

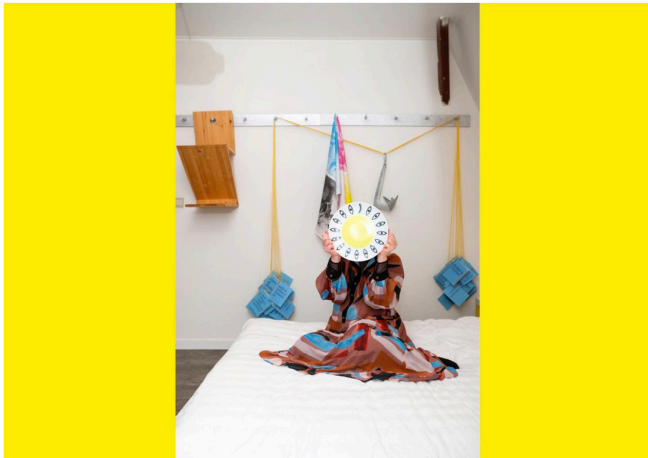
PRESS

WONEN DAKAPPARTEMENT IN GENT

De wilde route naar rust

Ikea-meubels, uitbundige kunst en vintage objecten – en ook nog een olijk hondje of twee – ze kleuren het dakappartement van galeriehouder en bewustzijnscoach Tatjana Pieters. En kijk, het is net door die drukte toe te laten dat ze helemaal tot rust komt.

Tekst en foto's **Ringo Gomez-Jorge**
zaterdag 1 april 2023 om 3.25 uur



Kunstwerk van Derek Sullivan



Links: Michael Pybus

Rechts: Clive Hodgson

Hoe ben je hier beland?

‘Tot twaalf jaar geleden zat ik met mijn galerie in een oude meubelfabriek dicht bij het Smak, tot ik moest verhuizen: een projectontwikkelaar zou de site omvormen tot studentenkoten. Ik overwoog om naar Antwerpen of Brussel te trekken, omdat ik veel internationale kunstenaars programmeer en die steden meer met het buitenland verbonden zijn dan Gent. In die periode reisde ik vaak voor mijn werk vaak. Zo kwam ik in de VS grote pakhuizen tegen die omgevormd waren tot prachtige artistieke ruimtes. En vervolgens stuitte ik in Gent plots op dit industriële terrein dat uit verschillende gebouwen bestaat. In eerste instantie heb ik hier een pakhuis verbouwd – onder leiding van interieurarchitect Pieterjan Deblauwe – én ingepalmd met mijn galerie. In 2020 kwam dit appartement vrij op de bovenste verdieping van de voormalige directeurswoning.’

Wat trok je aan?

‘De hoogte. Ik heb een vrij drukke baan en zit vaak in de grootstedelijke drukte. Dit appartement biedt de rust die ik zocht. Je kunt je horizontaal of verticaal distantiëren van de drukte: je kunt verder weg of net hoger gaan wonen. Ik heb voor het laatste gekozen. Ik heb hier ook uitzicht op de Nieuwevaart. Water biedt rust en creëert een soort verbondenheid met de natuur – zonder daar al te zweverig over te willen doen.’

De buurt heeft een ruw kantje. Spreekt dat jou ook aan?

‘Op het moment van mijn verhuizing was ik Gent een beetje beu. Door het industriële karakter van deze omgeving waan ik me nu in een grootstad: in Dublin of Brussel. Op een mistige dag heerst er een mystieke sfeer. En bij valavond, wanneer de maan op de fabrieksgebouwen schijnt, heb je het gevoel dat je op een plaats bent die veel groter is dan jou en de stad. Ik geraak hier nooit uitgekeken.’



Adriaan Verwée (zwarte sculptuur)
Felix Beaudry (werk onder raam)
Charles Degeuter (zwevende sculptuur)



Boeksculptuur van Pieterjan Gincfels

Kijk je vaak door het raam?

'Ik heb er een tuinstoel bij neergezet. In de zomer zit ik er vaak, wanneer het licht volop binnenstroomt. Ik had die tuinstoel gekocht om te kamperen, maar hij zit zo goed dat ik hem een vaste plaats heb gegeven. Hij is niet alleen perfect functioneel, maar ook grappig. En hij komt gewoon van bij Ikea.'

