





A good adviser is someone who has had the benefit of years of looking at art and because of that the benefits include knowledge and a sense of what's good, what's not, what's original, want's not, what's long-term, what's not.

JH: Which artists are in high-demand at the moment?

BF: The ones I recommended three years ago! The ones I recommended three years ago! I'm interested in new art and I think inevitably you get good at what you most like doing. I met and interviewed **Gerhard Richter**, **Blinky Palermo** and **Joseph Beuys** in Germany at the age of 19 in 1973. I lived in Germany 1975-77 and did the first New York show of **Thomas Struth**, **Candida Höfer**, and **Thomas Ruff** at my gallery in 1983. While working at Gagosian in 1995 I recommended that Larry take on **Andreas Gursky** – which he didn't do – and through **Lynne Cooke** later that year, met **Douglas Gordon**, who joined the gallery in 1997. It's good to be first but equally as important to create a supportive and dignified situation for artists.

JH: You helped to conceptualise and implement the ABN AMRO Emerging Artists award – how did that come about and what role do you see it fulfilling in the Australian art scene/market?

BF: I had assembled a collection for ABN AMRO in 1999 and was later sought out to help establish the award and manage the process in its inaugural year, 2004. I am happy to see it is an ongoing initiative. The public exposure of finalists' works in the lobby of ABN AMRO Tower is especially positive.

JH: What do you tell clients looking to invest and profit financially from their purchase?

BF: That they should buy the best examples of the artist's work it's self-evident that any work of art bought well will increase in value.

JH: In 2002 you collaborated with Lawson-Menzies on an ambitious project to sell contemporary primary market works at auction. Five years later, what are your reflections on that?

BF: That initiative stemmed from my idealistic belief that Australians deserved to see and be given the opportunity to acquire works of best quality from the international market. Like a good exhibition, it seems to have lived on in people's memories and awareness.

JH: What were some of the upshots – both envisioned and in reality – of LM_F international contemporary art auctions?

BF: It was the mix of Australian and international art and the focus on emerging art that was accessible in price – for the first time in an Australian auction – that made the auction as unusual and pioneering as it was. Overseas bidders recognised the exceptional value of the offering and were active. It may have been an idea ahead of its time: buyers locally were largely unfamiliar with the international work and would've become active in subsequent sales had the auctions continued.

JH: What are your thoughts on the place and role of auction houses generally when it comes to buying art today? Has the market changed in the last five years?

BF: It's a valuable place. The auction market, especially in the area of international contemporary art, is a phenomenon in its own right and it continues to advance unabated.

JH: What things do people need to consider when looking to buy art?

BF: There needs to be a level of personal commitment to the artwork in question: you should always acquire with the conviction that you'll have it forever.

JH: You've been in Australia for a number of years now but as an American – and as someone with a great deal of international experience, what are your thoughts on the Australian art market and how do we fare internationally?

BF: There are fewer artists and the scene is smaller here than that of cities like New York or London or Berlin, but I am impressed with the level of invention and the number of good artists working in Australia today. Art cannot be conveyed by the internet and the biggest obstacle is still distance – short of picking up and moving away, it's very difficult for an Australia-based artist to develop an international reputation. One of the most constructive avenues for corporations or benefactors would be to address this problem through the establishment of more incentives to attract international artists and curators to Australia, as well as more grants like the Anne and Gordon Samstag to enable Australian artists to gain a foothold ex-Australia.

JH: How can new clients find you?

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