

ART WORLD INSIDER

The Shift

by Arielle Bier



Labels in the art world are a dime a dozen. Museums are diversifying to meet consumer demands and exhibition opportunities for artists are snowballing in commercial and independent spaces. This is all happening hand in hand with the powerful media makers who magnify their popularity. Collectors and curators can be found rubbing shoulders on red-eye flights while hopping between the multiplying fairs and biennials, teasing or appeasing the gallerists who invite them. And the artists one might ask? The artists, overwhelmed by the mandatory socializing and desperately trying to keep on top of their high-octane production studios, flock around like everyone else, trying to find some way to get, and stay “in.” As the art world shifts and grows, so do the places and people who inhabit and define it. Professionals and non-professionals alike switch jobs and reinvent themselves with a litany of business cards played like a deck of cards. In the middle of it all is a sharp art world aficionado named Marta Gnyp.

Gnyp, a self-proclaimed “insider” doesn’t actually believe that there is a fixed “inside” or “outside” in the art world. She sees it shifting and changing as the market and global interest grow, and believes this is only the beginning of the uncharted global expansion that is yet to come. Gnyp started out in the corporate world as a commodities trader working for Glencore, dealing grain in the USSR in the ’90s. What began as casual museum and gallery tours, quickly turned into a serious passion for history and collecting, prompting her to sign up for night classes in art history. Without hesitation she made the switch into contemporary art and never looked back.

Her second book that is fresh off the press, deals with a hotly debated topic — the golden world of collectors. Titled *The Shift: Art and the Rise to Power of Contemporary Collectors*, Gnyp assembled a step-by-step analysis, laying bare all the juicy details about what really goes on behind the scenes and legitimizes it with intimate interviews, personal accounts, and substantiated quantifiable data (and lots of it).

The idea for the book came from her personal experience, as well as her interest in ideas about the participation of the viewer in art. In a recent interview she stated that “Since the ’80s, there’s much more power given to the viewer and much more space given to the collector who has become an important player in the art world. I wanted to map out the structure of what is going on in the art world through collectors.” Much of her latest book is framed by French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu’s theories on economic, cultural, and social capital, and targets, what is currently happening in North America and Europe. Interviews with influential collectors such as Rosa de la Cruz, Martin Z. Margulies, Thomas Olbricht, Egidio Marzona, and Julia Stoschek mark only a portion of what’s in store.

As an active collector herself, with notable works by artists such as Avery Singer, Michael Kunze, Danh Vo, Phyllida Barlow, Leidy Churchman, and John Baldessari, Gnyp draws on her first-hand experience with galleries, public institutions, auction houses, and all the money that drives it. She often reflected upon how it all works, and decided to seek after concrete answers. “I wanted to give a more thorough vision of what is going on in the art world. Why are they collecting? What makes it so popular? What are the moral codes of collecting and how are collections built? Is it really a hobby, or is it something more?”

For Gnyp, it *is* something more and the mission continues. This fall she will inaugurate her own gallery in Berlin called GNYP ARTSPACE hosting exhibitions by artists she admires. The first exhibition will be an exciting two-person show of works by the painters Zach Armstrong and Rose Wylie, juxtaposing their illustrative and playful techniques.

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