Heb je veel stukken van Ikea?

'Eigenlijk wel. Die opvallende zetel bijvoorbeeld is van de PS-lijn, waarvoor het bedrijf samenwerkt met bijzondere ontwerpers (*in dit geval met Studio Truly Truly, in 2017, red.*). Dat zijn stukken die, hoewel ze van Ikea zijn, toch verzamelobjecten kunnen worden. Ook de rode eettafel is van Ikea. Vroeger was ik een obsessieve Ikea-fan. Zo ging ik er met mijn toenmalige partner bijna wekelijks naartoe om de koopjeshoek te bekijken en om er te eten. Het is een interessant bedrijf. Het heeft design gedemocratiseerd en zo de woonkwaliteit verhoogd. Het bedrijf heeft ook al samengewerkt met interessante ontwerpers, zoals Walter Van Beirendonck en Sabine Marcelis. De kussenslopen zijn van Walter voor Ikea en ik heb ook eetborden van hun samenwerking.'



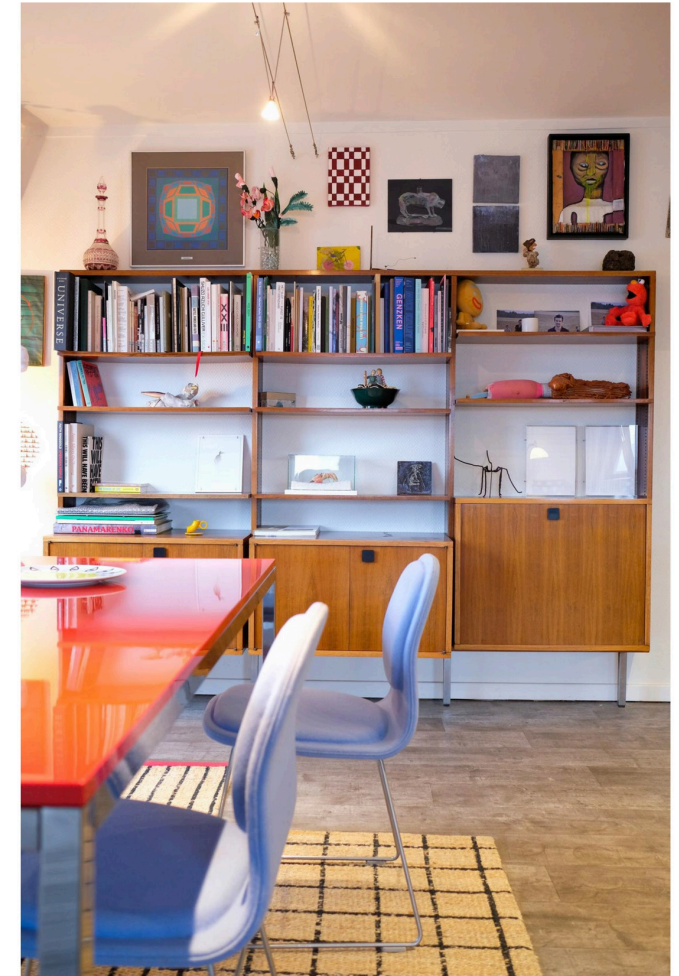
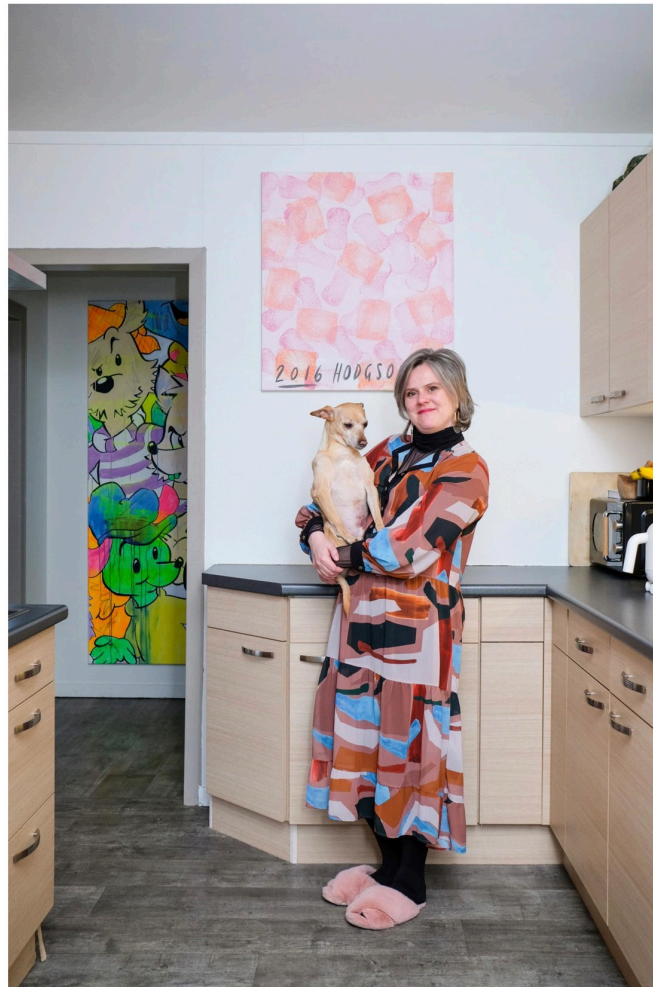
Schilderij van Rens Pieters
Keramiek van Tramine de Senna



