

# Barcelona Symposium 2022

## TALKING GALLERIES

THE THINK TANK FOR GALLERIES

TALKING GALLERIES 09

Talking Galleries is the first international think tank dedicated to generating debate and knowledge in the field of art galleries and the art market. Since its foundation in 2011, it has provided a space for reflection that the art market was lacking. It has grown into an established platform for industry professionals, focusing on disseminating relevant issues to the sector and encouraging its professionalisation.

This book collects the complete talks that made up the programme of the 2022 edition of the Barcelona Symposium. Celebrated on the 3rd and 4th of October 2022 at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the ninth iteration marked the return of this flagship event to its hometown after a two-year disruption caused by the pandemic, gathering once more leading experts and a varied audience of art professionals in a specialised context for discussing the latest trends in gallery management and the wider art market.

This year's meeting addressed the pressing issues and new concerns that had arisen in the previous two years in the art industry. Particularly, the two-day programme dedicated special attention to the spread of new digital policies. From the rise of NFTs to the advent of leading crypto art platforms, some of the sessions explored how these changes in technology affect the habits of sellers and buyers and, so, reconfiguring the art market. The conversations also looked at gallery practices in the secondary market as well as at the ever-debated relationship between fairs and biennials. While some space was devoted to review the reasons behind the booming Parisian art scene, this edition also claimed for a more inclusive environment for the art world.

While the market keeps adapting to global economic and geopolitical challenges, this publication packed with inspiring thoughts and relevant data aims at providing some keys to interpreting today's art gallery sector.

**Llucà Homs**  
Director



---

Paco Barragán  
Tom-David Bastok  
Ilaria Bonacossa  
Nicolas Bourriaud  
Ellen de Bruijne  
Anna Carreras  
Marc Domènech  
Elvira Dyangani Ose  
Andrew Goldstein  
Carles Guerra  
Llucà Homs  
Carine Karam  
Joe Kennedy  
Dylan Lessel  
Anika Meier  
Alex Mor  
Farah Nayeri  
Beatriz Ordovás  
Julia Peyton-Jones  
Guillaume Piens  
Alain Quemin  
Giusy Ragosa  
Andrés Reisinger  
Miguel Ángel Sánchez  
Jérôme Sans  
Kate Vass  
Pau Waelder

---

**Barcelona Symposium 2022**  
9th Edition

**SESSIONS**

<b>The Challenges Facing the Art World Today</b> Julia Peyton-Jones, in conversation with Farah Nayeri	11
<b>Can We Make the Gallery World More Inclusive?</b> Elvira Dyangani Ose, in conversation with Carles Guerra	29
<b>NFTs: Now What?</b> Joe Kennedy, Beatriz Ordovás, Andrés Reisinger and Kate Vass, with Pau Waelder	49
<b>Galleries in the Secondary Market</b> Tom-David Bastok and Dylan Lessel, with Marc Domènech	75
<b>See it in Venice, Buy it in Basel. Are Biennials the New Art Fairs?</b> Nicolas Bourriaud, Ellen de Bruijne and Alex Mor, with Paco Barragán	97
<b>Recent and New Trends for Galleries</b> Alain Quemin	115
<b>Art's New Digital Vanguard: Where We Are &amp; Where Things Are Going</b> Ilaria Bonacossa, Anika Meier and Jérôme Sans, with Andrew Goldstein	141
<b>Is Paris the New London?</b> Guillaume Piens, Alain Quemin and Giusy Ragosa, with Farah Nayeri	177
<b>The Resilient Collector: Behaviors and Trends Shaping the Art Market in 2022</b> Carine Karam	201
<b>Do Artists Need Galleries to Sell their Work?</b> Anna Carreras and Miguel Ángel Sánchez, with Lluçia Homs	225



# Sessions

### **Nicolas Bourriaud**

is a French curator and art critic, who has curated a great number of exhibitions and biennials all over the world. With Jérôme Sans, Bourriaud cofounded the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, where he served as codirector from 1999 to 2006. He was the Gulbenkian curator of contemporary art from 2007 to 2010 at Tate Britain in London. In 2009 he curated the fourth Tate Triennial, titled *Altermodern*. He was the Director of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, an art school in Paris, France, from 2011 to 2015. From 2015 to 2021, he served as the director of Montpellier Contemporain (MO.CO.), an institution he helped create.

