

PRESS RELEASE

ECLECTIC!  
The Batz Collection.



Vernissage: November 13, 2019, 7 - 10 pm  
 Exhibition duration: November 14 to 22, 2019  
 Opening hours: Wednesday - Friday, 3 pm - 7 pm  
 Location: Improper Walls. Reindorfsgasse 42, 1150 Vienna

Improper Walls presents ECLECTIC! The Batz Collection, a taste from a broad and diverse range of artworks from our Guest Curator Katrin-Sophie Batz's private Collection.

**Artists:** BOICUT/ Clifton Childree/ Robbie Conal/ Deso - Broken Fingaz Crew/ Alexis Diaz/ FAILE/ Faith47/ Frau Isa / Ben Frost/ Vasilena Gankovska/ Alex Gingrow/ Lia Halloran/ H101/ hoxxoh (aka Douglas Hoekzema)/ Never2501/ Laurina Paperina/ Peter Phobia/ POSE/ Stylianos Schicho/ Stinkfish/ The Stencil Network/ Stephen Tompkins/ Coco Wasabi/ Scott Malcolm Wigglesworth/ Zose

**Who the f\*\*\* is Katrin-Sophie Batz (i.e. The Batz Collection)?**

Mag. Katrin-Sophie Batz (née Dworzak), curator, initiator, founder and organizer of the exhibition series and Street Art festival *Cash, Cans & Candy* (2013, 2014, 2016 – a trademarked project of Galerie Ernst Hilger), worked for Galerie Ernst Hilger from 2006 to 2019. She began her work at the Siemens\_artLab gallery, subsequently relocating to Galerie hilger contemporary across the street, where she held the position of administrative assistant and public/collector relations manager. Since 2013 and up to her maternity leave, she was director of the exhibition venues comprising Hilger NEXT, HilgerBROTKunsthalle and project room@NEXT in the tenth district of Vienna. In 2010, Batz was co-organizer of the urban art festival *Escape the Golden Cage*. Over the course of her work-related journeys abroad she discovered the most diverse forms of expression of Street Art. In the numerous exhibitions that she organized and curated for the gallery she always emphasized the involvement of art in public spaces. In 2013, she was the first to mount a survey exhibition of Street Art in Vienna. Fifty national and international artists (including internationally renowned figures such as Shepard Fairey, Retna, FAILE, Faith47) were exhibited in all three exhibition spaces of the gallery in the tenth district of Vienna. The second edition *Bring a Friend!* focussed on the collaborative process in Street Art, while the third edition *Look Again!* examined the development from Pop Art to Street Art. The murals that were created as part of the three exhibitions are on permanent display in many districts of Vienna; Katrin-Sophie Batz is still offering guided tours by request.

**INTERVIEW**

**Katrin-Sophie Batz is interviewed by Klaudia Kreslehner (cultural historian and manager, curator at the City Museum Linz; her exhibition on Street Art and graffiti opens in May 2020 at the Nordico City Museum).**

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Our paths crossed almost ten years ago, when we were both active in the same cultural institution. Since then we have been sharing not only a wonderful friendship but also the passion for art. Dealing with collections as a professional occupation is one thing, as there is always a kind of professional distance with respect to the work – however, to collect art privately, to own art, that is something else – what moved you in that direction, why did you become a collector?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** Collecting effectively began at the same time as my career as a gallerist. On certain occasions, staff members received prints as a present – works predominantly by the American Pop Art artist Mel

Ramos and the Icelandic/French narrative figuration artist Erró. For my part, I started collecting and following my own taste around 2010 at an art fair in Washington DC, where the works were not presented in the classic way, mounted on an art fair wall, but impro-style in a hotel room. I was impressed by a young art initiative and treated myself to my first small number of drawings.



Regarding your second question, what was it that moved me to become a collector: the art itself has to move me, affect me. I have to fall in love with the work. Sometimes I know the artist, sometimes it is “merely” a particular work that I respond to – without any knowledge of the socio-cultural background of its creator or the philosophy on which it is based.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Wow, this means you have been collecting for almost 20 years! Who was this artist that you bought your first collector’s item – the drawing – from?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** Back then in Washington DC I also bought a drawing by the artist Simon Vega (El Salvador). This work is probably even more emblematic of my personal collecting process than the other two that I bought first. At that time I only knew Simon fleetingly on account of gallery work, but his style and the aesthetic of his sophisticated drawings touched me emotionally.

I absolutely have to emphasize the latest addition to my collection – a work by Oliver Dorfer, with whom I am connected not only by our friendship but also a longstanding, exceptionally positive cooperation. Unfortunately I did not have the required budget to be able to afford the work, but I could not stop raving about it – and then one day he gifted it to me without hesitation. However, this work will not be on view in the exhibition, but a different one.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Between private ownership and the public view: how did you come up with the selection that is presented here? Why do you want to present it to the public and what do you keep concealed? Are parts of your collection for your eyes only?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** The exhibition is titled *Eclectic!* (i.e. multifaceted) – I collect and assembled the works on display in the exact same manner. I would like to show my entire collection, but due to restrictions of space I decided on a selection together with the wonderful team from Improper Walls. And yes – some works are indeed private after all.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Collections and arrangements often permit others to draw inferences about the respective collectors. Just like public archives, private collections are documents of a particular period as well. What does your collection tell about you? What does your collection reveal about the period during which you have been collecting art?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** What my collection probably reveals about myself is that I have always taken on my projects with my heart’s blood and full commitment – frequently with a great deal of improvisation and a magnificent team that always had my back. Most of the works are by artists with whom I have worked with – they tell a story of mutual respect.

