

POS-ITIVE ENERGY

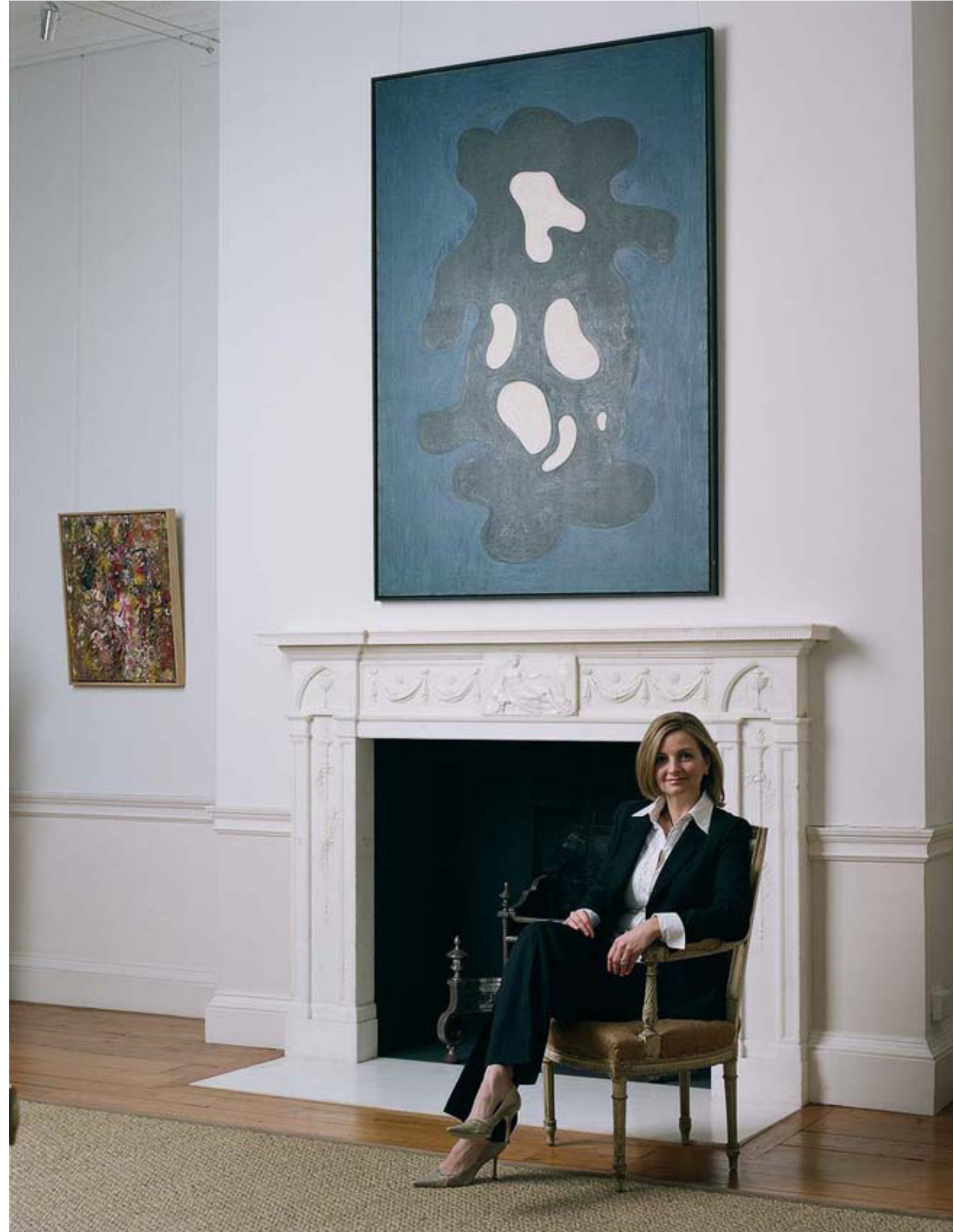
With the financial markets in turmoil, canny Canadian art advisor Tania Pos is turning paint into profit for a portfolio of clients. Just how did she get so smart about art?

words: Juliet Pospelovsky
photography: Andrew Lamb

If you want to buy art – and have cash to splash – where do you go? Chances are you may know your Monet from your Manet, but it takes a much deeper knowledge to negotiate the international art market successfully. Sophisticated shoppers frequent smart London or New York salerooms, Mayfair galleries and even make the annual pilgrimage to TEFAF Maastricht where highspenders jostle for Picassos, Vermeers and other big names. The young and hip frequent London's Frieze Art Fair and the in-the-know can be seen at Zoo.