### **Ellen de Bruijne**

is an Amsterdam-based art historian and curator, who founded her eponymous gallery and project space in October 1999, located at the heart of Amsterdam. Over more than twenty years, the gallery has focused on new tendencies in contemporary art, concentrating on performative art, socially related art, installations, and works in progress. Ellen de Bruijne Projects creates a platform for young international artists and mid-career artists to perform, generating shows with high standards on an international level and within an international context.

### **Alex Mor**

is the co-founder of mor charpentier and a Political Scientist that holds a master's degree in Resolution of International conflict resolution. Based in Paris since 2010 and most recently in Bogotá, the gallery has promoted and consolidated an artistic program engaged in current issues and problems with social, political, and historical, approaches. This engagement is reflected in the works of its broad portfolio of artists that often transcends the white cube and seek to present trends in art, with a special interest in Latin America. Mor is also a member of the selection committees of ARCO Madrid and ArtBo.

### **Paco Barragán**

is an art historian, art theorist, and curator specializing in the history of art fairs and biennials. Between 2015 and 2017 he was the Head of Visual Arts of Cultural Arts Centre Matucana 100 in Santiago de Chile. He was artistic director and curator of CIRCA Puerto Rico and PhotoMiami fairs. Some of the books he has authored are *The Art to Come* (Subastas Siglo XXI, 2002), *The Art Fair Age* (Charta, 2008), *From Roman Feria to Global Art Fair*, *From Olympia Festival to Neo-liberal Biennial: On the 'Biennialization' of Art Fairs and the 'Fairization' of Biennials* (Artpulse Editions, 2020).

## **See it in Venice, Buy it in Basel. Are Biennials the New Art Fairs?**

---

### **SPEAKERS**

**Nicolas Bourriaud, Ellen de Bruijne & Alex Mor**

### **MODERATOR**

**Paco Barragán**



---

## See it in Venice, Buy it in Basel. Are Biennials the New Art Fairs?

---

**Paco Barragán (P. B.)** Thank you Lluçia and Talking Galleries for inviting me. I think you should all be as excited as I am, not only with the speakers but also with the topic. I'm really excited because actually this is a topic that I tried to pull off in 2015, presented it to a big art fair and they said no, but I'm stubborn. In 2016 I tried again, another big art fair, "no", and then in 2018 I tried again. I was less ambitious with a mid-level art fair and they also said no, so I'm really happy that we can talk about this topic. I hope you will all agree that it's a great title: *See it in Venice, Buy it in Basel: Are Biennials the New Art Fairs?*

I have a nice presentation but before I can start the presentation there are some topics... Biennials vs art fairs, I'm quoting here Italian art critic and editor at Phaidon Press, Michele Robecchi, who's based in London. This is what he wrote a couple of years ago: "I still believe that biennials and art fairs are like apples and oranges, they're both delicious but fundamentally different". I still remember that phrase, you know, apples and oranges. Now I have this wonderful artoon by the talented Mexican-American New York-based artist Pablo Helguera, with a little bit of imagination we can cross out documenta and put Venice and then next to that Basel. So, like him, do we have to choose between Venice and Basel? Do we have to choose between art history and the art market? Do we have to choose between disinterestedness and commodification? Do we have to choose between oranges and apples?

Let's start with our first speaker, Nicolas Bourriaud. Actually, I think I could easily skip the presentation because who doesn't know Nicolas Bourriaud? I think we all know who Nicolas Bourriaud is, and I'm pretty sure that most of you knew about Nicolas Bourriaud like I did when he co-founded and co-directed the Palais de Tokyo between 1999 and 2006 with Jérôme Sans. Another interesting element I pointed out about Nicolas is that he was curator of focus country France at ARCOmadrid in 1999. Amazing, an art fair looking like Venice with a national pavilion. Isn't that funny? Then among the many biennials, triennials, pentennials that Nicolas did, I just highlighted the Tate Triennial, which went down under the magnificent name *Altermodern*, and



the latest edition of the Istanbul Biennial. He was also director of MO.CO. In Spanish it doesn't sound very good to be honest, but it's the Montpellier Contemporary, from 2015 to 2021. And Nicolas Bourriaud is a gifted and prolific writer, of course *Relational Aesthetics*, some of you might have read it, and then another one I like to point out, *Radicants*.