Nevertheless, the majority of my collection comprises artworks that can be located in the area of Street and Urban Art. For quite some time, Vienna has started to register on the radars of international Street Art artists and fans. Projects such as my brainchild *Cash, Cans & Candy, Calle Libre* and initiatives and galleries such as Oxymoron, AG18, major projects such as *TAKE OVER* at the Wien Museum, the One Woman Show Vera Steinkellner, or – back in the golden days – INOPERABLE Gallery and BLK River (one of the pioneers in Vienna) were and are responsible for Vienna to take on playing an enduring part in the Street Art history. National and international artists are given a platform in Vienna – areas in the public space are made available, with the city further establishing itself as a vibrant hub for this art form. The true value of Street Art or the murals lies in improving the quality of a neighbourhood, the look of a city, or highlighting social inequalities or social injustices – it is a gift presented to the

city, the neighbourhood, the inhabitants and the visitors of this city. The artworks ought to initiate a social, intellectual and political exploration of a variety of issues – and doing so via the aesthetics of a distinctive visual vocabulary. Having played a part in this movement is equally mirrored in my collection.



**Klaudia Kreslehner:** In Linz we are also dedicating an exhibition to the subject of graffiti and Street Art at the Nordico City Museum next year. However – except when art is “redrawing” the city through wall designs – then those who collect it, be it at home, for an archive or the museum, need space for storage or exhibiting. Art requires certain atmospheric conditions for optimal storage and consequently sustainable safekeeping. Where do you keep your collection?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** You are absolutely right about that. Most private collectors who do not have ample funds at their disposal will try to protect their valuable possessions the best way possible regardless of the circumstances and place their artworks in a temperature and humidity controlled storage facility. This is my own practice and I always use only a small number of artworks in rotation, which I then put up on the walls at home to appreciate their presence. If you are on a different financial level, for instance like Marty Margulies from the art hotspot Miami, you present your collection in a warehouse equipped with an aesthetic and staff that resembles a museum. Another collector from Miami – Jorge Perez – even runs his own museum.

My husband recently pointed out an article from the New York Times to me that addressed exactly this subject: the way private collections are stored and the way the treasures are protected by high-end security standards. ARCIS in New York City is such a type of “Fort Knox for art”. The temperature is automatically regulated, the ideal humidity of 50% consistently maintained. The artworks are transported in specific trucks and stored in crates with shock absorption: “It would be a good place to wait out the apocalypse” (“Step Inside New York’s Art Fortress”, *New York Times*, 13. 9. 2019). Because of this article I came across another interesting topic. This is a paragraph that I particularly liked from the article headlined “Art Disappears in Private Hands. Can Social Media Resurface It?” (*New York Times*, 14. 8. 2019):

*This is a problem for many collectors (...) who want to show their work to broader audiences or believe that there’s a public good to sharing the work they own. Though collectors at the highest end of the market are increasingly opening private museums, it can be difficult to afford or staff a space. Private collections can often be so opaque (...) that even artists don’t know where their own works are — part of his motivation to make that general information public.*

The bottom line is that far too few collections are accessible – virtually or in actual life. In particular the collections of younger – here I have to chuckle... though I am still UNDER 40, i.e. youngish – people on a limited budget, who may not be able to afford a Richard Serra or Anish Kapoor but are supporting industrious, talented artists in many different ways.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** An original remains an original – do you see the value of art exclusively in the original? Is it also possible to collect ephemeral, temporary art? And what about prints, which in a way are one of a kind as well?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** Prints are valuable as well, perhaps not so much from a monetary perspective compared to originals. But in my case I do not see a difference at all. As I said, either I fall in love with a work or I don’t. Art as an investment comes last as far as I am concerned. I own a lot of prints – solely for the reason that I wouldn’t even be able to afford the originals of many artists.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** The value of art. Collecting art as a (financial) investment – do you have any advice for a novice to the world of collectors?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** I believe that you should keep collecting art and art investment separate. For me, they represent two different approaches that are situated on diametrically opposed levels of meaning. Personally, I prefer collecting. The art of collecting, if you will. My advice is always to buy only works you like. You do not know when you will be able to resell the work – and especially IF you can sell it. For newcomers to the arena of art collecting I would recommend visiting the Parallel [art fair], or also the Vienna contemporary or the Art Vienna. There you will get a general impression of what is happening on the domestic market and more specifically there are sections dedicated to young artists. Consulting relevant literature such as Frieze magazine or Parnass can give you a better understanding of the national and international art scene. Commanding a larger budget, the Art Basel with its satellite fairs in Basel in June is a good choice, or, if you prefer warmer temperatures in winter, the Art Basel Miami Beach (with over 20 satellite fairs) in Miami in December – representing almost the entire international scene (high-end to lowbrow). For one week, you move within a microcosm chock-full of events, performances, parties. A lot of murals are created around that time, making it mandatory viewing for collectors and Street Art aficionados.



**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Are your acquisitions spontaneous, chance purchases or carefully considered? Which parameters have to be met in order for you to acquire a particular work?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** Some works in my collection were always considered as an investment. I have not built up a personal relationship with these works as I will have to let them go eventually.

All other artworks I chose with total commitment and based on the most different of conditions – or the artworks chose me, either through wonderful friendships or sometimes owing to merely brief but valuable encounters with the creative minds behind the objects. Frequently it's spontaneous.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Can you imagine to part with your collection, to sell it?

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** The entire collection? I hope that I won't ever be in such a dire financial situation that would require me to do this. As I mentioned earlier, parts of my collection are considered speculative items and an investment – these I will consider selling when the time is right or if a suitable deal should materialize. My heart belongs to all the other artworks. It would feel like treason.

**Klaudia Kreslehner:** Thank you for this interview!

**Katrin-Sophie Batz:** Thank you for your exciting questions!

[Facebook event](#)

For more information, images and appointment please contact:  
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