Interview with Art Dealer and Curator Lia Sosiaranko

Photo: Alexei Vinogradov

Check out our interview with art dealer, curator, and founder of Art Access Gallery in West Hollywood, Lia Sosiaranko. Lia Sosiaranko is a Ukrainian-American art dealer, curator, and founder of Art Access Gallery in West Hollywood, specializing in contemporary art from the Russian-Ukrainian sphere. Having moved to the United States through geopolitical conflicts, Lia intimately understands the struggles faced by these diffused.

Lia's personal life first drew her into the Ukrainian-Jewish, Russian, Russian-Jewish diasporas, an innocuous collection of 20 elements inextricably weaving together elements of distinction and commonality. Her mission is to bring the overlooked and thought-provoking works that pass through her gallery into focus.

Follow Lia @lia.sosiaranko

Hi Lia, please tell us a little about yourself.

Hi! I'm Lia Sosiaranko, art dealer, curator, and the founder of Art Access Gallery in West Hollywood. My journey in the art world has been shaped by my background as a Ukrainian-American and by the challenges of building thriving contemporary art spaces from scratch, a mission that's close to my heart. Over the past years, I've worked extensively in the international art market, from my role as an advisor has allowed me to navigate complex cross-cultural dynamics and bring fresh perspectives to collectors and institutions alike. I have also renovated collections in New York, Malibu, and Aspen.

Art Access, my gallery in West Hollywood, is more than a space for showcasing art. It's a platform for emerging artists and a sanctuary for supporting underrepresented voices in the contemporary art scene. It's a place where art and collectors can connect, exchange ideas, and foster meaningful relationships. I'm passionate about creating a space that's welcoming and inclusive, offering insight into perspectives that challenge and enrich the art world. Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to a cultural exchange that's mutually beneficial and enriching, ensuring that the art I bring to the gallery is a meaningful contribution to the art world.

My dedication to artistic diversity is driven not only by national and ethnic but also by personal experiences. Having survived the Russian-Ukrainian war and the traumatic experience of being trapped in occupied territories, I understand the profound impact art can have on personal growth and healing collective and personal trauma.

Describe yourself in three words.

Visionary. Dedicated. Compassion.

When did you start in the business?

I began my journey in the art business over six years ago. This experience has been instrumental in shaping my approach to art curation and dealership, especially in promoting Ukrainian contemporary art. I opened my gallery, Art Access, in 2020.

Name one of your strengths.

One of my key strengths is identifying and nurturing emerging talent. This skill has been essential in discovering and promoting new and innovative voices in contemporary art.

What is the key to your success?

My success can largely be attributed to my ability to forge meaningful connections between my artists, collectors, and influential figures in the art world. This branch for building relationships and networks has been crucial in establishing and sustaining my contemporary Ukrainian art as a force in the market.

What is fun and rewarding about what you do? And what's not?

The most rewarding aspect of my work is seeing the impact it has on both the artists and the art community. It's incredible to witness how my efforts to promote and support these artists can create ripples that extend through art. Each successful exhibition or placement of artwork in a collection feels like a small victory.

On the flip side, the challenges can be quite daunting. Navigating the complexities of the international art market, especially under geopolitical conflicts like the ongoing war in Ukraine, can be quite challenging. Additionally, the responsibility of accurately representing and promoting artists' works requires constant vigilance and dedication. Ultimately, it's a rewarding challenge.

Now what about your gallery 'Art Access?'

Art Access, my gallery in West Hollywood, is more than just a contemporary space dedicated to promoting Ukrainian and other emerging artists. It's a place where art and community come together. The gallery is a cultural exchange and for attracting international collectors and art enthusiasts, ensuring that the artists that offer fresh perspectives and challenge conventional views in the Western art scene.

The gallery's commitment to diversity and inclusivity is evident in its curation, with a focus on accessibility to a wide audience. We host a variety of events and exhibitions, aiming to create a dialogue between artists and the community. The gallery's mission is to foster a vibrant cultural exchange and promoting and appreciation of Eastern European art.

Running Art Access is both exhilarating and challenging. It requires a careful balance of artistic vision and business acumen. However, the opportunity to bring new and innovative art to the forefront and to contribute to the careers of talented artists is incredibly fulfilling and drives the essence of what we do at Art Access.

What inspired you to open an art gallery, and how did you get started in this field?

My inspiration to open an art gallery stems from a deep-rooted passion for art and a desire to create a space that fosters cultural exchange and supports emerging artists from underrepresented backgrounds. My heritage and the cultural nuances of Ukraine contributed to my personal experiences, leading me to discover these unique artistic voices in a broader audience. Getting started in this field involved a blend of passion, perseverance and practical expertise. My educational background, art degree in Art Law and Arts and Business, provided a strong foundation. My studies at Christian Education in New York were particularly influential, offering insights into the intersection of art and business.

