 53 percent compared with the same period in 2011.

"Our goal is to match buyers and sellers and know what each is looking for," Mr. Porter said.

Taking notes at auctions of who bids on something but doesn't get it, auction house experts are compiling buyers' wish lists, so when the right seller comes along they can make matches.

Both companies are expanding their private sale teams. At Sotheby's, Alex Rotter, who is head of Sotheby's contemporary art department in New York, has also taken on the job of beefing up its private contemporary art sales, in-