Stoel van Kasper Bosmans

De keuken baadt in het beige. Aan het kookeiland staan metalen krukken in de Belgische driekleur. Ik heb zo'n voor gevoel dat je nogal kickt op de jaren 90.

'Die keuken heb ik niet zelf gekozen, want dit is een huurappartement. Maar doordat ze te midden van die kleurrijke kunst en designmeubels staat, werkt het wel. Het is belangrijk hoe je de dingen combineert. Ik meng graag. Rond de Ikea-tafel staan blauwe stoelen van Cappellini. De houten wandkast daarachter is van Alfred Hendrickx en is vintage jaren 60.'





Wat me opvalt, is dat je veel grappige kunstwerken hebt. Hoe kies je die?

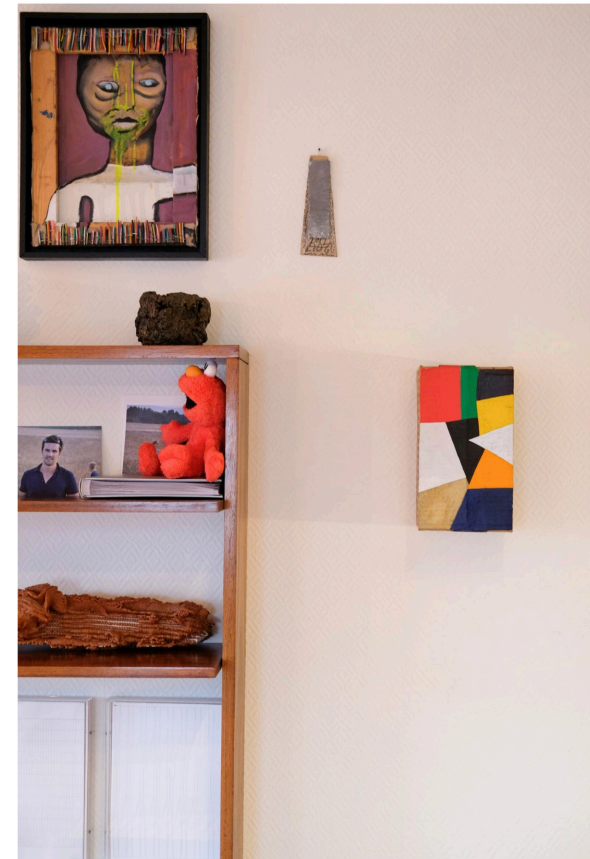
‘Het is voor mij belangrijk dat ik blij word van de kunst die bij mij thuis hangt. Ik vat mijn woning op als een ruimte waar de verwondering wordt geprikkeld. Het schilderij van Lisa Vlaemminck – dat achter de eettafel hangt – is daar een goed voorbeeld van. Zij laat zich onder andere inspireren door plastic planten en tilt namaak naar een hoger niveau.’

