

KANTOR GALLERY

PRESS

Art Market Guide 2004

by Richard Polsky



Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills



Margo Leavin Gallery on North Robertson Boulevard



The entrance to the Manny Silverman Gallery



L.A. Louver, with a sculpture by Joel Shapiro



L.A. Louver gallery directors Kimberly Davis (left) and Elizabeth East with a work by Terry Allen



Bruce Conner (left) and Michael Kohn



Daniel Weinberg Gallery

On a recent trip to Los Angeles, I was struck by how much the local blue chip and resale markets have shifted over the last ten years. Driving down Wilshire Boulevard brought back memories of 1994, when the Pace Gallery (now PaceWildenstein) opened an impressive space (supposedly to keep up with the Gagosian Gallery) with a wonderful show of new paintings by Chuck Close.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to the grand opening. The party was spectacular, with Dustin Hoffman and other movie stars, serious cuisine by Matsuhisa, part of Rodeo Drive roped off and covered in white carpeting, and banners decorated with images of Pace artists hanging from the lampposts (imagine the face of Mark Rothko looking down upon the proceedings). However, the image that really stayed with me was that of Pace owner Arne Glimcher strolling through the crowd holding hands with Julian Schnabel.

The show was a bellwether for the Los Angeles art scene. Before the coming of Pace, Los Angeles collectors felt the need to run to New York to buy their art. But by showing Close paintings that were fresh to the market, Pace made a statement that Los Angeles would be offered first rate material not New York rejects. But in the end, for one reason or another, the gallery didn't find it practical to maintain its Los Angeles space.

Somehow, Gagosian, who also opened in 1994, still seems to be flourishing in Los Angeles. Under the scholarly direction of Robert Shapazian, its shows are always provocative. Recently on view was a survey of Andy Warhol's late black and white paintings derived from advertising. Paintings that measured 20 x 16 in. were available for \$50,000. Whether the work was selling was hard to say. Regardless, Gagosian's shows continue to add a "big time" dimension to the local scene.

The city's other blue chip galleries, such as Margo Leavin and Manny Silverman, reliably offer collectors strong resale selections. Another prominent dealer who falls into this category is the L.A. Louver Gallery one of only two galleries who represents David Hockney (Richard Gray in Chicago is the other). What's fascinating about L.A. Louver is how it has managed to maintain a top notch gallery in a section of the city that has long housed artists, such as Ed Ruscha, Ed Moses and Robert Graham, but never attracted a critical mass of dealers. On the day I visited L.A. Louver, the gallery was exhibiting an elaborate group of Terry Allen installations along with a tasty selection of Ken Price ceramics. Since Price's recent show at Matthew Marks, these \$25,000 small gems have been in great demand.

Like the above galleries, the Michael Kohn Gallery also focuses on his stable of artists, but continues to offer works from the proverbial "back room." Recently, Kohn was displaying Bruce Conner's enigmatic collages, while having resale work available by Joseph Cornell (collages) and Andy Warhol (a nice Soup Box painting). Then there's the young dealer Neils Kantor. The Kantor Gallery continues his family's art dealing legacy (his father, Paul Kantor, was Diebenkorn's first dealer) by offering works from the secondary market in this case by Basquiat, Warhol and Haring. These three artists are also regular staples at Kay Richards' gallery in Santa Monica. Other dealers with interesting resale material include Jack Rutberg, Daniel Weinberg and Mark Moore.

One of the city's sleepers for works from the secondary market is Marc Selwyn. As the former director of Pace in Los Angeles and Sotheby's now defunct L.A. contemporary art department, Selwyn is uniquely positioned. When I dropped by his space, he was in



the process of mounting a James Casebere show of large scale photographs. However, his office contained a handsome two color Joel Shapiro figurative drawing, a pair of de Kooning charcoal sketches, and an attractive Sol LeWitt ink drawing. A wild card in every city's resale scene is always its private dealers. For some reason, Los Angeles doesn't appear to have very many of them. The biggest name remains James Corcoran. Once arguably the city's most important gallerist, he maintains a low key presence, while offering works by Joseph Cornell and Ed Ruscha. Another standout is Jonathan Novak although technically he has a space that's open to the public. On my recent visit, Novak showed me several new colorful Jim Dine canvases depicting "Hearts." He also had available large scale paintings by Sam Francis, Botero, and Donald Sultan.

So where does all of this leave collectors who "want the best?" Not to be flippant, but it's hard to say. The problem for any collector or dealer who doesn't reside in New York is that even with the internet and the proliferation of auction catalogues, the playing field isn't level. You still have to go to New York.

Even if you could add up all of the resale offerings from Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Dallas, Boston and Seattle, my guess is that they would equal only about 25 percent of what you'd find available in Manhattan. If you throw London and Paris into the mix, the percentage might grow to 35 percent. But this is old news. The most important trend to emerge in the buying and selling of blue chip works is the preponderance of art fairs. The most efficient way of looking for material is to visit the fairs in New York, Chicago, Miami and Basel. That's the current reality. In the meantime, an art buying trip to Los Angeles can still be productive and there's always the great outdoor dining at the Ivy and Le Petit Four.

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