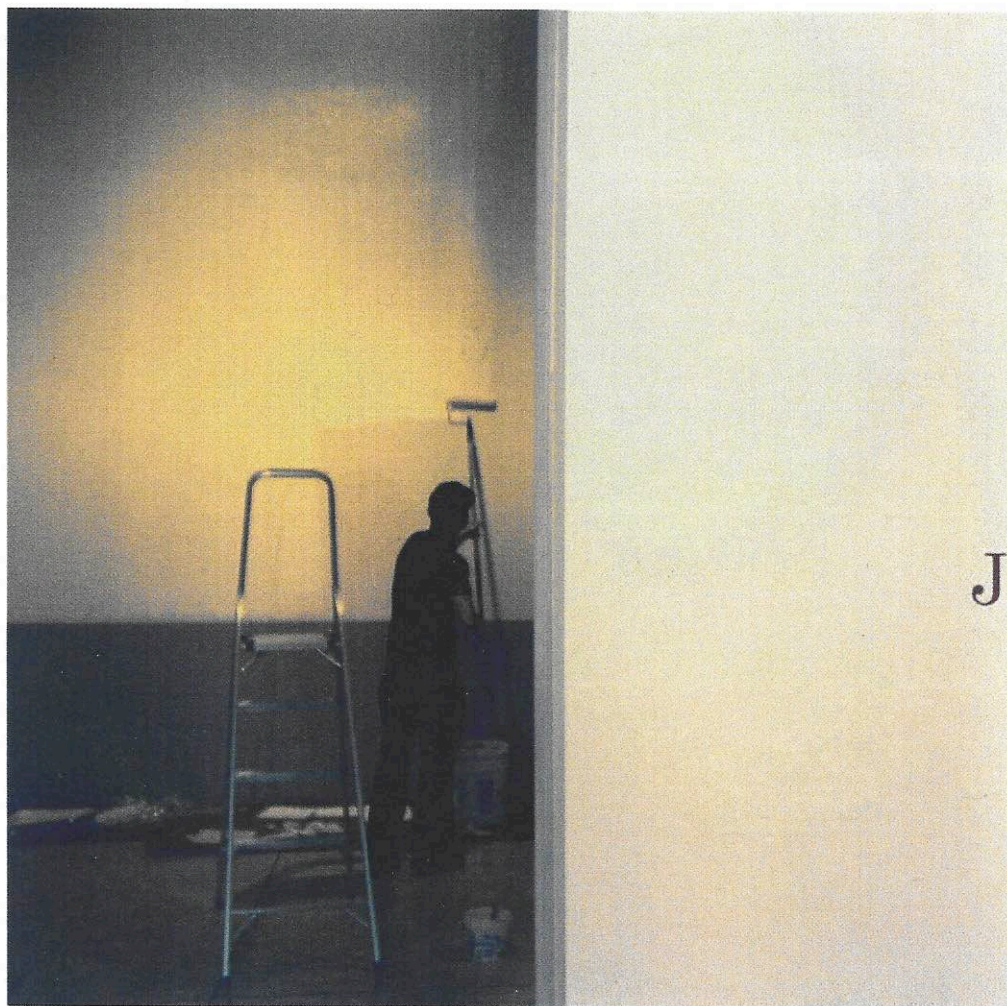


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THE UNSEEN WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY ART

SECOND ISSUE

RISKY BUSINESS

— KIM HEIRSTON BY EVE THEROND

WHITEWALL: *While most people would find coaching billionaires on how to spend their money very enviable, I'd find it very stressful to challenge your skills, reputation and confidence each time you have to make a prediction ...*

KIM HEIRSTON: I guess I have a certain amount of confidence, in the sense of having a strong historical background. I studied, and sort of lived for, art history, so I think that gives me knowledge. Also, constantly returning back to that knowledge and basis gives me a tremendous amount of confidence to make decisions about what's happening today.