‘Misschien heeft mijn liefde voor dit soort kunst te maken met mijn achtergrond. Mijn ouders waren belezers en cultuurminnend. Mijn moeder was bovendien Russische. Behalve boekenkennis kreeg ik ook een liefde voor de kleurrijke, excentrieke Russische cultuur en folklore mee. Mijn moeder groeide op met een zeker gevoel voor zuinigheid. Haar houding inspireerde me om waarde te halen uit dingen die schijnbaar banaal zijn of zelfs als afval worden beschouwd. Ik werk vaak met kunstenaars die humoristisch werk maken en ook graag eenvoudige middelen gebruiken. Daarom waardeer ik ook de combinatie van vintage design en Ikea. Ik zet de items naar mijn hand. Noem het een andere manier van kijken naar de dingen.’

Maakt al die excentrieke kunst je woning niet te druk?

‘In een sober appartement zou ik niet tot rust kunnen komen. Doordat hier veel te bekijken valt, kun je net makkelijker je aandacht naar buiten richten en de gedachten in je hoofd loslaten. Dat is uiteindelijk de essentie van elke vorm van meditatie.’

‘Ik vind het net fantastisch om als het ware in het gezelschap te zijn van al die kunstenaarsstemmen. Als kind had ik een grote verzameling teddyberen. Ik sprak ermee. Datzelfde gevoel heb ik hier met de kunstwerken. Onbewust ga ik ermee in dialoog. Het stimuleert mijn innerlijke wereld.’



Van boven naar onder:

Tom Poelmans
Michel Frère
Clive Hodgson
Philippe Van Snick
Tamara Van San
Kasper Bosmans



Guy Simpson



Schilderij van Hans Vandekerckhove

Ook de slaapkamer staat vol kunst.

'Het nachttafeltje is van Ikea, maar ik heb het onder handen laten nemen door Michael Pybus, de kunstenaar van het grote muurschilderij in de gang. Michael heeft de poten veranderd, waardoor het op een stuk design van de Memphis-stroming lijkt. De grote kunstinstallatie die de hele muur inneemt, is van Derek Sullivan. Er hangt een Rietveld aan, naast zelfgemaakte kunstboeken. Het hele metalen ophangstelsel is geïnspireerd op de manier waarop de quaker-gemeenschap haar spullen ophangt. De twee trossen boeken houden elkaar in balans. Dit werk was het ijkpunt waarop ik de rest van de kamer heb afgestemd.'

Is deze speelse woning ook een vlucht uit de kunstwereld die toch wel bikkelhard is?

'Toch niet. Vroeger vond ik de kunstwereld hard, maar intussen is mijn kijk erop veranderd. De vraag is: welk spel wil je spelen? Ik neem mijn job ernstig, maar wil er plezier in scheppen. Daarom doe ik de dingen met een bepaalde lichtheid en trek ik ook mensen aan die mijn lichtheid delen. Mijn ontmoetingen met kunstenaars en verzamelaars zijn leuk. Het gaat om balans. Je hebt een ego nodig om iets te verwezenlijken. Maar tegelijkertijd moet je jezelf ook niet te serieus nemen. Kunstenaar Clive Hodgson toont dat goed. Zijn werk hangt in de keuken. Het is een mooi schilderij, maar uiteindelijk bestaat het uit niets meer dan roze afdrucken die met een spons lijken gemaakt. Dat vind ik schoonheid: iets wat zichzelf helemaal durft te tonen.'