Our second speaker is Ellen de Bruijne, art historian, curator and founder-director of Ellen de Bruijne Projects. We were talking this morning because she, like Julia Peyton-Jones, also did the shift from more a curatorial work to sales work or gallery work. Like most galleries, she has participated in many art fairs, like for example Basel, Liste, ARCOMadrid, Artissima. Some of the artists she works with are Otto Berchem and two Spanish artists among them, Lara Almárcegui and Dora García, Japanese artist Suchan Kinoshita, Maria Pask, Saskia Janssen, and I can easily go on. Most of the artists I was interested in because some of them have, of course, participated in biennials, documentas, national pavillions and things like that.

And our last speaker, last but not least, Alex Mor. I think he has a very interesting profile: political scientist with a master's from NCR, the National Conflict Resolution Center. One interesting thing is that maybe even though most of you are not interested in politics, he was part of the campaign of the presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt. He's member of the selection committee of ARCOMadrid and ARTBO. He manages two spaces together with his partner, Philippe Charpentier: in Paris since 2010, and a space in Bogota since 2021. Artists the gallery works with or represents, with a very multicultural scope, are: Kader Attia, Alexander Apóstol, Paz Errázuriz, Voluspa Jarpa, Bianca Bondi, and I can go on.

Now, let's start with our friend Nicolas. MO.CO. was many things, but one of the things was that they showcased private collections, so an institutional space showcasing private collections. That's interesting. And this was an installation shot of the Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo collection that was exhibited in 2021 and beginning of 2022. This takes us to the next image, and this is a show that's ongoing now at Palazzo Bollani in Venice. It's called *Planet B: Climate Change and the New Sublime*. What's interesting about the show is that all the works are on sale and it has been organised by his curatorial platform Radicants. I'm quoting from the website: "Radicants is an international curatorial cooperative, working with independent professionals. We conceive, produce and organize institutional or commercial art exhibitions. We provide advising for projects or programs. Radicants has an exhibition space in Paris."

I wanted to start with Nicolas because I think it's a clear example of how we are walking the thin line between the institutional and the commercial. I showed the image of MO.CO. first because I have this idea, but maybe I'm wrong, that in a way MO.CO. was the dry run for Radicants. Can you tell us a little bit about it and why you conceived Radicants?

**Nicolas Bourriaud (N. B.)** We could come back to the oranges and lemons of Michele Robecchi, but I don't have the same lemons and the same oranges, actually. I think, for me, the oranges are exhibitions which provide a vision of art and an intelligence of art, an idea about it, and the lemons are all the bad ones, and that's the main distinction I make in a group show, for example. Works being for sale in art, we all know that this distinction has been completely blurred in the last 20 years, so rather than trying to turn around this kind of hypocrisy, it's really important to address it and to create the entities which answer this new situation and are able to provide a new way of intervening in the market.

**“WORKS BEING FOR SALE IN ART, WE ALL KNOW THAT THIS DISTINCTION HAS BEEN COMPLETELY BLURRED IN THE LAST 20 YEARS. RATHER THAN TRYING TO TURN AROUND THIS KIND OF HYPOCRISY, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS IT.”**

For example, Radicants is a curatorial platform, the base of all our activities is a curatorial vision, not only mine, I just did the first one because it was easier. But the exhibitions you could see in Paris, for example, there was a solo show by Bracha L. Ettinger curated by Noam Segal, and we have five different curators at the moment each showing an emerging artist and we have many projects for the future with other curators, not only in Paris but abroad. The idea is that we both produce and conceive, with this network of curators, exhibitions that are museum exhibitions on one side—that are in a way produced with the institution, with the foundation, with the person that wants to make it exist—or commercial exhibitions. Two different aspects of what a curator can do, but it's not dividing the world into galleries on one side and institutions on the other. That's something which is from the past. For me it's the old world frankly, it doesn't work like that anymore, and we have to just answer to this situation by proposing something else. That would be a virtuous circle also, because every project we're doing, actually, when I hire a curator



for a project, this curator gets their part of the economy of the project, he or she is paid also if we sell something, and for the first time curators are really part of the economy, which is never the case anywhere. So these kind of things create a virtuous circle.