The journey began with building connections in the art world, working as an advisor, and gaining hands-on experience in various aspects of the art market. This multifaceted approach allowed me to understand the art curation and dealership. The decision to open a gallery was driven by the desire to create a dedicated space for Ukrainian contemporary art and to foster cultural dialogue through art exhibitions and cultural events. The gallery is a culmination of my vision, dedication, and commitment to the art community.

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How do you decide which artists or art pieces to showcase in your gallery?

I follow a few key guidelines when deciding which artists or art pieces to showcase in Art Access Gallery. Firstly, I focus on underrepresented voices, particularly emerging Ukrainian contemporary artists who bring fresh perspectives and unique styles to the art scene. It's important for me to provide a platform for these artists to gain exposure and recognition.

Secondly, I consider the diversity of my clients. Understanding their preferences and tastes is crucial in curating a selection that resonates with them. This client-centric approach ensures that the artwork we exhibit not only enriches the art scene but also appeals to them and creates a sense of value and relevance.

Lastly, staying abreast of art market trends is essential. The art world is dynamic, and keeping a finger on the pulse of these trends allows me to anticipate which artists and pieces might gain traction in the future. This foresight helps me make informed decisions about which artists to support and promote, ensuring that our gallery remains at the forefront of the art scene.

Have you encountered any significant trends in the art world recently, and how have they influenced your gallery's direction?

Indeed, there are a few key trends in the art world that have significantly influenced the direction of Art Access Gallery.

Firstly, there's a growing interest in abstract paintings, particularly in non-figurative and minimalist styles. This trend has influenced our gallery to feature more abstract artworks that resonate with our clientele, who appreciate the unique and thought-provoking nature of these pieces. Additionally, the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian artistic, the work specifically embodies the innovation and boundary-pushing spirit we aim to showcase in our gallery.

Another significant trend is the blending of physical and digital spaces in the contemporary art market. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of virtual galleries and online exhibitions, which has allowed us to connect with a wider audience and participate in more opportunities. This hybrid approach has enhanced our gallery's visibility and accessibility, ensuring that we can showcase our artists to a global audience.

Lastly, we are seeing a trend towards focusing on younger collectors and artists. This reflects a generational shift in the art world, with more emphasis on social media and digital platforms. This trend has influenced our gallery to be more active in our approach to engaging with these younger collectors and artists, which helps us building a community around the gallery.

How do you collect and engage with your audience, especially in an increasingly digital world?

Attracting and engaging with our audience is today's digital world involves a multi-faceted approach that combines traditional gallery experiences with innovative digital strategies.

We leverage social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share high-quality images and videos of our artworks and upcoming events. This helps us reach a wider audience and maintain a strong presence in the art community.

Email marketing is another tool we use to engage with our audience. By sending out regular newsletters, we can keep our subscribers informed about upcoming exhibitions, artist features, and special offers. This ensures that our audience is always aware of what's happening at the gallery.

Collaborations with other galleries, artists, and organizations also play a significant role in our strategy. These partnerships allow us to cross-promote events and reach a wider audience.

Finally, we organize various events and exhibitions to bring our community together in person. These events provide an opportunity for growth and learning, and addressing them head on is a vital step in building a gallery that's welcoming and inclusive.

What are some of the biggest challenges you face as a gallery owner, and how do you address them?

As a gallery owner, there are several challenges that I face, each requiring a unique approach to address them effectively.

One of the biggest challenges is staying relevant in the ever-evolving art market. This industry is dynamic, with trends and tastes constantly shifting. To address this, I focus on staying informed about the latest trends and emerging artists. I also make it a point to attend exhibitions, art fairs, and events, which helps me maintain a deep understanding of the market.

Another significant challenge is balancing the commercial aspects of running a gallery with the artistic vision. The art world is not just about creativity; it's also a business. To tackle this, I focus on sound financial management and strategic planning, ensuring that the gallery remains financially stable while supporting artists' integrity.

Marketing and building relationships in the art world can also be demanding. Establishing connections with artists, collectors, and other galleries is crucial for success. I address this by actively participating in industry events, leveraging social media to connect with artists and collectors, and maintaining a strong presence online to foster a community around the gallery.

Ultimately, the ninth towards diversification poses both an opportunity and a challenge. Embracing digital tools and online platforms has enhanced our reach and flexibility. We're continually exploring digital strategies to enhance our online presence and reach a wider audience.

Each of these challenges presents an opportunity for growth and learning, and addressing them head on is vital in building a gallery that's thriving and sustainable.

How do you interact and engage with your audience, especially in an increasingly digital world?

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Are there any particular artists or art movements that you are personally fond of or would recommend to new collectors?

As an art dealer and curator with a passion for contemporary art, there are several artists and art movements I personally admire.