WW: *In '92, what made you confident enough to start your own business and join the elite group of art advisers? What does it really require to take on such a job beside a cool head?*

KH: Again, knowledge of art history, which is constantly being owned, shown, defined and revised. I get such pleasure from the advent of David Smith at the Guggenheim. How he worked, who his influences were and how important he was not only to the development of minimalism but also to the advent of site-specific art and earthworks. Being able to go back and look up an old artist's essay, or re-read someone like Donald Judd's specific objects, and really get into the mind of the artist. That's what would give me solace and confidence at the same time.

WW: *Predicting the value of art has almost become a science. What's involved in it?*

KH: It's not only art history; it's preparedness on all fronts. It's knowing the market. It's obviously studying the auctions results. It's going to the galleries. It's talking to the artists. Yet, it really comes down to looking and looking and learning, and making the cracks the core of my practice.

WW: *How can you keep up today with the ever-evolving, ever-expanding overheated art market? Who and where do you get insider tips from; a heads-up on the market so you'll be better in that 'science' than others?*

KH: It's relying less on tips than on what I feel is knowledge. I'm less interested in fads, in trendy. I always seek to strengthen and deepen. And something in here [shows her heart] that tells me it's something I've never seen before. It's hearing a new language.

WW: *When betting on an artist like you did on Damien Hirst (in '92 you purchased his dot paintings for only \$8,000), what is part of the science, and what is part of instinct and gambling?*

KH: [Laughing] Probably 75 percent is knowledge of art history and studying, and 25 percent is gut response and instinct. Something that makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Something that feels so revolutionary that you've never seen anything like this before ...

WW: *Revolutionary is how you identify a great future artist?*

KH: Revolutionary, but not just being in your face, or provocative. There's so much of that out there, and that makes me feel almost nauseous ... Somehow, it's an invention that's respectful of art history. Yet, at the same time, doing something new, but not just seeking to shock for pure shock value.

WW: *How has your clients' profile changed over the past 15 years? Who are they, how many are they?*

KH: I am working with so many different types of people: a couple of my clients are famous writers; some are in the music and entertainment industry. I have clients in their early- to mid-thirties and clients in their seventies. I have clients who collect video art and installation sculpture. I just placed Urs Fisher's Bread House (2004), which was a huge commitment. But I can also place a Picasso! I have clients who collect abstract expressionism and minimalism, and others who are interested in the very new, so I constantly weave between the two. I love the fact that one day I can sell a major Milne and connect that to Rothko and Bustamante. I focus on the younger generation but people work with me to assemble a second-generation abstract expressionist collection.

WW: *Is this an area you know very well?*

KH: Most people don't know that about me. When I worked for Robert Miller Gallery, they represented Lee Krasner's Estate and Joan Mitchell. I became very close to her. We stayed up late, spent nights at the Westburry drinking scotch. There's nothing like that firsthand knowledge gained by speaking to an artist about his or her work. She gave me so many books to read.

WW: *I am amazed to hear that you still have time to read!*

KH: Little sleep ... People see me in the park at around 6 am, and ask me when do I sleep. I don't have the answer! A little more since I've been married. [Laughing]

WW: *What does art really mean to your clients, besides money-cashing?*

KH: More and more people are collecting with the idea of a legacy. They're interested in setting up foundations, or creating spaces to show their art. A lot of people think it's for social cachet, but my clients are not particularly wildly social, or striving or climbers ...

WW: *On the contrary, you seem to have a pretty busy social life!*

KH: Less so now. I am pretty much going to go to a dinner, if it's an artist's work I support, or a friend. That's clearly a benefit, but people overrate that.

“PEOPLE
ASK ME
WHEN DO
I SLEEP”



*NY Private Art Advisor
KIM HEIRSTON
in front of a THOMAS
RUFF in her home / office
in uptown Manhattan
PHOTOGRAPH BY WARWICK SAINT*