**“IT’S NOT DIVIDING THE WORLD  
INTO GALLERIES ON ONE SIDE AND  
INSTITUTIONS ON THE OTHER. THAT’S  
SOMETHING WHICH IS FROM THE PAST.”**

We also work in a different way with artists because we don’t represent any artists, we’re not a gallery, so we also work with galleries. For example, we’ve been working with you on this exhibition here, actually, about Bianca Bondi. It creates a new type of network and a new type of activity which is, in the end, very creative. Even for me, I just discover a lot of things. The thing is I didn’t become an art dealer, because I would be the worst art dealer ever frankly, believe me. But Radicants is a platform where there’s someone who takes care of this, who’s a professional, we hire more professionals also to sell the artworks, because it’s not my job at all. Others organise exhibitions in a technical way, and this is the platform that allows many different types of projects also, including consulting.

**P. B.** Interesting. Now, let me get to Ellen first and then to Alex. As a gallery you’re used to working with the market, with art fairs, but also with biennials. How do you navigate, for example, the participation of one of your artists at Aperto or Venice Biennale or some other biennial?

**E. B.** I think we discussed this before. Answering the first question, is the art fair and the gallery world and the museum world and the biennials two separate worlds? I think nowadays it is one world and maybe I’m the proof, because I came from curating and working in a museum and there was a certain moment that I thought: “Now it’s more important for young artists to start a gallery than to start a non-profit space in Amsterdam.” In 1999, that was a situation that there were a lot of good non-profit spaces but not so many good galleries.

So, when you start from art or the artist, then you’re much more looking at what is necessary for them, and at that time it was, and still is, having a gallery that’s more curatorial, that’s not going for the easy pieces but also is prepared to go for performances, more conceptual work or even work that you cannot sell, like *The Rubble Mountain* by Lara Almarcegui that are not for sale [laughs].

And then it’s very handy, of course, that you have a curatorial background because then it’s easier to understand the needs, but at the end of the day the artists have to pay their rent so that’s also important. I see the importance to sell the work and also bring it to a higher level, and career-wise, that an artist is able to jump to a museum or jump to a more important collector. Therefore I started the gallery, but for me it is one world, it’s not a separate world. I really do understand that public money and private money are of course a different thing, because let’s say tax money, public money that’s from us all, you have to be aware of where you spend it. And for instance with Dora García and Lara Almarcegui, when they did the Spanish Pavilion, there was no question asked to the galleries like: “Can you pay for the transport?”

**“IS THE ART FAIR AND THE GALLERY  
WORLD AND THE MUSEUM WORLD AND  
THE BIENNALES TWO SEPARATE WORLDS? I  
THINK NOWADAYS IT IS ONE WORLD.”**

**P. B.** It’s not the same as with *Aperto*, with the main Italian Pavilion... Alex, let’s go straight to the heart of the matter because there’s one case I know particularly well. One of my favourite artists, Chilean Voluspa Jarpa, with whom you work, she was at the Chilean National Pavilion in Venice and I know that Chile pays a little bit, but most of it you have to fundraise. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Alex Mor (A. M.)** Yeah, well actually that case was one of the only times that we didn’t pay anything for the Venice Biennale, I think maybe the only time, because there’s always something that is asked for galleries depending on the level of the project and depending on the different scales. In this particular case it was an institution called Antena, which is like a foundation with collectors and patrons all over Chile who actually really believe in the soft power of art and actually gather all the necessary money, which was a lot of money because it was a very intense and quite a complex pavilion to build. And they just funded everything, but this is very rare actually. I have to point out.

Before getting into detail I just want to point out like three important things to understand the relationship between funding, galleries and art fairs and biennials. The first one is that it’s extremely rare that an artist gets paid for their participation in a biennial, it almost doesn’t exist. I could only find three examples where it happens among the great variety of biennials that exist. The

second point is that there are different categories and hierarchies between biennials and fairs so, of course, the Venice biennial is stronger than the Cuenca one for example, so actually you don't get the same attention or the same demands in each of them. And the third one is, as Ellen was telling, and I totally agree with her, that this kind of tension between where the funds come and if you sell the work in Basel from the biennial... the same happens within institutions, you know, we've been dealing with this idea within institutions, especially in countries like the United States where most of the time the funding is private, so it's not like a new situation. So, in this case of Chile, to be honest it was fantastic, but it's one case among many in the 10 years of the gallery. It was the first time that we didn't give one penny.