I'm fond of contemporary Ukrainian-Jewish diaspora artist Mariana Kiyanovska, a great World War II art recommended known for her focus on spontaneous, authentic, or subconscious creation. Mentalism is another movement that I find intriguing, as it delves into the realm of the subconscious and dreams, creating artworks that are profoundly impactful. Abstraction of realism and of a variety of styles and approaches to collectors who appreciate a more modern, understated aesthetic.

In terms of contemporary artists, I am particularly drawn to those who are innovating within these movements or blending different styles to create something unique. Ukrainian artist Tetiana, Tetiana's art exemplifies the blending of traditional and modern elements, creating a unique and thought-provoking aesthetic.

For new collectors, I often recommend starting with emerging artists. These artists often have perspectives that challenge the conventional norms of movement. Collecting works from emerging artists not only provides the unique opportunity to support and follow an artist's career as it evolves.

Ultimately, the most important thing for new collectors is to choose pieces that resonate with them personally. Art collecting is not just about financial investment; it's about building pieces that speak to you and enhance your living space. Therefore, artists can provide guidance, I always encourage collectors to trust their instincts and choose art that they feel a personal connection with.

What advice would you give to someone who is new to art collecting or interested in starting their own collection?

I would emphasize the importance of education and personal exploration for anyone new to art collecting or looking to start their collection.

It's crucial to start with a solid foundation of knowledge. Engage in learning about different art forms, movements, artists, and the market dynamics. This knowledge will guide your decisions and help you avoiding. Perhaps the most important aspect of collecting art is to develop a personal connection with pieces. Spend time exploring different types of art to see what truly resonates with you. This could be a specific art movement, a particular artist, or even a style that reminds you of something from your childhood or your journey and tastes. It's not just about the monetary value of the pieces but about how they speak to you and fit into your life.

What are your future goals for the gallery, and how do you see it evolving in the coming years?

Looking towards the future of Art Access Gallery, our goals are centered around growth, collaboration, and broader participation in the community.

A key goal is to expand the range of artists we represent. This means not only increasing the number of artists we work with but also ensuring that we continue to feature a diverse range of talents and perspectives, a wider array of mediums and artistic expressions to our audience.

Technic strategy is the power of collaboration in the coming years. I plan to forge partnerships with other galleries, artists, and organizations, and venues. These collaborations can take many forms, from joint exhibitions to co-hosted events. Such partnerships not only enhance our gallery's offerings but also strengthen our presence in the art community.

In the future, I aim Art Access being a hub for creative ideas. These events are vital platforms for the art community, fostering networking opportunities and the chance to keep abreast of the latest trends and market dynamics. Participation in art fairs and allows us to showcase our artists to a broader audience and connect with collectors, curators, and other professionals in the art world.

Overall, the vision for Art Access Gallery is to grow as a dynamic and influential space in the contemporary art scene. We aim to foster meaningful connections, collaborate with partners, and ensure our offerings remain relevant and impactful.

The art business is very competitive. What do you do to stay on top of the game and to promote your gallery?

Staying competitive in the art business requires a strategic and multifaceted approach. We focus on curating unique and engaging exhibitions that draw interest from both regular patrons and new visitors. By ensuring our exhibitions are diverse and high-quality, we maintain our reputation and attract a wide audience. We also actively participate in art fairs and networking events to stay abreast of trends and connect with other galleries and collectors.

In today's digital age, leveraging a strong online presence is crucial. We maintain an active and engaging social media presence, using platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share high-quality images of our artworks and promote our gallery to a broader audience.

Establishing and maintaining strong relationships within the art community is vital. This includes connecting with artists, collectors, other gallery owners, and art critics. Networking helps in creating opportunities for collaborations and staying informed about industry trends.

Attending art fairs and industry events is essential for visibility and keeping up with market trends.

Providing personalized experiences for our clients engaging with them through events, private viewings, and personalized tours helps us build loyalty and ensure repeat business. We also offer various payment options, including credit cards, and use technologies like an iPad to conduct transactions seamlessly and adaptation ensures the gallery remains relevant and ahead of the curve.

Any advice to entrepreneurs out there?

Entrepreneurs, I would say that patience and persistence are crucial. It's important to see failures as learning opportunities. Stay open to feedback, adapt, and keep moving forward. Remember, success doesn't come in a journey with its highs and lows. Stay committed, be patient, and keep pushing forward. Your unique vision and perseverance will pay off in the long run.

What book should every entrepreneur read?

I highly recommend reading "Principles" by Ray Dalio. Dalio, the founder of Bridgewater Associates, one of the world's largest hedge funds, shares his decision-making principles that have served him well over his career. It covers unique insights that will be invaluable.

The book is particularly valuable for entrepreneurs because it offers a candid look into the thought processes and management strategies of a highly successful business leader. Dalio emphasizes the importance of radical transparency and thoughtful disagreement in organizational cultures, which can be invaluable for anyone running a business.

