



John Bock
Ohne Titel (130306,1) (2006)
 Collage, mixed media
 41.4 × 25.5 cm

Courtesy: Klosterfelde, Berlin

7. WHO TO HANG OUT WITH IN THE ART WORLD

The answer, of course, includes advisors, artists, curators, collectors, critics, dealers and gallerists, all have valuable perspectives to offer, but who will be the most helpful?

Artists can tell you things about themselves and their work that you may not be able to find out any other way – what they are up to, their favorite projects, upcoming shows, other artists whose work they admire – and they’re often fun to party with. Many artists swap works with each other, and some artists understand good art better than others. When an artist you admire tells you whose work they are swapping, you should investigate that artist.

I was once wisely advised to buy artists a beer and dealers lunch. I’ve heeded that advice many times and usually end up inviting both home for dinner. During one of those dinners, Gardar Eide Einarsson told me about Oscar Tuazon before a gallery represented him, and at another dinner Einarsson mentioned Josh Smith, an unknown artist at the time. We also had a whole lot of fun.

Going on studio visits is interesting and often comes with the added advantage of allowing you to select from an artist’s work before other collectors have the opportunity. It is also interesting to observe how artists relate to their own work. For instance, an artist like Klara Lidén somehow becomes her art in the sense that the two are difficult to separate. It is almost as though her personality has been transformed into form, a transformation I both appreciate and admire. Also, I am a romantic and I don’t like it when artists see art merely as a career choice.

I find it very inspiring and educational to see private art collections, and to eat and drink with collectors. Most collectors love to show their collections to someone who is really interested, and I quite often invite myself. Sometimes collectors find it hard to speak well of other collections. A friend concluded: “...the ego trip of possession, sometimes a relentless narcissistic aggressive attitude; the thrill of putting your money on the line and being proven right or wrong in the face of other people’s skepticism does not necessarily make you very generous towards your peers.” As they say in Congo: A man who has swallowed a coconut needs to have lots of faith in his own arsehole. There were many animals onboard Noah’s Ark, and I learn from and enjoy these people’s company.

Curators and museum directors have inside knowledge about which artists will be included in which institutional shows and therefore whose paintings are likely to increase in value. Most curators also know a lot more about art than I do.