**“IT'S EXTREMELY RARE THAT ARTISTS GET PAID FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN A BIENNIAL, IT ALMOST DOESN'T EXIST.”**

**P. B.** I know from Voluspa that Antena did a hell of a job because they put together a lot of people, collectors, foundations, whatever, to get that done, so that was really amazing. But what you said, it's fascinating. I have some more images, I took this from *Frieze* magazine, I'm sorry I hacked the hacker, because actually they had curators in there, on the other side they had dealers, and I thought it was fun to put art fairs and biennials, so this brings us to the idea of “Is art just too refined for business?”, which takes us to the next slide which is interesting. This is the Venice Biennale sales office that was running until 1973, and actually until the late 60s and beginning of the 70s practically all shows were sales shows, museum shows, biennial shows, the Royal Academy shows, they were just sale shows as well.

So when we think about biennials and art fairs we think anachronistically from the present: “Oh, at biennials works are not sold, etc.” But it's always been the same, and I want to quote Clarissa Ricci, she's an Italian academic and she has studied and researched the Venice Biennale profoundly, and she says this interesting thing: “The charter reform of 1973 was substantial and it helped the Venice Biennale to become a contemporary platform closer to the documenta model, but in both 1984 and 1993 the sales office seemed an appropriate solution to manage value exchange independently.” Which means that while the sales agency disappeared, and here you see this elegant gentleman Ettore Gian Ferrari who was the official dealer, he charged 15% for the Venice Biennale and 2% for him of every artwork sold. The thing is that while the sales agency was closed due to dealers' pressure, like Leo Castelli, Ileana Sonnabend and

also France May '68 anti-market attitudes and whatever, it has always been on the table and it has always been a discussion with different curators, with Achile Bonito Oliva, whatever, if they were going to reopen the sales agency again.

So you see, it's what you said, Nicolas, it has always been blurred, and Alain Servais, the famous Belgian collector, says he buys most of his works at biennials or museums, and says that if you go into a biennial or a museum and you look at the label and it says “courtesy of the artist or the gallery”, then the work is available. Now the question is: is it ethical? I mean, for example, for the Venice Biennale to ask that the gallery produces and transports the work, secures the presence of the artists. What is your take on it?

**“THE VENICE BIENNALE SALES OFFICE WAS RUNNING UNTIL 1973. UNTIL THE LATE 60S AND BEGINNING OF THE 70S PRACTICALLY ALL SHOWS WERE SALES SHOWS.”**

**N. B.** First it depends on the biennials, not every biennial is the same.

**P. B.** No, documenta for sure not, and maybe some others, but in the case of Venice, I mean, it's clear.

**N. B.** The question is a bit tricky because I personally don't think biennials look like art fairs, maybe bad biennials, yeah, but look at the Venice Biennale this year, I don't think it has anything to do with an art fair to be honest, and so it's not really true. The question *is a formal question, it's a question of meaning. If you go to an art fair there's no meaning, you're just confronted two artworks which are just isolated, deprived of any context and certainly no narrative, and that's the biggest difference that can exist between the two.*

**P. B.** But let me get to the ethical question, because we know what happens doesn't only happen in some biennials, especially Venice, but even with dealers, most museum shows and even many National Pavilions in Venice that are totally funded by dealers, galleries, etc. What is your opinion on that? Do you think it's just a sign of the times?

**A. M.** I don't know if the right term is to say if it's ethical or not. It's a fact, it's just happening and galleries have to deal with that. But an article just came out a couple of weeks ago on Artnet about a very large investigation about the

top biennial artists that are around. It turns out that we have four artists in the top 20 and we have a total of 16 artists from the gallery in the top of the most shown biennial artists. Does it mean that we sell all that and that we sell all the works that these artists show in the biennials? No. I wish, I would be extremely happy because if half of the programme just sells because it's in the biennial... So you have to nuance what type of work is shown in those biennials.

**“IF YOU GO TO AN ART FAIR THERE’S NO MEANING, YOU’RE JUST CONFRONTED TWO ARTWORKS WHICH ARE JUST ISOLATED, DEPRIVED OF ANY CONTEXT AND CERTAINLY NO NARRATIVE.”**

Also something that's very important to point out is that in this top 20 and even top 50 none of the artists are painters, and that's very important to understand because a painting with the stamp of the biennial sells better for sure. And going back to this ethical question, I'm going to point out an example that happened recently. We have an artist, Marwa Ansanios, who's now in the present documenta, who had a lot of problems, and there's this one painter participating in documenta that actually forced the curatorial team to include a set of three paintings even though they had no room to place them, because they were pre-sold as documenta paintings, and if the works were not presented at documenta the business was out!

