

Greta Meert

The Calm Throughout the Storm

Since its inaugural show of German photographer Thomas Struth in 1988, Galerie Greta Meert, located in the center of Brussels in a stunning five-story Art Nouveau building, has established itself as one of Belgium's leading contemporary art galleries. Known for its precise focus on minimal and the conceptual art, it boasts a meticulously curated roster of artists including heavy-weights such as Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Isa Genzken, Louise Lawler, and Robert Mangold.

Interview by Sarah Schug
Photographer Mireille Roobaert

L'OFFICIEL ART: Keeping a gallery relevant for over three decades is not an easy task. What's your secret?

GRETA MEERT: When I look back 33 years later, I have to say that it's something you have to be very dedicated to. In order to keep the energy in it for such a long time, you need to give it all your time and attention. You need to keep it intelligent and focused, making sure the artists you select are proud to be part of the gallery, and at the same time you need to stay interesting for your colleagues, yourself, the visitors, but also for being admitted to important art fairs such as Basel. This pressure to be serious means you are studying all your life.

How did you arrive at this level of success?

I was lucky to be surrounded by the right group of friends and thinkers early on. I listened and learned. I was curious and cultivated myself as an autodidact. You need to keep educating yourself. How do you become respected or important? It's the

artists you select. At least that's my way of working. If you're consequent in your thinking, and work seriously and honestly, artists feel it. As I grew up with an artist father, I know the struggles of artists, their fragility, and their need for compliments. The biggest compliment is somebody acquiring their work. If you don't sell, it's hard, not because of the money, but because "nobody wanted to live with my work".

Did you ever feel it mattered if you were a woman or a man?

No. In the past, most gallerists were women. Just take Mary Boone, Paula Cooper, Barbara Gladstone... there are so many. In the last 15 years or so, this changed, and men took over. They approach it more like a business, and I think the internationalization with galleries having branches all over the world is largely due to them. I do remember a remark from a collector that really shocked me. He said: "Greta, she's the mother of the artists." I hated it. It diminishes my work. It's also a very negative vision of the artists. They don't

want to be nurtured, they want to be listened to and respected. I am the mother of my sons, not of my artists.

Do you still take new ones onto your roster?

Yes. Take our latest exhibition for example, a group exhibition on painting. It was necessary in this selection to mix older with newer artists. So we included younger artists we are interested in working with, and that we want to continue to pursue. It's a good way to get to know them better.

Any advice you'd like to pass on?

I think life is a result of coincidences. You have to follow your feelings. The only thing I want to say to the younger generation: I was 38 when I started the gallery. You can start something at any time. Don't think you're old when you're 45.

Di fuochi e accesi sensi:
painting - group exhibition
From September 15 to October 19

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