The super-rich, however, use the services of art advisors, who in these troubled economic times are, somewhat surprisingly, enjoying a healthy growth in their businesses. Amongst their ranks is thirtyish Tania Pos, one of a new breed of art advisor who is tutoring the tastes of a variety of collectors. Her most recent claim to fame is bidding and bagging Monet's record-setting £40.9 million *Le Bassin aux Nymphéas* in the glare of the media spotlight at Christie's. Whilst many art advisors prefer not to get caught in the act, Tania was out there in the front row. But despite the intense speculation – was it for Microsoft billionaire Paul G Allen? – there was not even a hint or whisper from her of her client's identity though Tania is happy to talk about her own palpable passion for art. ⇒

Art advisor Tania Pos at Michael Werner Temporary in London at 'Black Swan' – a 'by appointment only' selling exhibition



Engagingly enthusiastic and energetic, this power-punching Canadian is now a British national and lives in west London with her banker husband and two sons. It doesn't take very long to realise that she is incredibly bright and with a long list of highly impressive academic and professional credentials. And, in a world that can be frighteningly intimidating – there's old money folk and even an European princess on the art scene – the most appealing quality about Tania is her down-to-earth approach. She is, without doubt, somebody who can

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move effortlessly from the drawing room of a duchess to an art warehouse storeroom. Elegant in her Cartier jewellery, she's pictured here at Michael Werner Temporary in London, viewing 'Black Swan', one of the many secret selling exhibitions that only the art cognoscenti can gain access to. She's frequently to be seen at cutting-edge events such as Frieze – and its offshoot Zoo – talking to gallery owners and artists. 'It's important to stay connected with the grass roots. I'm always on the look out for a lot of art – sculpture, paintings, drawings, mixed media. These kinds of venues might be the place to find the next Damien Hirst,' she proclaims breathlessly, eyes shining at the prospect of unimagined riches. 'People think that I only buy 80 million dollar works, but a lot of my biggest clients – the important collectors – are the ones that invest in and nurture emerging artists. I'll buy works for £5,000 just as readily as £500,000. Every year I'll scoot through the pre-preview of Frieze, making instant decisions and buying works in some quantity. You have to be quick in those situations. Often, if there's a sense of urgency, I'll be sending images to a client via my Blackberry for their feedback. It's exciting and it's very competitive.'

Her activities at a grass roots level speak volumes about the art world because entering its hallowed gates is not just about having money. It's also about appreciating beauty and innovation. Money gives you the freedom to seek out what's new and fresh and to be a style leader. By patronising an artist, you can influence the history of art and maybe encourage a new talent to flourish.

Tania herself is very well heeled, from a family of bankers. 'It's where I got my business sense,' she smiles. 'As a child, I'd always be in my own room drawing and painting. When my parents had their friends around to dinner parties, I'd hold an art exhibition in my bedroom and charge guests a quarter – 25 cents – for admission.' Fast forward a few years and Tania is a revered specialist in Impressionism and Contemporary Art, attracting the crème de la crème of collectors to her Arts & Management International Ltd office in Berkeley Square. 'Of course the majority are investors who are cash rich and time poor with other interests to pursue, so they'll pay for my expertise because I'm in the art market 24/7. At the level they are investing, large sums of money are involved and mistakes

are costly. I prevent my client from jumping in without being sure of the market history of a work, I'll check the Art Loss Register to make sure it's not stolen and, most importantly, I'll prepare a condition report and I'll have a sense of what is a good buy and what isn't. There are anomalies in the art world ...there's a reason, for example, why one Picasso is worth one million and another 20 million. Even great painters had their off-days!'

Paid to avert disaster, art advisors are also used to shield clients from any unwanted attention. It may be because a collector wants to scout the usual venues without being scrutinised, but the most common reason to hire a top-end art advisor is that help is needed to enter the hush-hush world of the private art market. We're talking about the very highest end of the business, where rarefied works of art never see the light of day at an auction house and often go for millions of pounds through a closed network of buyers and sellers. Some of the best pictures ever to be sold have been sold privately. In London – one of the hotspots of the private art market – some half a dozen paintings worth 100 million have exchanged hands in recent times.

As well as having enviable contacts in this arena, Tania is certainly someone who instils trust, but more than that she's immensely likeable. Art is a very personal style of investment – it's not like buying shares – because the works might, after all, be displayed in your home and become part of your life. To hire an art advisor, you need to let them in on your stylistic preferences. 'I do try to develop my clients' aesthetics,' says Tania. 'I want them to have their own voice and I do try to nurture them.' She also gets serious collectors – the art purists – seeking her assistance because tracking certain works is difficult and her out-in-the-field knowledge is invaluable. 'Four eyes are better than two is often the motto.'

