



**DOERR DALLAS
VALUATIONS**



By Jonathan Horwich
Modern Art Specialist

ART BUSINESS CONFERENCE REPORT



Arriving bright and perky at 9.15. Melanie Gerlis in the background getting ready.



Melanie Gerlis Conference Chair giving the opening welcome

Jonathan Horwich, Modern & Contemporary specialist reports on the London Art Business Conference, 25 March 2002.

The scene was set as I entered the Gothic gateway into Deans Yard, behind me was Westminster Abbey and opening out in front of me was Westminster School to my left and in the air Westminster Abbey choir practising for the Duke of Edinburgh's Memorial service for the following week. It felt and sounded a bit like a scene from a Harry Potter film as I walked up to the Church House were, after two years, finally we're all back together again enjoying some proper face to face communication, which is so important in the Art world.

On arrival I bumped into Melanie Gerlis, the conference chair who is a powerhouse presenter and well able to hold the attention of a room full of noisy Art professionals. Melanie gave the opening address which was followed by a panel discussion on Sustainability and the Art World. The panel included Chris Bentley from AXA, speaking about sustainably insuring art in transit; Tom Woolston from Christie's spoke about his firm's 10 years to net zero programme. Imogen Prus from shippers Convelio spoke about new materials and methods of shipping and their plans to reduce the use of air transport. Lastly Clodhna Murphy the Director of sustainability at International Contemporary Art dealers

Hauser and Wirth spoke about their plans to reduce the galleries carbon footprint.

Louisa Buck from the Art Newspaper was moderating the discussions which focussed on reducing air travel which is the most significant and heavy polluter. The aim is to try and reduce movement of art by air, the majority of which is for auctions and travelling exhibitions, while at the same time not depressing the market. It's a hard trick to pull off, there were discussions about moving art by sea container which comes with its own difficulties. The captain of the ship has the right to move or worse remove any container on board even if it is full of valuable pictures. However, I think we can look forward confidently to significant changes in sustainability for shipping in the art world going forward.

This was followed by an inspiring all-female discussion panel outlining just how extraordinarily quickly the African Contemporary Art market has moved up in value in very recent years, up 44% since 2020! particularly at Sotheby's who only began selling in this category in 2016 following the arrival of the extraordinarily hard working and dedicated specialist, Hannah O'Leary. Not only is she running Sotheby's very successful auctions in this category but she is also traveling the world, leading fundraising initiatives across Africa & Europe to enable artists to have access to safe living and studio accommodation, so they can just focus on making art.

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Art World Sustainability panel; left to right Tom Woolston (Christie's), Imogen Prus (Convelio shipping), Clíodhna Murphy (Hauser and Wirth Gallery), Chris Bentley (AXA XL) Louisa Buck moderator (Art Newspaper)



NFT Panel left to right, Vivienne Chow, (Moderator Artnet) Xin Li-Cohen (co-founder TR Lab NFT portal) Brendan Dawes (NFT artist) Alex Estorick (founder online NFT market voice at Right Click Save) Jo Kennedy (Unit London Gallery)

Our next panel was also an all-female panel discussion on 'women innovating in art' with new tech. and finance. Stacie McCormack talked about her App, FairartFair, which enables you to buy art direct online via virtual exhibitions and studios tours all at very reasonable prices with no commission, it's an amazing App. which is continuously evolving.

Anna Lowe of Smartify was a very inspiring speaker, she set up the app Smartify from scratch, the app allows you to take a photograph of any work of art in any museum and it will instantly identify the piece and give you the artists name and work details whatever and wherever it is in the world you're looking at... the app was developed hand in hand with all the museums cooperation so they have embraced the idea and are moving away from earphone headset guides that you have to hand in at the end of your tour.

Smartify enables you to know what you are looking at and retains the art you saw on every trip so when you get home you can share the images and details in all the usual ways from any trip. The museum can use the App to see how popular their museum is in real time and also which are their exhibits are the most popular. I spoke to Anna later and she told me she is looking for new investment for the expansion of Smartify.

Rebecca Fine told us about her business, Athena Finance, they loan against owned art in order to allow owners to have liquidity on demand.

The final panel discussion on NFT's was another fascinating session, with a strong cross-section of panel members including Xin Li-Cohen (founder of TR Lab, an NFT portal) Alex Estorick (founder, right-click-save) who for some inexplicable reason had shaved his head and was wearing a bright green freebee tennis sweat band) Joe Kennedy (Unit London) and Brendan Dawes (NFT artist).

Alex's presentation was an extraordinary tour de force, his app 'right click save' really led us through the pluses and minuses of NFT's and his depth of knowledge and grasp of the details was quite extraordinary.



View of the balcony of Church House - Art Business Conference venue, with attendees enjoying the sunshine face to face time with old friends and contacts with a drink in hand!

Joe Kennedy of unit London similarly is involved in NFT's and was a contrast to Alex in his description and very engaging. Brendan Dawes the NFT artist was a revelation, he told us that as an artist, NFT's have absolutely transformed his life, he was no longer thinking how to pay his bills, he was now very comfortably off, making art and engaging with his collectors, often one-to-one through the website 'discord' that enables collectors to communicate directly with Brendan and other NFT artist. He did say that it sometimes can be quite exhausting but stimulating, after an hour with 1000 voices asking you questions you really need a lie down!

Xin Li-Cohen (TR Lab) was personally involved in advising Chinese clients on the record breaking \$69 million sale of Beeple's NFT '5,000 days' sold at Christie's New York in 2021. She founded TR lab after the auction to sell NFT's. Brendan Dawes is one of TR Lab's top artists.

The NFT and Contemporary African art panels were highlights for me, however the whole event was wonderfully run and gave out very positive vibes confirming that the Art World is busy getting back to normal...

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