

## 10 Promising Female Gallerists

A new wave of women art dealers is taking the art world by storm. At New York's Lower East Side, women own more than 30 percent of art galleries in the neighborhood, up from 4 percent five years ago. Women are playing equally powerful roles in cities around the world and more interesting and influential galleries have female owners who are a part of a new generation that is slowly transforming the contemporary art scene. In honor of International Women's Day, we picked up 10 upcoming women gallerists you should know.

### **Nina Johnson**

*Gallery Diet*, Miami

The story of how Nina Johnson-Milewski became the owner of one of Wynwood's most popular and innovative art galleries, Gallery Diet, is actually quite simple. She liked to paint as a child, was encouraged to keep going, and just followed the path that presented itself to her. Although it is not always easy finding an artist who can actually materialize their passion into a profession, Johnson succeeded and that's exactly what makes her so inspiring.

Her gallery is located in the Wynwood District of Miami, where it has existed since 2007. The gallery has produced over 30 solo and group exhibitions by new and emerging artists from around the world and has documented those exhibitions in hard cover print on a yearly basis.

When asked what it takes to be a gallery owner, Johnson replied: "Building relationships with artists is one of the most important components. Maintaining those relationships is where the majority of my time is spent. Part of that is also researching new artists. The other important part is building relationships with clients. In Miami, there's a huge education component. Hopefully, you are dealing with new people who are just beginning to collect and who are looking for your guidance. You want to help them develop a vision. It's not just about amassing objects."



Nina Johnson

### **Rebecca May Marston**

*Limoncello*, London

Rebecca May Marston is the director and curator of Limoncello Gallery, a dynamic, contemporary art gallery

that opened in East London in December 2007. The gallery's programme supports solo shows, curated shows and the Punctuation Programme; a programme of non-profit performance and events.

“When anyone opens a gallery they have to announce what they're about,” says Johnson, “They have to have an identity. Identities change with galleries, and that's largely defined by the artists they're working with and the programmes they're doing. But they kind of have an identity, and there are a couple of things I wanted to do with Limoncello. The gallery's not just about, 'I'm paying all this money to have the gallery, so I have to have something saleable in it all the time.' I really want to commit to those things because I think it's making a commitment to art – to something good. “



Limoncello Gallery

**Rachel Uffner**

*Rachel Uffner Gallery, NY*

After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in art history and painting, Uffner earned a coveted job at Christie's. After that she worked for a private collector and in 2003, joined the D'Amelio Terras gallery in Chelsea.

At one point, she even wanted to be an artist. “But I never had the rigor of spending the day in the studio by myself,” she said in an interview. “I liked being out with other people.” So she started her own gallery in New York's Lower East Side and stayed put even after her first exhibition - scheduled within days of the Lehman Brother collapse – didn't go as planned. It went uphill from that point on. With pieces in her gallery that cost mostly \$3,000 to \$10,000, Uffner testifies: “I do like being the conduit between two worlds.”

**Tanja Wagner**

*Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin*

The international and discursive program of Galerie Tanja Wagner, founded in 2010, is created by artists with different cultural backgrounds who work in varying mediums. It is decisive for the program that all artists create a tension between the idea and the material. The gallery aims to express a new position for which post-modern terms do not apply.

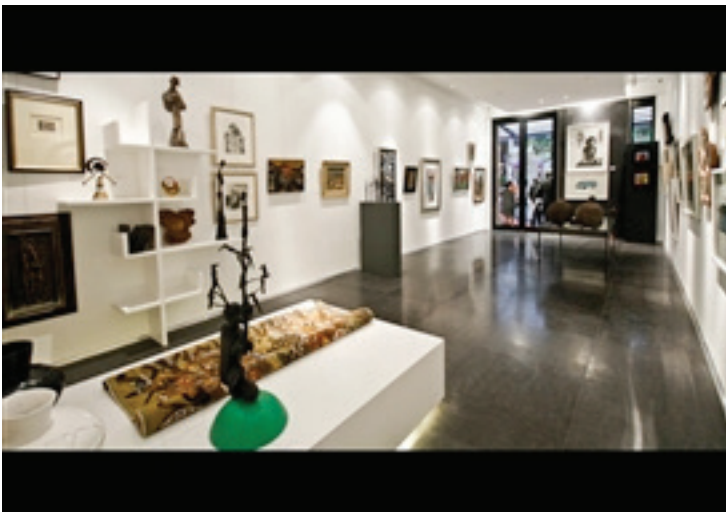
When asked how she started, Wagner said: “For me it actually all started for me when I said that I’ll open my own gallery, showing what am I personally interested in, what I want to talk about, what is different now. We are the new generation of gallerists. We are showing new artists, young artists. I really wanted to work with artists who really engaged again and who told a story. I wanted to open up a dialogue. I wanted to not have a clean space in a very 90s sense, white cube kind of thing.”