Ringo Gomez-Jorge, "The wild route to peace",
De Standaard, April 2023

Ben Edmunds invite à gravir des montagnes

du 04-02 au 19-03

La deuxième exposition solo de l'artiste britannique Ben Edmunds (1994) organisée par Tatjana Pieters s'intitule *Second Mountain*, comme l'ouvrage de David Brooks paru en 2020 sur la recherche d'une vie significative. L'ascension de la première montagne portait sur la carrière, la réussite, la richesse, autant de termes qui ne sont pas forcément synonymes de bonheur. Cette seconde montagne concerne le lien avec autrui et notre environnement. Quel est le pouvoir du tableau ? Par le passé, Ben Edmunds associait le potentiel transcendant de la peinture abstraite à sa propre expérience de sports comme la voile. *Second Mountain* est désormais une marque apposée sur les cadres confectionnés par l'artiste, comme s'il s'agissait de matériel d'escalade. Cela renvoie aussi au lien avec autrui. Signalons au passage deux tenues vestimentaires, une collaboration avec le créateur de mode Oliver Selic et une bande-son de Joe Clark. Dans une autre salle, Ben Edmunds présente *Search Party*, exposition collective réunissant une foule d'autres artistes amis, dont Beatrice Lettice Boyle et Charles Degeyter. (cv)

Tatjana Pieters
Gand
www.tatjanapieters.com



Ben Edmunds, *Miracles d'une nouvelle perspective*, 2022 (détail), peinture pour textile et peinture acrylique sur toile avec contour différent et cadre fait main, 180 x 140 cm. © de l'artiste / Courtesy Tatjana Pieters – **Prix : 10.000 €**

COLLECT Belgique, April 2023

The gallery of... Tatjana Pieters

How (and when) did they start their gallery, what has changed in the art world since then, what is their profile, what do they collect themselves, and what is the impact from Corona at their gallery? This week with (TATJANA PIETERS)

Where you exposed to art while growing up?

There was attention for modern art, not for contemporary art nor self-employment. My Belgo-Russian background led me early on to an extensive fascination with art, ranging from Greek antiquities to Belgians such as Rik Wouters and René Magritte and to Russian 20th century geniuses such as Kasimir Malevich. But my interest in contemporary art did not develop - through contemporary dance, opera and music - until around the age of eighteen. I remember a visit to Anthony Cragg's exhibition at the M KHA in Antwerp: the sheer talent to create a completely new visual language in a pure and direct way through found and existing materials proved to have a lasting influence in my selection of artists.

How did you come into contact with the art world?

My parents had no connection with the contemporary art world, but a lot of creative friends, including some artists. Through one of them I got inspired to study sculpture conservation and restoration at the Academy of Antwerp. This environment offered me my first contact with aspiring artists. I wanted even more know-how, both theoretical and practical, and continued to study art science at the University of Ghent and sculpture in evening classes at the Antwerp Academy.

What was your first job at a gallery? Or did you immediately start a gallery yourself?

Through mutual acquaintances I found a student job at a young Ghent gallery, which collaborated with a gallery from London. The gallery was run by business people who did not have time for the day-to-day activities. I was happy with the freedom this gave me and I immediately immerse myself in it - with no prior experience in the field, but with complete dedication. I gladly accepted an invitation from my bosses to run the gallery full-time, on the condition that we could continue under a new name and with a new roster of artists. Helmut Stallaerts, the first artist I picked up from school myself, was a direct hit. By introducing him to an influential group of collectors, the gallery suddenly gained momentum and I found myself in a dilemma with the owners. We had different visions regarding the future of the gallery and I

decided to go on alone.

Those first years were not commercially viable, as I had to make the gallery self-sufficient with artistically challenging choices. Fortunately, I gained the confidence of a few people. For example, in 2006 Philippe Van Cauteren bought a monumental sculpture by Anne Wenzel for the collection of S.M.A.K - and recently a beautiful ensemble of works by gallery artist Audrey Cottin. That sale allowed me to continue for four months, plus my first museum sale was a fact.

This allowed collectors' confidence to grow, and so did my relationship with them. Because in the story of the gallery, the collector cannot be missed. I even devoted a series of exhibitions to this triangular relationship: in the 'Private Collection Selected By' series I ask one of the gallery's artists to select works from a collector's collection which they are also part of and include them in an exhibition in dialogue with new works, which are for sale, of course. This has already resulted in two special exhibitions, with beautiful pieces from the collections of Tanguy & Bieke Van Quickenborne-Clerinx selected by Anneke Eussen, in 2013, and Anny De Decker (founder of the White Wide Space), selected by Derek Sullivan, in 2014. The next edition will take place in the summer: recent addition to the gallery's roster, artist Hans Vandekerckhove presents a series of new works in dialogue with the collection of Marie-Rose & Paul Declercq.