**N. B.** Shit...

**A. M.** Now we're talking about ethical things. [laughs]

**P. B.** I used to say that there are three USPs, unique selling propositions or sales techniques, and dealers in the audience please correct me if I'm wrong. One is: "This artist is going to participate at Venice, documenta or whatever." The second one is: "This artist is going to participate in an exhibition at Tate, MoMA or something like that, a big museum." And the third USP is: "This artist is being collected by Rubell or Pinault or whatever." What you're talking about is what in other sectors, especially the financial sector, is totally prohibited, and that's an interesting thing we can link tomorrow to the Paris scene, and that's insider information. Because I think that biennials and also brands and dealers work with insider information and very often the fact that an artist is going to participate in a biennial or an important large-scale international event can be a good sales argument. So we're going back to the limits that are blurred.

**E. B.** I think the point is that the art world is maybe not so aware of different money angles, you can say, because we're all dealing with artists and art pieces and culture, which is a good thing, and I think in normal companies they divide much more the public money and the private money, and also the intertwining of money things and art is happening now and you cannot take them apart, but maybe in the future. I mean, I think also with normal companies and with countries, they're trying to make it more transparent and this is something that of course isn't transparent. And maybe you can also say it's not fair that some artists are having a kind of free platform on biennials and that you sell it in a profit situation like in a gallery, but this is something that's not an issue now but maybe in the future we have to think about it more specifically.

**“DOES IT MEAN THAT WE SELL ALL THE WORKS THAT THESE ARTISTS SHOW IN THE BIENNALES? NO.”**

**P. B.** Yes, you're right. Nicolas, you curated quite a few biennials. My question would be: if an artist exhibits in an important biennial, does that impact the price of the works or their career? How is your experience with that?

**N. B.** This I don't really know because I never really got interested in that, naturally, and even now I have to say, for example, the artist I'm showing in Venice, I'm not wondering are they sellable or not. I just constitute an exhibition in exactly the same way I would do in a non-commercial context and then I ask other people to sell them, which is totally different.

But the selection is not oriented by the market at all, which is really the most important thing, because the real question behind yours is: is the fact that a gallery sustains an artist a sufficient reason to invite him or her? Actually yeah. It does, a kind of perversion of the system, you know... For example, I know for sure that if an artist was contacted to do the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, he or she needs to come with a gallery or otherwise there's no chance to have it. And that's a fact, and that's the pervert way, I would say, that orientates the selection, and that's the enemy, you know? Not the money, money is fine, it's not the question. The question is: does it modify and pervert the choices the curators or institutions have to take?

**P. B.** I remember Robert Storr when he did his Venice Biennale, he was complaining about having to do a lot of fundraising to get his artists to Venice. Alex, how's your experience with that?

**A. M.** Actually, I want to point out something really important that Nicolas said, because we're really talking about this tiny, tiny limit between the ethical side and the formal side. This is very important, because we know as a fact that artists who don't have a gallery have little chance of going to a major art exhibition, because they have no funding. It also happens that whenever we try to find financial support to help artists, it also happened to us because, we're going to be honest here, if someone wants to fund a project it's because they have an idea behind it. Which means they're gonna support that work and then they're going to try to buy that work, because they want to have the biennial stamp, and it's very important to have that but of course they're going to get back the production cost, they're going to get a discount and then they're going to buy the work, which means that finally, even if it was a major project, the final gain for both the gallery and the artist is very little. That's a fact.

**“THE ART WORLD IS MAYBE NOT SO  
AWARE OF DIFFERENT MONEY ANGLES.”**

And also what happens is that sometimes if you try to find this funding, the institutional collector is going to tell you: “Can we change the project? I'm happy to fund it, but it has to be a project I'm happy with or that I can buy.” And then it can change the curator's vision of it because they want to present the artists at any price and has to change the project, because if there's no exit for that work, it won't happen.

**N. B.** So the real question is not between private money or not, it's where is that private money situated, where is it? Is it after the choice or before the choice? That's the real question.