## **Thandi Sibisi**

### ***SIBISI Object of Art***, Johannesburg

Thandi Sibisi has opened her SIBISI Object of Art, on 2012 in the Melrose Arch district of Johannesburg. She’s the first black woman to own an art gallery in South Africa and surprisingly enough, she ended up in the gallery-world almost accidentally. The 25-year-old owns four thriving businesses and through her marketing agency she collaborated with the Department of Arts and Culture during the football World Cup in 2010. It was while she was working with the department that her interest grew and her love of the creative arts began. “I fell in love with art,” she said in an interview. “My whole life has been driven by showcasing our South African heritage ... It is such a beautiful country, but we tend to undervalue ourselves, so I wanted to illustrate what South Africans have to offer.”

Sibisi has no set criteria for choosing which artists to exhibit, as she wants the art shown to reflect the ideals of the Sibisi brand. “I choose artists who are authentically South African, and who carry the same values as me and the gallery,” she explains. Her future plan is to expand into new markets: “I want to open branches in London and Paris, among others, but the hub of Sibisi will always be at Melrose Arch because I have never felt as at home as I do in this gallery.”



SIBISI Object of Art

## **Candice Madey**

### ***On Stellar Rays***, NY

Candice Madey opened her gallery space only one day before the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy stunned the global market. She resisted the temptation to play it safe, preferring to make the most of the tough times by experimenting and challenging viewers with cutting-edge exhibitions. Four years later, On Stellar Rays continues to thrive with its represented artists often receiving awards and recognition from preeminent institutions like MOMA PS1, LACMA, Performa and many more.

When asked what makes her gallery stand out, Madey replies: “We definitely take a lot of risks with the program, the shows often look and feel very different than others in the area. We have given performance proper

space and exhibitions, rather than using it as a sort of headliner for openings, as many galleries do. The work is also quite intense, intellectually and psychologically, it requires a lot on behalf of the viewer.”

## **Monika Branicka and Asia Zak**

### *Zak I Branicka Gallery, Berlin*

ŻAK | BRANICKA is led by Monika Branicka, a critic and historian, and Asia Żak, an artist, and is located Berlin’s Kreuzberg district. The ŻAK | BRANICKA Foundation, based in Krakow, and its Berlin gallery, ŻAK | BRANICKA, are dedicated to the integration of primarily Polish and other Eastern European art into the international art context.

ŻAK | BRANICKA chose to explore and investigate contemporary Eastern European art. Zak on this niche they chose:” We have started our gallery in 2007 when Eastern European art wasn’t still in focus. We are committed to the promotion of those artists maintaining the traditions of the Easter Europe avant-garde art, which haven’t gotten yet enough international recognition. The gallery also has a very strong representation of female artists: starting from Zofia Kulik (Venice Biennale 1997), Katarzyna Kozyra (Venice Biennale 1999) or Agnieszka Polska.”



Stanislaw Drozd, Forgetting, at ŻAK | BRANICKA gallery Berlin, courtesy ŻAK | BRANICKA

## **Laurel Gitlen**

### *Laurel Gitlen Gallery, NY*

In 2005, Gitlen founded a contemporary art space in Portland, Ore., called Small A Projects, which had a loyal following. So when she moved to Manhattan three years later, many of the artists she had worked with in Portland agreed to join her at a new Broome Street gallery. She found her art space accidentally, after walking around the neighborhood and since then moved to a bigger space on Norfolk Street.

Gitlen seeks strong relationships with museum curators. “I come from a curatorial background, so I am looking for artists who will have a place in the historical conversation,” she said in an interview for the New York Times. She prefers to remain mostly quiet, unlike some art dealers who are often more controversial than the artists they represent: “These days, I don’t know if you want to have a personality or you want the gallery to have it.”

## **Hannah Robinson**

### *Mary Mary Gallery, Glasgow*

Mary Mary Gallery was born after Hannah Robinson, its director, took the inspiration of two strong women (both named Mary) and opened her own art gallery in Glasgow. The gallery began in domestic surroundings before opening a more conventional gallery space in 2005. It opened with a solo show by Karla Black and has since organized a programme of exhibitions and events.

Mary Mary participated in many fairs, including Frieze New York, Frieze London, Liste 17 Basel, ABC Berlin and FIAC Paris. Robinson says that fairs are vital for her gallery and taking part in them, selling work and making contacts, allows her to programme with more freedom, as well as to take on special projects.



Mary Mary Gallery

**Isabella Bortolozzi**

*Isabella Bortolozzi Gallery*, Berlin

In 2004, the young Italian Isabella Bortolozzi opened her gallery in Berlin as a place “where questions are asked rather than answers found or things resolved.” Accordingly, the door to the gallery is decorated with a big question mark, like a logo welcoming visitors and her choice of art is sometimes challenging for viewers.

Bortolozzi had her own way and opened her gallery with a program not aligned with many other Berlin galleries, a fact that did not stop her gallery from becoming one of the most hip galleries in the city. The gallery primarily represents emerging and young international artists; untypically, not one of them is German and no painters are to be found. Bortolozzi has assembled an artistic programme that combines a unique conceptual edge and has been representing artists such as Ed Atkins, Seth Price and Danh Vo.