

# Collecting IOI

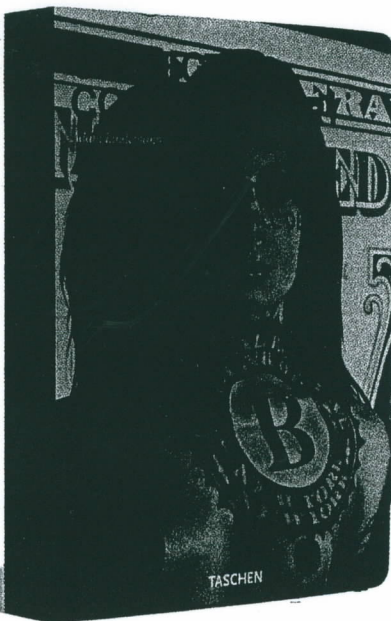
IT WAS A SIGN OF THE TIMES when collector Adam Lindemann's new book, *Collecting Contemporary*, all but sold out from Taschen's store in the lobby of Art Basel in June. (Only one copy remained on the fair's final day, and it was in German.) As the market swells with new collectors, their pockets stuffed with hedge-fund cash, there is a palpable need to learn what is hot and what is not in the world of young art, and how to navigate its byzantine byways, so it's not surprising that more authors should be in on the game. Two other volumes of instruction released recently are Louisa Buck and Judith Greer's *Owning Art*, and Lisa Hunter's *The Intrepid Art Collector*.

The New York-based Lindemann began by buying African art, but, under the influence of collector and publisher Peter Brant, swiftly moved into the Basquiat and Warhol markets. In his book he confesses to an obsession with snapping up the hottest contemporary works, a mindset so purposeful that the thought of what he might buy next distracted him during a recent retreat in India to the home of the Dalai Lama.

The thoughts that disrupted Lindemann's meditation led him to conduct interviews on the subject of collecting new art with more than 30 art world *machers*. *Collecting Contemporary* is primarily composed of the fruits of these conversations, with the author's bullet-point questions—abbreviated to sentence fragments such as “Art as an investment?”—seeming to kneel before the long-winded answers his interlocutors provide. He divides the contemporary art world into “Seven Types of Art Market Players”—artists, critics, dealers, advisers, collectors, auction-house experts and museum professionals—although artists and critics get short shrift. In general he sticks to the art world elite with whom one imagines he hobnobs, including critic David Rimanelli, dealer Larry Gagosian, art adviser Philippe Ségalot, collectors Dakis Joannou and Jean-Pierre Lehmann, auctioneer Tobias Meyer and Guggenheim Museum director Lisa Dennison. (Oddly absent among the collectors are Don and Mera Rubell and fellow Miami tastemaker Marty Margulies.)

What one gleans from these movers and shakers is not exactly news—the market has expanded; it's event driven; collectors compete for works and status. For the seasoned collector, Lindemann's book will be enjoyable mainly for the stray remarks and anecdotes, which sometimes reveal subtle strains of influence in the contemporary art world. Take the ever-contentious subject of Charles Saatchi. In the words of PaceWildenstein honcho Marc Glimcher, Saatchi typifies and serves as a model for the most vile of speculators— “[His] only interest, in my estimation, is to raise himself above the artists and take pleasure from destroying their lives.” But for Mexican juice heir Eugenio López, the British adman's ample exhibition space in London served as a different kind of model altogether: “I said to myself, ‘My God, we have nothing like this kind of alternative space in Latin America.’”

Then there are the often perfectly captured voices of the subjects. Take Francesca von Habsburg, who tells us that her father thought art collecting was “the same as collecting beautiful women, except that the latter you could not hang on the wall, which had its downside.” Or Bruno Brunnet of the Berlin gallery Contemporary Fine Arts, who refreshingly attests to the joys of a true gallerist: “What stimulates us are those moments when the



**Collecting Contemporary**  
by Adam Lindemann  
Taschen, \$29.99

**Owning Art**  
by Louisa Buck and  
Judith Greer  
Cultureshock Media  
\$30

**The Intrepid Art Collector**  
by Lisa Hunter  
Crown, \$13.95

exhibition is installed. You light a cigarette, turn on the music, have a glass of champagne and thank the artist.”

Buck, like Lindemann, is nothing if not an insider—she is a well-known art journalist and a recent judge of England's Turner Prize—and her book, written with Greer, also takes the talking-heads approach to a certain extent. And yet, doffing her mantle of insiderliness, Buck gently guides the reader through all the ins and outs of collecting—from dealers to auctions to conservation—allowing the personalities to emerge in small doses. To her credit, she gives a voice to the artists, whereas Lindemann merely teases the reader by listing a section on artists in the table of contents and then leaving it blank.

Buck's great subject is endorsement, the elusive process by which an artist gains stardom. Reading about its intricacies, including galleries, museums, prizes and so on, is akin to pulling back the curtain that thinly obscures the Wizard of Oz, and must also provoke a frisson from the art worlders who peruse this book.

On the other hand, insiders are unlikely to gain much in the way of enlightenment from Hunter's book, a primer that runs the gamut from tribal art to photography to oriental rugs and is aimed at the total neophyte. Hunter, a collector on a modest level and a journalist who has worked in museum publicity departments, provides new collectors with tips for avoiding such reprehensible types as the Huckster and the Fraud; but even if one already knows how to steer clear of them, her advice has entertainment value. On the subject of contemporary art, she suggests strategies for “beating the dealer,” including buying from art schools, looking for “has-beens” who may make a comeback and buying against current taste. She sometimes veers into schlock, as when she offers advice on procuring the works of Thomas Kinkadee and art by celebrities.

Absent from Hunter's book—aside from the occasional sidebar from the likes of former Whitney Museum director Maxwell Anderson and former Art Dealers Association of America president Richard Solomon—are the talking heads. And after reading Lindemann, and Buck and Greer, one doesn't exactly miss them. “Enough already,” the reader may be saying. “I can collect art on my own, thank you.” In these days of chasing the next big thing by chasing the chasers of the next big thing—for the uninitiated, this is called “buying with your ears”—the final line of Lindemann's book, from the lips of Art Basel impresario Sam Keller, seems strangely ironic: “Be confident in collecting without imitating.” ■ SARAH DOUGLAS