



CAREER IN FOCUS

ROSANNE McDONNELL

The solicitor and co-founder of Art\$ummit Ireland has turned a passion for art into a specialised career, says **MEG WALKER**.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME INTERESTED IN ART?

My mother did a lot of painting when we were growing up; being surrounded by her creativity was a big influence. My best friend's parents were also artists. I have fond memories of her dad, Dieter Blodau's studio. We're still great friends, and Dieter has an exhibition celebrating his 80th birthday at Limerick's Hunt Museum in December.

I merged art and law when I became more established in my legal career. At present, there is no formal education in Ireland that specialises in art law and art business. I realised I had to travel, so attended conferences in London, New York, Switzerland and various parts of Europe. I immersed myself in understanding the legal and business challenges that faced these markets and adapted them to the Irish situation. It wasn't long before I started to build a network of experts both within Ireland and abroad.

MANY PEOPLE START AN ART COLLECTION WITHOUT KNOWING THE LOOPHOLES – WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THEM?

I'd advise anyone starting out to consult with an experienced art gallerist or dealer. Often when buying art, you will need patience and a keen eye and understanding of the market. Whether you employ the expertise of a dealer or go it alone, it helps to understand how the art market works. To do that you need to understand the basic working of the art ecosystem and its impact on the market. This is the theme for this year's Art\$ummit Ireland.

WHAT SPARKED THE IDEA FOR ART\$UMMIT? There's never been an independent art business conference in Ireland focusing on the art collector in commercial terms. Art\$ummit Ireland provides an open

discussion on all aspects of the market in an independent forum. It explains the importance of the art ecosystem and how it works in order to create value in an artist's work. It educates on how to invest wisely, whether it's in a young emerging artist or an Old Master. It will take the audience on an informative evening with networking and investment opportunities. There's also a tour, led by a member of the National Gallery of Ireland, of The Merrion's outstanding collection.

WERE THERE ANY OBSTACLES IN GETTING ART\$UMMIT OFF THE GROUND?

People do not think there's an art market in Ireland and that it pertains only to the international hubs of London and New York. However, there has always been a healthy art market here. We're privileged to have a legacy of internationally recognised artists, such as Jack B Yeats, Francis Bacon and Sean Scully. Irish art needs the support of patrons to collect their work, build value in their work, and thereby sustain their resilience and longevity in the market, both at home and abroad.

HOW HAS THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AFFECTED THE WAY WE INVEST IN ART?

Social media has made art more accessible. You can analyse auction results and look at values and trends. However, the internet is limited in terms of the types of work it displays. There is so much in the real world that should be experienced. There's nothing like

sitting at an auction and feeling the energy in the room or walking through a gallery and looking up close at the artist's skill and time that's gone into the work. My advice is to be careful – you cannot assess the condition of an artwork online. Buying good art is based upon established relationships; there is comfort in going to a dealer or gallerist who knows your taste and what works you already have. Their expertise will help improve your collection.

ANY ADVICE FOR CAREERWOMEN WHO WANT TO EXPAND THEIR JOBS TO INCORPORATE THEIR PASSIONS?

Yes – start now. Educate yourself by attending conferences, building networks and carrying out independent research. I understand that in today's world, email and social media is the new way to communicate, but there is nothing better than picking up the phone to a colleague or peer and asking if they're free to meet for a coffee. Face to face meetings create trust and strong business relationships. You need to show integrity and respect for those already in that business, and in time, this respect will be reciprocated.

Art\$ummit Ireland runs November 3 at The Merrion Hotel, Dublin. For Tickets, from €266, visit artsummitireland.com.

WORK UNIFORM I tend to wear dresses. This time of year, I love opaque tights with a nice heel – style and comfort is key. **ULTIMATE WAY TO SPEND DOWNTIME** With my husband and four children.

FAVOURITE PLACE TO UNWIND The beach – I feel so lucky to be alive when I'm watching the waves. **YOUR RITUAL TO WARD OFF STRESS** I live in the countryside, so for me, fresh air is a must.