**A. M.** And then you are on a dangerous road...[laughs]

**P. B.** I want to be a little bit dissident with Nicolas. Look at this image and look at the next one. One is at Art Unlimited and the other is at the Ibirapuera pavilion, in São Paulo. When I said that galleries and art fairs look alike, it's a little bit because they have lots of things in common. We don't need to look much further, but global art, painting, different mediums, installations, corporate and private funding, curated sections, VIP lounges, whatever, Venice even sells VIP cards, platinum, gold, silver, catalogues, etc. So when you look at all those talks at fairs, biennials, whatever, when you look at it one way or another, I think they have started to look alike and I think that they started to look

alike because in a way these sophisticated platforms like art fairs and biennials are something that helps cities compete in this really ruthless, competitive, cultural capitalism in the 21st century where cities compete for being on the map. Actually, this morning the person from Catalan cultural enterprises was talking precisely about that, about putting a city on the map, competing with culture, and this is what it's all about. Today it's not politics, it's not philosophy, it's not religion, the only thing that brings us together is culture. I think that these platforms, or maybe a blockbuster exhibition, like fairs and biennials and things like that are really very strong attractions and they are also temporary, so they are awaited for every year or every two years.

**“WE KNOW AS A FACT THAT ARTISTS  
WHO DON'T HAVE A GALLERY HAVE  
LITTLE CHANCE OF GOING TO A  
MAJOR ART EXHIBITION, BECAUSE  
THEY HAVE NO FUNDING.”**

**A. M.** I just want to de-demonise this idea that putting a work that you see in Basel or that you see in the Venice Biennale, in a fair is a bad thing. Because unfortunately a lot of people think, and Ellen you will agree with me, that we are banks. We're not banks, we cannot just give money for projects everywhere, we have to find a solution and we have to find a balance between what we support and how we get the money back. So if you put a lot of money in a project for Venice and then you ask the artist to maybe adapt some part of that work so you can put it in an art gallery and sell it, and then you get back your cost, you're happy.

And I don't feel that I'm betraying the art world and I'm betraying art history. We are just getting back the money that we're putting in and we have to be honest, we can't just give the money away. I would be happy to just fund works in any single biennial, but it's not possible, and I know that stronger galleries like Perrotin or like Hauser & Wirth or Pace, they agree with this: we can't just continue funding things and not getting anything back. So we have to de-demonise this idea and we have to think that we are living in an ecosystem, we all turn on the same level, but at some point as galleries we need to back up and we need to continue, and in order to continue we have to use these kinds of mechanics, and it's not a bad thing, it's just happening.

**P. B.** Well, it's just the blurring of the limits or whatever. I think that it's much more complex because, from my own experience, what today in the art

world isn't possible, tomorrow is. I think that in today's cultural capitalism or neoliberalism, whatever you want to call it, it's more and more complex each time and it deals with complexity and contradiction. Especially as dealers, and you Alex, each time you have to confront the decision: do I sponsor this exhibition or not? I guess that for some of your artists like Falke Pisano you get petitions for shows, and especially from the US, that they are asking for funding, so I mean you're a mid-tier gallery, you're not Gagosian or whatever, because Gagosian can easily fund a show at a museum or biennial or whatever. So it's much more complicated for you...

**“I JUST WANT TO DE-DEMONISE THIS IDEA THAT PUTTING A WORK THAT YOU SEE IN BASEL OR THAT YOU SEE IN THE VENICE BIENNALE, IN A FAIR IS A BAD THING.”**

**A. M.** But in that sense, like Ellen, we have kind of complex programmes, it's not like 100% commercial programmes, and actually if you're talking about contradictions we have to go further. A lot of the artists in that case, the top four that we are talking about at least in our gallery, most of them criticise power, migration, the capitalist system, and at the same time we have to ask funds to show in the capitalist world that we are against. [laughs] So if we go into the contradiction we can go really far, and we share that common thing. That's why I was really happy to be here because they always think about the good and the bad, and it's just a system that's evolving all the time. There's a lot of contradictions, we just deal with them and we try to handle them the best we can. We can't just say black or white because there's a lot of grey.

**P. B.** But it's very convenient to see black and white, right? That's what I'm doing, that's my task [laughs]. Before I open the discussion to the audience, I showed you the first image of the artoon by Pablo Helguera and he made a second one for my book and it says: "The first path will lead the artist to aesthetic glory and art historical fame, the second is just what you take when you need to pay the rent." Pablo is always very accurate and very on time.

**Contributions and questions (c/q) from the audience**

**Q1.** Nicolas, you talked about artworks being out of a context, deprived of narrative in a fair situation. I'm very close to also having artists that deal with

geopolitics, history, very narrative and deep research, a little bit also with what Alex was saying, and it's maybe like a question to both of you and even Ellen if she would like to participate. Do you believe that with such strong narratives or artists with strong works, where the narrative is super important and not just the aesthetic part of it, could you kind of micro-curate a booth? Make it like a super small exhibition space? I don't think that always, in an art fair context it's always deprived of this kind of meaning. I think that perhaps we could use the possibility to also produce something... Many times it's a dialogue or something...

