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A NEW FORCE
IN THE ART WORLD
KELLY YING

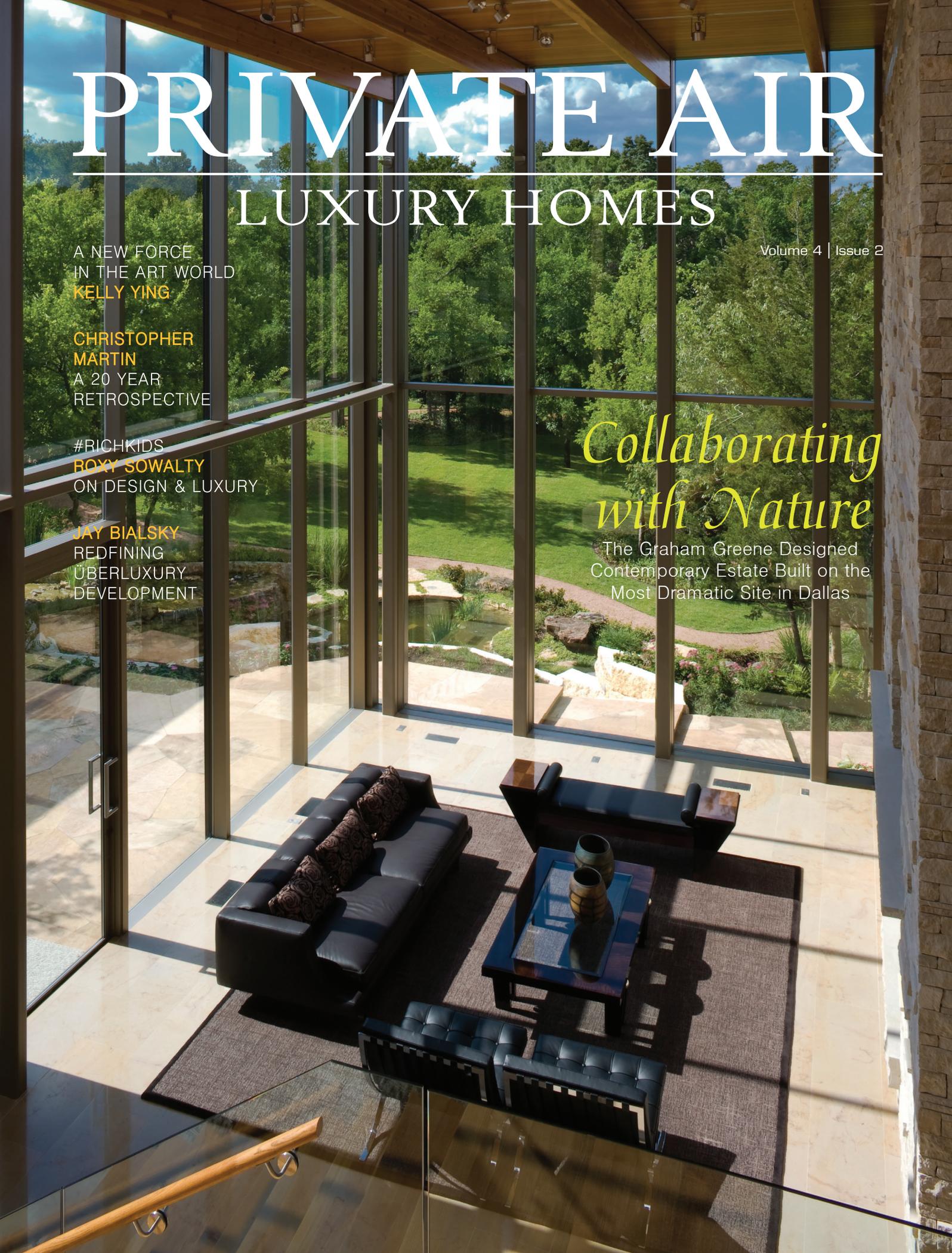
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A NEW FORCE IN THE ART WORLD

Kelly Ying,
Former Fashion
Industry Maven,
Co-founder of
Shanghai's Art021,
Wife of Art
Collector David
Chau, Shares
Her Passion for
Collecting Art

By: Mandy Hegarty

In the past, Western art was typically the preserve of wealthy Westerners, while Chinese collectors tended to focus solely on Asian works. But these days, a new group of young Chinese collectors are emerging and making their influence felt in the art realm, both in auction houses and in galleries across the globe.