How would you describe your gallery's profile?

Visionary, wilful, committed, responsible, fresh, flexible, DIY and diverse. I had to map out my career as a gallerist and entrepreneur myself in the moment, so it was learning by doing. As a result, it took a little longer to achieve the success that I am currently experiencing, but I now also aware of most of the trade's pitfalls.

I have a keen eye for young talent, and I am often among the first galleries to show an emerging artist. I am thinking of Belgians such as Kasper Bosmans and Lisa Vlaemminck, but also of foreign artists such as Anne Wenzel, Pamela Rosenkranz and Julia Spínola. I am happy to see how these artists continue successful collaborations with colleagues I admire.

At one point I also thought it was important to work with different generations. I represented Walter Swennen, but also the estate of Philippe Van Snick. During the eight years that Philippe

and I worked together, we managed to map out an international track that put his oeuvre back on the map. Besides Luc Tuymans, he is one of the few Belgians in the collection of the MOMA in New York.

I am currently showing work of the underappreciated Ghent artist Ria Bosman for the second time. I'd like to call her a minimalist alchemist with colour and matter. For 30 years, she has been working relentlessly on a consistent and meditative oeuvre of hand-cut and re-woven cloths in flax, leather and other natural materials. All long before the use of textiles and the blurring between arts & crafts in contemporary art became a trend. Under the hegemony of Jan Hoet – whom, of course, I also greatly appreciate for the visionary he was – she found no place in the then rather phallic-oriented art scene. Fortunately, this has changed recently. These days there is an appreciation for both female artists and less explicit and bombastic work.

Belgium is steeped in Catholicism, which to me explains why our more minimal and conceptual movement of artists has not broken through as well. I am thinking of the incredible oeuvre of Lili Dujourie or the late Guy Mees, whose estate is now happily under the management of Sofie Van de Velde – a sign that such oeuvres will now get the attention they deserve.

What part of being a gallery owner do you like most?

The change I can make in the world through collaboration with my team, the artists, the collectors, my colleagues and the public. The empowerment I experience for and towards others. The freedom to completely be myself and create what I want without having to justify myself.

At times it has been tough, failing to achieve the level of success that I in mind. I lost artists to other galleries and experienced very slow financial and substantive growth. I found running a gallery very exciting due to the variety of experiences, input and encounters, but also very stressful due to the multitude of tasks, decisions and responsibilities.

When I was about to quit my gallery in 2015, I discovered through Avatar - a course based on the simple truth that your beliefs cause you to attract situations and events that you experience as your life - that it was mostly my own doing. I realized that my ideas about the art world were getting in the way of myself as a gallery owner, and that I could change my experiences if I changed those ideas. I suddenly had a very practical toolbox which I could apply in all areas of my life. For example, I no longer see the end of a collaboration as a loss, but as the start of something new.

I also believed that I could only be a successful gallerist if I was working on my gallery 24/7. That was of course not sustainable. Nowadays, I combine my practice as a gallery owner with my practice as an Avatar Master and curator for the renewed Belgian Art & Design Fair in Ghent.

Despite my other jobs, 2020 was the gallery's best year ever in terms of experience and growth as well as in terms of turnover.

Are there any galleries at home or abroad with which you feel an affinity?

I like people who can be both human and business-like at the same time, who act from a connection between mind and heart. Who dare to do great things out of courage and integrity, stand up for what they stand for and thereby help people without harming others. I appreciate this in my clients and the artists I work with, but also in colleagues. The South-African Los Angeles-based collector and entrepreneur Stefan Simchowicz is one such person: we are currently working together on the work of the promising Mexican artist Elizabeth Ibarra. His innovative hands-on approach suits me. He seems controversial as a collector, but I am not that interested in what others say. If I had listened to that, I would never have started my gallery and had stopped by now. I trust my intuition and rely on my own experience. Stefan has the financial means to support artists by buying many works from them at once, so that they can continue to work and increase and improve their production. Some people may see that as capitalizing on the success of the artist, I see that as helping an artist to succeed. I personally experience Stefan as very generous without us having much personal contact. It is in the attitude, in the road to success, not in the success itself. What good is success if you don't love the person you have become on your way there?

