

# Transatlantic Influx

New York galleries move into London's Mayfair neighborhood, creating overlaps with local dealers

BY ELIZABETH FULLERTON

Competition among art galleries in London is heating up with the arrival of several New York heavyweights. While the transatlantic influx confirms London's status as a center of the contemporary-art scene in Europe, it has also raised concerns among some of the smaller galleries that represent the same artists as their rivals from the United States.

The New York galleries—Pace, Skarstedt, David Zwirner, and Michael Werner—have all opened spaces in Mayfair, illustrating the resurgence of the posh central London neighborhood, which has also seen a number of local dealers move in from the city's gritty (though gentrifying) East End. Pace and Michael Werner already had a presence in the city, but both are expanding to take advantage of London's rising prominence on the international stage.

The move has been mainly driven by a desire to capitalize on London's position as a dynamic hub for collectors from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, many of whom have homes in the British capital or find it a more convenient travel destination than the United States. "It's a very engaged art audience in

terms of viewers, critics, and collectors, and there are collectors who come to London who don't come to New York. It seems to be an international stopping point," says Gordon VeneKlasen, a partner at Michael Werner, which has leased two stories of a Mayfair townhouse.



Marc Glimcher, president of Pace Gallery.

Just 20 years ago, London's commercial art scene was largely concentrated around one Mayfair road, Cork Street, with a few key outposts elsewhere in the city. Charles Saatchi's championing of contemporary artists such as the BritArt generation, the opening of Tate Modern in 2000, and the establishment of the Frieze Art Fair three years later are widely

credited with changing the game. Over that same period, Russian oligarchs and billionaires from India and the Middle East flocked to London, attracted by its reputation for tolerance, low crime, and favorable tax schemes for foreigners. Many turned their attentions to art collecting, and galleries sprouted up across

TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS

## FRENCH INTERCONNECTIONS

While several heavy-hitting American galleries are inaugurating new and bigger spaces in London, two major international dealers, Austrian-born Thaddaeus Ropac and American Larry Gagosian, are branching out to the Paris suburbs. These mega-spaces for monumental works opened during the same week in October—which coincided with FIAC, France's international

contemporary art fair—and both galleries decided to showcase the same artist, Anselm Kiefer.

The new Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is situated in Pantin, on the northeastern outskirts of Paris. (Ropac has another location in Paris and two in Salzburg.) The deluxe complex, housed in the converted remains of a boiler works, measures close to

50,000 square feet, linking four exhibition halls intended to allow artists "to realize their vision without the usual space restrictions," Ropac says. In addition to Kiefer, the inauguration includes a show devoted to Joseph Beuys's 1969 performance piece *Iphigenia/Titus Andronicus*, featuring a live white horse quietly munching hay as part of the installation.

Gagosian, who opened his first Paris outpost two years ago,



TOP: COURTESY THE ROYAL ACADEMY, LONDON; BOTTOM: CHARLES DUPRAT

the city, with purveyors of avant-garde art settling in the east and blue-chip dealers in the city center. That is now changing as both traditional and emerging galleries set up shop in Mayfair.

Pace, which represents a raft of big names such as Willem de Kooning and Alexander Calder, has leased a wing of the Royal Academy's Burlington Gardens building, while David Zwirner, whose stable includes the estates of Dan Flavin and Donald Judd, has moved into a five-story Georgian townhouse renovated by Annabelle Selldorf. Neither gallery arrived quietly. Zwirner inaugurated its London gallery with a solo show of Belgian painter Luc Tuymans, and Pace London opened with an exhibition contrasting Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographs of seascapes with Mark Rothko's late

**The Royal Academy's Burlington Gardens building, home of Pace London.**

dark paintings. Skarstedt, which specializes in 1980s American and European art, has opened a 2,500-square-foot ground-floor space nearby.

While the American outposts are an affirmation of London's high standing in the art world, several home-grown galleries are likely to be affected by overlaps of artists with the newcomers. Michael Werner launched its space in late September with a show of new work by the Trinidad-based British artist Peter Doig, who is also represented by Victoria Miro Gallery. VeneKlasen has not discussed the issue of competition with his London counterparts

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launched his new gallery just days after Ropac, in a space that literally caters to the jet set. This is Gagosian's 12th gallery. It's located in a hangar-like building at the airport hub Le Bourget, where private jets take off and land. Designed by architect Jean Nouvel, the former warehouse measures 17,760 square feet and has arched ceilings, skylights, a lofty mezzanine, and a drawbridge that can be lowered to allow big

works to enter.

Ropac started planning his Kiefer exhibition some 18 months ago, while Gagosian announced his intent to show the artist last June. (Both shows run through January.) But Ropac says he's "totally relaxed" about the situation, which he perceives as an "interesting," even happy accident that has helped promote his new space. "Paris," he says, "has profited from all the attention." —*Laurie Hurwitz*



**Thaddaeus Ropac in his new mega-space in suburban Paris.**

but insists his gallery is not “incredibly aggressive.”

