

we find and show our artists and work with our collectors, but I am relishing the challenge and it's making me much more acutely aware and sensitive to new talents and ways of doing things."

So how has the coronavirus pandemic affected the gallery world, and what is Grove Square's response? "It would be wrong to say that COVID has not provided a very unique set of challenges" says Serena. "As a new space, however, it is an exciting opportunity to help create the new norm without the baggage of 'how things have been done in the past' - we haven't had to unlearn old habits, just creatively work together in order to forge a new path."

"The general move within the art world to an emphasis on digital has also opened up various avenues, and we genuinely believe if a new gallery can open and be successful during this time, we're here to stay."

"Since getting the keys to our Fitzrovia gallery in February the world has changed dramatically. This time has given us the opportunity to reflect on our mission and spend time working really closely with our artists and building relationships with new ones. We believe each of our artists has a story that should be heard and our aim is to do that through a dynamic exhibition programme and a series of talks that highlight their work. Whilst the method of sharing those stories may have changed, our compulsion to do so hasn't. The pandemic has caused a significant problem for a lot of artists and we think supporting them is more important than ever."

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

With that in mind, is art the investment it once was? Are collectors still looking for long-term profit, or perhaps concentrating more on works they like and want to live with? "This very much depends on the individual and their own independent goals" explain Serena. "However what we have noticed is our that clients who are initially approaching us from a pure investment are realising either early in the process or mid process, that art is more than that!"

"We've found that the shift towards a more digital way of engaging with audiences presents an opportunity to engage with new collectors who have developed an interest in acquiring art for their homes after months of looking at blank walls during lockdown."



It's only natural that people have a new appreciation for how art can transform a space and we're enjoying working with both new and established collectors; sharing our knowledge and passion to help them build their collections."

So what sort of strategy should the art investor adopt? How can an art advisory service help a private collector or a corporate client? "First and foremost - buy what you love!" says Serena. "However it all comes back to the simple question of what each individual collector or investor is looking

(Above) Christopher Kieling, *Sierra*, 2020, courtesy the artist and Grove Square Galleries

for with their purchase. For example, are they looking for a long-term opportunity to support an artist's journey as they become more recognised?

"At Grove Square we love to help clients discover and support artists on our roster and to help provide new ways of looking at art through our exhibition and events programme. At the end of the day, if a



(Left) Mark Standing, *Primordial Instinct* (2020), courtesy the artist and Grove Square Galleries



(Below) Crystal Fischetti, *Memory Made* (2020), acrylic and oil on canvas, 150 x 120 x 2.5 cm, courtesy the artist and Grove Square Galleries

prospective investor isn't a good fit and wants a "get rich quick" scheme we will turn them away."

So what sort of artists will Grove Square be supporting? "Our aim is to champion artists at various stages of their careers" says Serena. "For our emerging and mid-career artists we pride ourselves on providing them with a safe space for them to discover their full potential and I'm always on hand to facilitate that - whether it is regarding a new idea, opportunities to collaborate or commissions."

UNIQUE VOICE

"When looking for new artists, our criteria are simple - artists who have a unique voice, a story to share, and a desire to succeed in a collaborative setting. We are here to support and nurture, as much or as little as each of our individual artists need."

"We launched with a solo exhibition of paintings by Berlin-based artist Christopher Kieling. Chris' works exude nostalgia and elegance. The paintings we're showing were created during lockdown and he drew on the circumstances we all found ourselves in, so they really resonate with these extraordinary times. When we saw Chris' work, we knew we were looking at something very special and we're thrilled to have this body of work as our inaugural exhibition."

So finally, what can galleries do to reach out to new audiences and to democratise the culture of collecting, particularly in these challenging times? "With the current climate affecting football and international travel, we (along with others in the industry) are turning towards creating a digital experience alongside our physical gallery programme" Serena explains. "Our personal relationships with artists and clients have always been at the core of what we do, and providing a tailored and personal experience is still vital and possible, even with the move to digital and appointment-based viewings." ♦

Grove Square Galleries is at 156 New Cavendish Street, Fitzrovia, London, W1W 6YW, www.grovesquaregalleries.com.

The Colour of Abstraction: New Ways of Seeing runs from 10th December 2020 - 22nd January 2021, with work by Orianda Broom, Crystal Fischetti, Elena Gual, Harry Rudham and Marc Standing.