

MEET THE GUY OF A SIMONDOY

Rebecca Hossack - Day 4

Selling pieces from pictures that play with postmodern alienation to aboriginal art, the gallerist has a flourishing day at the fair in Berkeley Square



SEPTEMBER 26, 2014

REBECCA HOSSACK

DAY: 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

I am sitting up having breakfast in bed (brought by my ever-loving husband) when I get a text message from Georgia (the gallery manager) to say that she and Brett are over at the Charlotte Street gallery, loading up works to take down to the fair. I fling on a tracksuit and run down to see them.

We get coffee (from Italia Uno, the thoroughly Italian café on Charlotte Street run by Felice, the hardest-working man in Piterovia) and then drive to Berkeley Square ahead of the morning rush hour for the regular vetting ritual.

After last night's successes – with three of our biggest pictures selling – we have to rehang almost the entire stand. It is a fun process but there is the pressure of working against the clock. We get everything up on the wall – and looking great – minutes ahead of the 11am opening.

Almost the first person through the door is my friend Alvia, an American-

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born academic and passionate collector of both aboriginal art and abstract painting. He is a big fan of David Whitaker – two of whose exquisitely precise, almost up-art, pictures we have up on the stand. Alvin and his partner Ian are upgrading their civil partnership to a full marriage, and he has come to discuss plans for holding the wedding reception at our Conroy Street gallery. He brings delicious homemade gluten-free chocolate brownies to fuel our discussion.

As he leaves, the journalist Charlotte Metcalf arrives to interview me for a piece she is doing on aboriginal art. I resist the temptation to hide the remaining brownies for later and graciously offer her one.

Suddenly it's past 2pm and I'm still in my tracksuit, feeling horribly out of place amid the general elegance of the Lapada fair: the chic visitors, the well-turned-out dealers and, of course, the beautiful exhibits. At that moment a stupendously well-groomed and beautiful Ukrainian woman arrives on our stand: white Chanel outfit, Jimmy Choo shoes with diamond-encrusted straps, a handbag so exclusive I don't even recognise the brand, and a mane of beautiful golden-blond hair. She wants to buy a picture. I feel like a bag lady, standing talking to this vision of radiant smartness about Sherry Karver, the New York-based artist who creates scenes of modern metropolitan life, shot through with text that suggests the secret lives of the various disconnected individuals in the picture.

Having completed the sale I fire and race home on my bicycle to change. I put on my lucky Duro Glowa frock, a beautiful boldly patterned creation in greys and greens and browns, expertly cut with a tailored waist and a slightly ruffled neckline. It is a remarkable dress – but then Duro is a remarkable designer.

Pedalling back to the fair along New Cavendish Street, I am manouevred all the way by a young man in a Maserati – revving, roaring and racing from one set of red traffic lights to the next. The noise is deafening and yet he proceeds along the street no more quickly than I do on my bicycle. In London, these expensive peace-shattering machines seem meaningless useless – and the drivers, mixed in traffic, quite ridiculous. Not, I'm sure, the effect they are hoping to achieve.

Back at the fair, the lady dress immediately works its magic and I sell

Back at the fair, the lucky dress immediately works its magic and I sell two aboriginal paintings (simple, almost geometric images in pale creams and browns) to a young couple. These are the first artworks that they have ever bought – and they are thrilled. It is always a special moment when you sense people opening up to the real joy of having art in their lives. It is one of the things that makes being an art dealer both exciting and rewarding.

Life, it seems, is getting forever more complicated. One used to be able to order a simple gin and tonic. Then in the 1980s people started to specify which gin they preferred: Bombay Sapphire, Tanqueray and the rest. Now, I learn, you are expected to take a view on which particular tonic water goes with which gin. The girls in the gallery currently insist on Berkeley Square Gin with Fever Tree tonic water. Happily – and appropriately – both are available at the fair's bar. And, I must admit, I can see the attraction of the combination: subtly perfumed and delightfully frisky. One glass sets me up for the busy evening.

I leave the fair at nine, exhausted but happy. No gala dinner tonight, so it's home to a welcome bowl of soup. Then early to bed with a copy of Plato's *Critias*. Not my usual bedtime reading – but I am starting a philosophy course next week at the Temenos Academy. I drift off happily into sleep, murmuring my newly learnt word: teleology.

Rebecca Hensack studied at Christ's and worked at the Guggenheim in Venice before opening her first gallery on Charlotte Street in 1968. She now has two further galleries – on London's Conroy Street and on Mott Street in New York. Born in Melbourne and serving at the Australian cultural attaché in London between 1955 and 1967, here was the first gallery in Europe to exhibit aboriginal art. The Lapada Art & Antiques Fair takes place in Berkeley Square, London W1, from September 24 to 28 2014. www.lapada.org, www.rebeccahensack.com.
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