“We’re not coming to take every artist, that’s not our idea,” he says. Still, he points out that relations between galleries and artists have changed, with younger artists increasingly seeing dealers as “jumping-off points.” (Miro did not wish to comment for this story.)

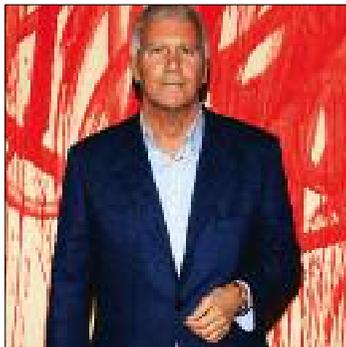
Pace’s expansion could similarly tread on toes in London, where overlaps exist with spaces like Jay Jopling’s White Cube, Stephen Friedman Gallery, and Stuart Shave/Modern Art. Pace president Marc Glimcher admits that news of the move prompted some anxiety. “I got phone calls right away—Stephen Friedman, Stuart Shave,” he said at his London Soho venue.

Friedman represents Yoshitomo Nara and Shave represents Richard Tuttle, two artists signed to Pace. “My response immediately to Shave was, ‘You do such a great job, all you have to do is consider now that your Tuttle warehouse is around the corner instead of across the ocean,’” Glimcher says. The director accepts it may take time to allay fears that Pace, with its seven galleries spanning London, New York, and Beijing, will put the smaller players out of business. “It’s still nerve-racking—they’re still unsure. We’re still coming in on their territory.”

Around 15 of the 40 artists on David Zwirner’s roster already have London representation, including Chris Ofili and the estate of Jason Rhoades. Angela Choon, who heads the new gallery, has promised to respect artists’ existing relationships. “Obviously, we’ll still work with them, but we’ll do them all from New York,” she says. While the gallery hopes to pick up some new artists, she notes that a core aim will be to play to its strengths by showing the American Minimalists in its stable in a fresh way.

The London dealers have officially played down fears they will lose business to the Americans. “We already have long-standing professional relationships with New York galleries, and their increased proximity will only broaden the scope for more collaborative opportunities,” Friedman says. Neil Wenman, a London director of Hauser & Wirth, says the multibranch Swiss gallery has a long history of collaboration with Zwirner (including a joint venture in Manhattan from 1992 to 2009). “There is no conflict, it’s a completely open conversation,” Wenman says, noting that the contemporary-art market is very small. “We all attend the same art fairs around the world,” he adds, “so one has to be collegial and work together.”

Inevitably, though, local dealers will lose out on



**From top: Larry Gagosian has 12 galleries around the world; David Zwirner.**

hefty commissions they had previously enjoyed from exhibiting and selling works by artists who had no London representation on behalf of the American galleries. “Those American dealers will drop the English dealers they’ve been using. They will do the shows themselves,” predicts veteran dealer Leslie Waddington, who has run galleries on Cork Street for four decades.

On the local side, some dealers based in the East End are also upgrading to Mayfair, while several galleries that are already there have upsized existing premises, so as not to miss out on the action. MOT International director Chris Hammond, who represents Elizabeth Price, a Turner Prize–nominee this year, says his gallery’s move to Mayfair from the East End in April was crucial to gaining a foothold on the international art stage. “We needed to make a step up with the gallery, and Mayfair was the place we figured it was important to be,” Hammond explains. Hauser & Wirth opened a cavernous exhibition space on Savile Row in late 2010, in addition to their sizeable gallery nearby. And Blain|Southern moved its operations to an expanded space in the area this past October.

Similarly, Marlborough Fine Art set up Marlborough Contemporary on the first floor of its Mayfair building. Andrew Renton, director of the new space, says that the idea was to build on the 60-year history of the original gallery, which represents Frank Auerbach and Paula Rego, while creating a separate, more conceptually driven program with a new roster of quality young artists. (Much like Marlborough Gallery in New York did with its hipper Marlborough Chelsea outpost.) “If you’re looking at the artists today who you think are going to be the masters of tomorrow, you have to have the courage to take a very long-term view,” Renton notes.

A conspicuous absence from the spate of launches is über-dealer Larry Gagosian, who represents Jeff Koons and Richard Serra and who was the first big American dealer in London, opening an office in 1999 and a gallery in 2000. A pioneer of the global-gallery brand with a reputation for aggressive expansion, Gagosian has 12 branches worldwide, including a small one in Mayfair and a flagship space in northern London, both designed by Caruso St. John Architects.

Stefan Ratibor, director of Gagosian Gallery in London, won’t discuss rumors of a new venture in Mayfair but hailed the arrival of his American counterparts as “a fantastic sign of confidence in the marketplace in London.” If it means greater compe-