**“THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BASEL AND VENICE IS, FIRST, FORMAL. ON ONE SIDE YOU HAVE A JUXTAPOSITION OF ARTWORKS WHICH ARE NOT ORGANISED IN A COMMON SPACE, THERE'S A TOTAL LACK OF WHAT IS CALLED CURATORIAL GRAMMAR.”**

**N. B.** Absolutely. It's not a matter of square metres, not at all, and even before being a matter of narratives or not, because I really think the main difference between Basel and Venice, to take this metaphor, is first formal. On one side you have a juxtaposition of artworks which are not organised in a common space, there's a total lack of what is called curatorial grammar, because this is a grammar, space is a grammar. When you curate an exhibition, it's not the same part of the brain that you use when you write a text, it's something which is completely different because visual thinking is totally different from discursive thinking. An exhibition first has to take care of the space it is allowed, in an art fair nobody gives a shit about it, right? So it's just boxes and then you just put things in the boxes, you know? Some galleries make some efforts but still it's not the same. So, the first thing is before even the problematics that the artists are addressing is a question of the organisation of the space, I think. And then you have all the narratives which can be historical narratives, theoretical narratives and there can be many other types of narratives, but that's the big difference between the two and those are my apples and my oranges and my lemons. And it's not a matter of artworks for sale or not for sale, that's for sure.

**P. B.** An interesting detail that you can read in my book, sorry for the shameless self-promotion, is that one of the directors of Basel in the 90s, Lorenzo Rudolf, said that he picked up Basel when Basel was down, with lots of competition

from new art fairs in Paris, Madrid, Chicago, etc. He said that he finally got the fair to be number one again, and then he went to Venice and saw that his biggest competitor was the Venice Biennale, because the dealers were literally standing in front of the artwork, selling it, and that's how and why they conceived *Art Unlimited*, the huge exhibition space to compete, precisely, with Venice and to also attract the bigger institutions. It's a fascinating story.

**“WE HAVE TO STOP THINKING THAT  
HAVING A CURATORIAL APPROACH AND  
SELLING ARE CONTRARY OR OPPOSITES.”**

**A. M.** But again, we have to stop thinking that having a curatorial approach and selling are contrary or opposites, you know? I think in our cases, since day one, we curate every single show we do in an art fair. Actually, this morning I received the portfolio that we're going to send for the next fair in London and it's 25 pages. We don't have that much art but everything is built and we give a context and we give a social context and we give a political context and we're there to sell, you know? Ellen has a very complex programme too, but we're happy to sell. Here in the art world there's always this contradiction: “Oh! If you want to sell you have to be commercial,” but there's other ways of being commercial and not necessarily being easy. There's ways, you just have to work out of it.

**E. B.** Maybe I can add something. I think when I have a question or I just don't know anymore, then I go back to the artist or back to the artwork, back to the artist. Then it's very important to have a good piece and a good piece may be complex, or maybe I have to put a lot of effort to explain and I will do it again and again and again, but in the end I think when it's a good work it will sell or it will get a place. I'm not even thinking about selling but it gets a place and it's in a museum or in a private collection. I want to teach my artists right from the start that there is not something like: “Ah, I'm going to make a commercial work for the gallery and a real work for a museum,” it never works. [laughs] Please stop thinking that you can make a commercial work, it doesn't exist. To make a good work is already so complex, focus on that.

**A. M.** And actually if you go to visit Nicolas' show in Venice, you'll never guess that the works are for sale, because it looks like a museum show, and I don't think the aim one single minute was to sell. It just happens that the works are for sale, but the construction of the show is not showing a commercial side, it's just that the works are for sale. So you can find those balances and I think it's

fascinating that today there's a bigger awareness about that and that curators and dealers, we are mostly working on that, because, again, it's not just one side or the other, you can find a place where you find both.

**N. B.** And it's important to insist on the collective model. I'm sure that in the near future all the galleries which are super galleries like Perrotin, Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, Gagosian, that have several spaces on several continents, we'll have to learn how to work differently and also with other people, and that's my bet, that's it.

**P. B.** Thank you for being here, thank you, speakers, Nicolas, Alex, Ellen.