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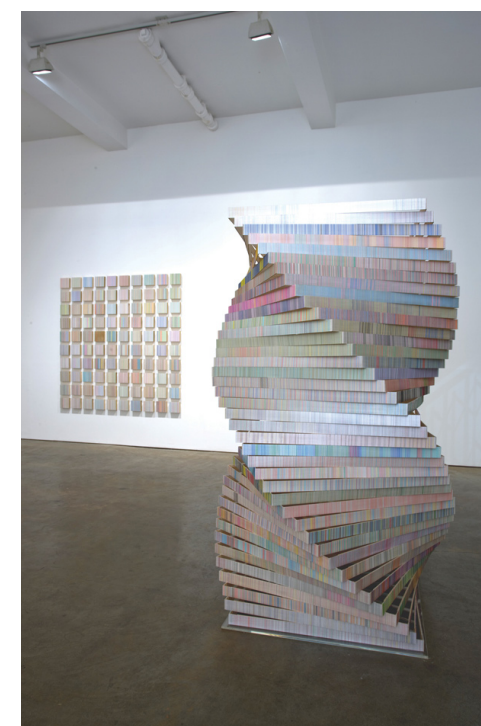
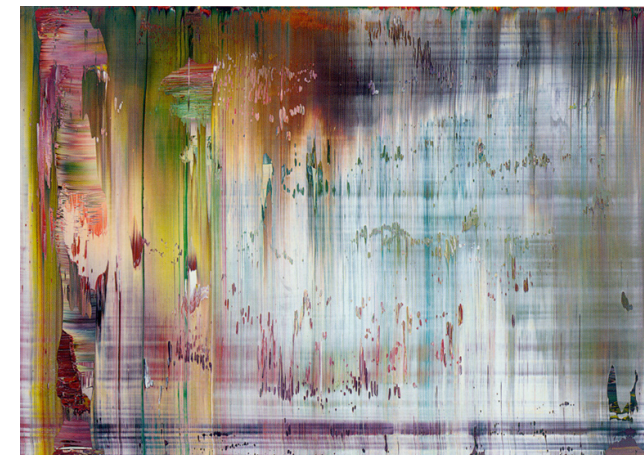
Some clients, however, are not interested in art at all, but simply see it as a way of increasing their wealth - who the artist is is immaterial. 'It is true that the return on the really great stuff has been remarkable,' observes Tania. 'It's very ironic that on the day of the Lehman Brothers' demise, Damien Hirst's legendary sale at Sotheby's took an astonishing £111 million.'

One of the most frequently asked questions is what is a good investment. The top quality works – and there is some consensus on what those very best pieces are – are always going to keep their value and probably increase. It's about what's rare and fresh to the market as well as the importance of a well-established name,' explains Tania. 'There is always more cachet in buying something that hasn't been sold before. The trick is to buy and sell privately.' For that you'll need someone like Tania.

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Where to Buy Art



- There are a number of 'by appointment only' selling exhibitions in private spaces. One such exhibition 'Black Swan' by Michael Werner was held recently at a secret address in London. For information on future events, ring 001 212 988 16 23.
- London, Paris and New York's top salerooms are obvious choices. Reputable world class auction houses can manage sales of the magnitude of Damien Hirst's recent 'Beautiful Inside My Head For Ever' (Sotheby's London) or Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé's collection (Christie's Paris) which we feature in this issue. www.sothebys.com and www.christies.com.
- Art fairs are the buzziest places to buy art. Held annually in the autumn, Frieze and Zoo are great for emerging artists, whereas The European Fine Art Fair, also known as TEFAF Maastricht (13-22 March), has all the big names. Bridging the gap is Pulse Contemporary Art Fair in New York (5-9 March). www.friezeartfair.com; www.zooartfair.com, www.tefaf.com and www.pulse-art.com.
- Galleries have great links with artists, both established and up and coming. For what's hot, visit cutting-edge venues such as White Cube or Gagosian Gallery. www.whitecube.com or www.gagosian.com
- If you don't have time for all this, hire an art advisor and let them do the leg work. For Tania Pos, see www.artsandmanagement.com



from top left and clockwise:
 Sarah IV by Manolo Valdes and Andy Warhol, Black Light Self Portrait shown at TEFAF Maastricht from March 13-22; Crossed Bones by James Aldridge and String Theory, installation view, by Brian Wills at Zoo; Abstract Painting (840-7) by Gerhard Richter at Pulse Contemporary Art Fair.