Also, people tend to focus on the success stories and not on all the other efforts that preceded it. This is the same with a gallery. The gallery often puts a lot of work, trust and faith in the artist before success comes - and vice versa, of course. The artist puts his trust in the gallery. As long as this is done with coordination and honesty about where both parties want to go, the cooperation can continue to grow healthily.

My fifteen-year collaboration with Anneke Eussen is a wonderful example of this. We believed in each other when we both faced some serious issues and kept open the space for stagnation and change. We have also always kept in tune about where we want to go together and how we can achieve that. There is a clear plan behind our joint actions. It is great when what you envision together manifests itself. Doing business is also daring to take risks. I've always done it that way, sometimes at the expense of my personal and material well-being. In the past, I often envied people who had the financial power to be able to invest immediately. Now, I work with them. Everyone benefits from that.

In an ideal world, which artist would you most like to represent?

The artists I work with. Of course, I can name some artists I admire greatly, but I prefer to appreciate and admire with whom I now make history. Every person and every artist is unique. I do require the artists I work with to tick a few boxes. For example, I expect that they are willing to sell their work and think along how this can be done, I expect them to be flexible, not to get lost in alcohol, drugs or engage in other destructive behaviour (I do not believe in the genius of the destructive artist), that they love what they are doing, are collegial and show a permanent eagerness to grow, try, experiment without limiting themselves. Oddly enough, I used to be dismissive of artists who soon found their own signature. Now I see that as a force, as long as it

doesn't turn into a comfort zone. The danger often lies in this, but not only with artists - with everyone, including me. In feeling safe with what you already know, there is the danger of staying "small". Aside from any theory of life after death, we only have one life in the physical body that we have been given right now, so why not make it 'fantastic' by exploring the unknown, instead of being okay with the mundane. I believe this is also what people appreciate in my gallery programme: the choice for diversity.

What has changed in the art world since you took your first steps?

I don't think you can speak of what has changed, but rather of how someone experiences change. I think it is a very exciting time right now, because we live in a world without a single truth, but where different viewpoints and realities are possible. For many people that can be confusing, but for me it is enormously enriching because I have the freedom to choose what I want to experience without losing myself. I create the life that I experience, so I can also steer it in the direction I want. My limitations are the ones I impose on myself. From this realization, life becomes one large playing field and obstacles also become easier to handle.

What / whose work do you collect yourself?

I buy work from 70% of the artists I work with and have worked with in the past, because I want to support them, because I believe in them.

I haven't been able to live with my collection for years, because I kept investing everything I earned in my gallery, and lived there too. For a year now, I have been living a few doors down to my gallery in a large penthouse apartment, and I can finally surround myself with my collection. I haven't counted the number of works I own, but I reckon I now have about fifty works. I bought most of them, some were gifted to me. My latest acquisition is a work by Elizabeth Ibarra, but I am also thinking about buying Ben Edmunds' work.

Ben is only twenty-six, but already has an exceptionally mature and unique signature style. Takashi Murakami recognized this the moment he saw it, he is a huge fan and collector of Ben's work. His contemporary and innovative take on abstract expressionism, ready-made and our dual society - which meanders between mind and body - is fresh, intelligent and promising.

I own a few monumental canvases by Michael Pybus. It is a joy to live with his work. I love colour and social engagement in art, as long as it is not pedantic. I find room for interpretation, magic and imagination necessary in the experience of art

Has the pandemic influenced your thinking about the art world?

Just as this applies to society at large, I think the coronavirus pandemic poses a great challenge for the art world. I believe that art and culture have an essential place in society, but I also believe that people should claim that place by taking more personal responsibility for what they put in the world and how they go about this. The pandemic has forced us to think differently about this and no longer always put the blame for our fate on another (and also have more

compassion for another). We can continue to complain and resist change, or we can see how we steer our own ship on the waves of change and thus reach new horizons. I think the latter generates the greatest chance of success, both personally and socially. I also think that spiritual development is essential in this trajectory, as it can lead to great creative power and wisdom, allowing us to put even more things into the world we want.

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Oscar Van Gelderen, "The Gallery of Tatjana Pieters", Gallery Viewer, February 2021