Dalio also delves into personal growth and learning from mistakes, stressing the importance of setting ambitious goals and learning from setbacks and the challenges and setbacks that arise in pursuing them.

Overall, "Principles" provides a blend of personal anecdotes and professional advice, offering insights that can be applied not just to entrepreneurship but to life decisions as well. It's a book that encourages readers to think critically about their own principles and how they can apply them to achieve their goals.

What is your self-definition of happiness?

My definition of happiness is a state of fulfillment and contentment that comes from pursuing and living in alignment with my values and passions. It's about finding a balance between three components: personal growth, meaningful work, and relationships. Happiness, to me, is not a constant state of euphoria but rather a deep sense of satisfaction and gratitude for the journey of life, with all its ups and downs. It's about embracing both the successes and the challenges, as they are all integral to personal development and fulfillment.

Moreover, happiness involves connecting with others, contributing to something larger than myself, and maintaining a sense of curiosity and learning. It's about staying open to new experiences and continuously refining my perspective to maintain and nurture.

What is next for Lia Sosiaranko in 2024?

Looking ahead to 2024, my focus will be on further expanding and enhancing the impact of Art Access Gallery.

Something people don't know about you?

One aspect of my life that people may not know about is my deep interest in cultural anthropology. Aside from my professional pursuits in the art world, I have a fascination with how different cultures and societies perceive and interpret the world around them. This interest has influenced my approach to curating and promoting art, ensuring that our gallery showcases a diverse range of perspectives and narratives.

Additionally, I have a passion for travel and exploring new cultures firsthand. This passion has led me to travel extensively and immerse myself in various cultural environments. Through this journey, I have learned to more open-minded and adaptable, which has enriched my personal and professional life. It's also worth mentioning that my background in art and culture has allowed me to develop a unique perspective on the intersection of art and culture, a skill that has proven to be an important part of my work and life.

Who was your role model as a child?

As a child, my role model was my grandfather. He was a remarkable individual, known for his wisdom, kindness, and the way he lived his life with a sense of purpose and integrity. My grandfather was a teacher and a doctor, and his dedication and compassion in his roles left a lasting impact on me. He was a man of deep values and outlook. His approach to life, which emphasized integrity, perseverance, and compassion, left a lasting impression on me. The lessons he taught me about the importance of staying true to oneself and treating others with respect and empathy. These lessons have been invaluable in my journey, influencing my decisions and interactions with people and artists. The impact of his guidance is evident in my commitment to promoting cultural understanding and exchange in the art world. My role model in childhood, my grandfather, continues to inspire me in various aspects of my life.

What is your favorite song to belt out in the car or for karaoke?

"Girl Gone Wild" by Madonna. It's such a high-energy and empowering song, with a catchy beat that's perfect for belting out.

3 things you can't leave home without

Phone, car keys, lip balm

Fear of a perfect Sunday?

Fear of a perfect Sunday evokes mixed sensations and emotions. It's a concept that can be both exciting and daunting. The idea of having a day where everything goes smoothly, where all tasks are completed efficiently, and where you feel productive and accomplished can be appealing. However, the pressure to maintain this perfection can lead to stress and anxiety. The fear of not being able to meet these high standards can prevent you from enjoying the day to the fullest. It's important to remember that perfection is an illusion and that life is inherently imperfect. Embracing the unexpected and allowing for flexibility in your plans can help you enjoy the day more fully and reduce the pressure to achieve perfection.

pool in my backyard, immersed in the tranquility of my own space.

I'd start with a refreshing swim, followed by some quality time lounging with a good book, letting myself get lost in its pages. To add to the ambiance, I'd have a pot of tea, enjoying its soothing warmth and aroma as I relax. This combination of leisurely activities in the comfort of my home provides a perfect balance of relaxation and indulgence, recharging me for the week ahead. Sundays like these are a gentle reminder of the joys found in life's simple pleasures.

What do you think of Social Media?

My view on social media is that it's a powerful and multifaceted tool. It has the potential to be immensely beneficial, especially in the art world, where it serves as a platform for artists to showcase their work, connect with audiences globally, and build communities around shared interests.

However, it's also important to approach social media with a degree of mindfulness. The digital space can sometimes create pressures around constant connectivity and the need to present a curated image of success or perfection. Balancing its use, ensuring it serves a purpose without overwhelming or dictating one's life or business strategy, is key.

Where can we follow you?

Instagram @lia.artaxcess
Website: www.artaxcess.com
Artsy.net: Art Axcess Gallery

Quote: "Don't worry about looking good. Worry about achieving your goals." — Ray Dalio

Actor/Actress: Matthew McConaughey

Drink: Water

City: Los Angeles

Movie: Interstellar

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