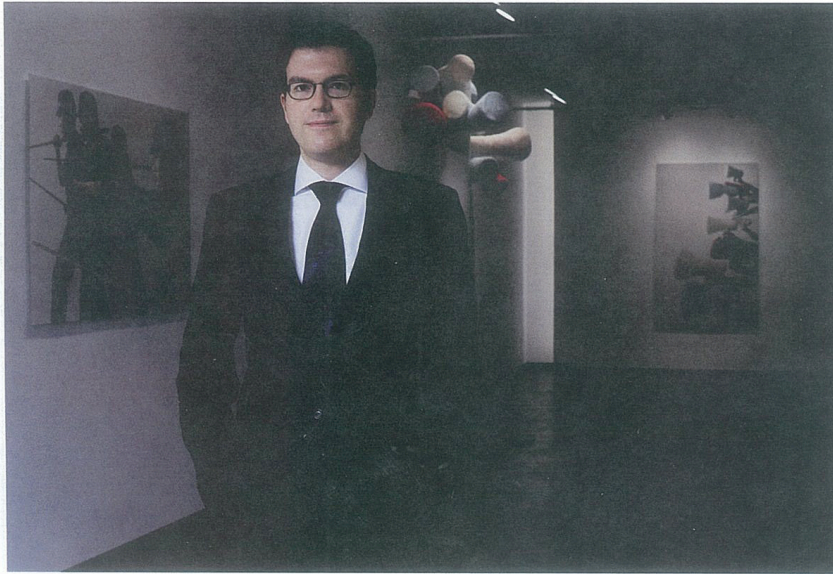


whitewall

CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2009



Tiffany Chung
Play Tough Aim High
2008
Digital C-print
39 x 59 inches
Courtesy of Tyler Rollins Fine Art

TYLER ROLLINS

OWNER OF TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART, NEW YORK BY KATY DONOGHUE, PORTRAIT BY STEVE BENISTY

WHITEWALL: Tyler Rollins Fine Art opened in Chelsea this past fall, in October 2008. What led you to your decision to establish the gallery?

TYLER ROLLINS: I studied art in graduate school, but I missed being with the objects and wanted to have a more hands-on interaction. I worked at Christie's, then with a private advisory firm, and then continued as a private dealer.

I've been traveling to Southeast Asia for the past 10 years and noticed so many amazing artists I hadn't seen exhibited in New York before. That was part of the appeal in opening a gallery – being able to showcase artists from that region, many of whom haven't shown here before, or especially not in solo shows. That was the exciting thing, to feel that I have some contribution to the public, cultural dynamic.

WW: When you first traveled to the area, what about the artists and their work struck you?

TR: I was just really struck by the region on so many levels. I'd always been particularly interested in the antiquities and Buddhist art during the ancient period, and there's such richness throughout East Asia. The region has always been a transit point with a great deal of cultural richness and history. It has also changed since I've been visiting – it recovered from its financial crisis. Initially, the artwork focused understandably on national themes, but now more so on globalization. It's amazing how the region's art scene has opened dramatically in the past few years.

WW: How have predominant themes changed

– you mentioned a switch from national themes to globalization?

TR: Particularly in Indochina, a lot of the tragic history of the past few decades overshadowed foreigners' perception of those nations like in Cambodia and Vietnam. I think now, because the countries are very young in terms of demographics, the respective cultures are very interconnected throughout Asia as well as throughout the world. It's a very different cultural scene now than it was a few decades ago.

WW: Do you seek out artists who have moved away from those predominant nationalist themes?

TR: I look for artists with a unique perspective and then try to provide them with the opportunity to show here. I try not to focus on people who have any particular style or who have an overarching theme for the gallery, but rather, have a certain spirit.

Tiffany Chung (whose work was on view from December 11, 2008, through January 17, 2009) is directly inspired by the youth culture that we're seeing all over Southeast Asia. Her work is inspired by Japanese manga and cartoons, which are such a powerful influence on younger people. So she works with that while making a deeper commentary on the political situation in Vietnam – the great prosperity that's happened and how that's influenced the culture.

WW: The mission of Tyler Rollins Fine Art is to promote intercultural dialogue. What are some of the challenges you anticipate when presenting

these artists to a New York audience?

TR: The plan is, over the first year, to gradually evolve the program. We try as much as possible to bring the artist here to arrange meetings with collectors, museum people, press – that's the first step. And then we'll work on having a lecture series and work with particular charities to help bring people into the artist's world and raise awareness of their concerns. It does take a certain amount of educational outreach. Some of the art, if you're not familiar with the history or culture, might not immediately resonate. As people begin to understand the commentary and how it resonates in other parts of the world, it really deepens the experience. It does take a certain amount of time to deal with that.

WW: What have you noticed since opening in October that surprised you or perhaps caused you to implement any changes? Has it been a trial and error of sorts?

TR: The New York audience is very curious and generally has discerning taste and high standards, so it's exciting to have people like that coming in and ask challenging questions. I think that's provided a great opportunity and a great challenge – we want to engage people, and it's a matter of finding the right balance. Beyond that it's a step-by-step process with catalogues that include some perspective from the curator and other writers to provide more background, and trying to have the artists here to create an ongoing dialogue.