Whereas once Chinese collectors fixed their attention on domestic talent, now there is a new generation who no longer feel constrained by home ties. Their interests stretch beyond China's borders and their collections are often international in scope.

What is more, these extremely discerning buyers are not just restricting themselves to blue-chip Western art, they are also snapping up works from lesser-known contemporary names. Hailing from Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong, this new crop of cosmopolites is the product of China's increasingly wealthy urban environments. As sales of property and luxury goods soar among this demographic, it comes as no surprise that they've also turned their attention to art.

Among the well-educated, fresh-faced Chinese collectors making their mark on the art scene is Kelly Ying, a young and prominent collector based in Shanghai. Ying is married to David Chau, who is a well-established art collector in his own right, having assembled an impressive and valuable collection of artworks and rare Chinese coins.

Ying, who holds a master's degree in mass communication, has a background in fashion. She worked for the esteemed fashion magazine *Vogue*, before transitioning into the art world. Art has, however, always had a presence in her life. "My mother has worked in the art field for tens of years. She has many friends who are renowned artists. Therefore, I grew up in a very artistic atmosphere," says Ying. This influence is at least partly responsible for her decision to begin collecting, "I think it is mainly because of my family. The outside environment is very important after all," she muses.



Above: Kelly Ying's Art Collection includes Mark Hagen's *A Parliament of Some Things* (Additive and Subtractive Sculpture, Titanium Screen, Panels 3, 4, 5), 2014

THE ART OF COLLECTING

Key to acquiring art is knowing where to look and this is especially true when it comes to contemporary works. Of course, there are established art fairs and institutions, but to spot emerging artists at an early stage of their career, you have to visit up and coming galleries and studios. Recalling her first art purchase, Ying says, "I went to meet the young artists in Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. I saw a young artist's work, which was very street-style and very interesting. So I asked him to draw a painting for me and I loved the painting in the end. I've kept that painting since then," said Ying. "The artist's name is Li Zan, who should still be teaching in Sichuan Fine Arts Institute right now."

For Ying, collecting must be driven first by passion, one that is felt most in the initial instinctive connection between a viewer and the artwork. "First must be the passion and love. Collecting mainly for investment purpose cannot be called collecting," asserts Ying. "[Upon seeing a new artwork], the first feeling is very important. But then I will try to analyze the artist in a rational way."

Over the past three or four years, Ying has continued to acquire new pieces and discover more artists. "If I find it [the artwork] interesting," she says. "I would love to meet with the artist and go to visit his or her studio. I want to have a thorough understanding of an artist before buying his or her work."

Ying now collects with gusto and has amassed a mainly contemporary collection that encompasses paintings, sculptures and installations. It is not restricted by medium nor by geography. "My collection first focused on the Chinese contemporary artists, but I began to pay more attention to international artists a few years ago," explains Ying, who has so far avoided assigning a theme to her collection. "I feel that I am only starting my collection journey now and it is too early to draw a clue and decide a theme for my collection. Only when the collection has reached a certain level in terms of the amount can you do that. I need to accumulate more and that can help me to change from [looking at it] quantitatively to qualitatively."

YING'S COLLECTION

Ying can't put an exact figure on the number of works in her collection, but even so, the quality and breadth is enviable. Among the artists represented is Mark Hagen, a Los Angeles-based artist who, having staged solo exhibitions in Almine Rech Gallery in London and Marlborough Chelsea in New York, has been drawing increased interest from collectors, curators and critics. Then there is Yoshitomo Nara, a wildly popular Japanese artist best known for his cartoon-like portrayals of children and animals with fiendish expressions.

There are also many Chinese artworks counted among the collection. Ying owns pieces by Shanghai-based Zhang'en Li (whose "Four Seasons" solo exhibition is showing in Hauser & Wirth in Somerset, England from March 7), and the highly acclaimed Beijing-based artist Liu Wei, as well as Yang Fudong, one of the most eminent and internationally recognized Chinese names in the global art market. And these names are just a few of many.

Ying insists there are "no favorites" within her collection. "There must be something about the art work that touches you to make you buy it. Therefore, each artwork that I decide to add to my collection is my favorite. Take Li Wei's work for example. Compared with his paintings — of course the market value of paintings are higher than other art forms comparatively speaking — I prefer his installation works more. No matter whether it is in wood, porcelain, steel, or old books, they are all very compelling."



ABOVE: The Always Fashionable Kelly Ying. BELOW: Art Installations at Shanghai's Art021 Art Fair

OTHER ART ENDEAVORS

Ying's art-related pursuits don't stop at collecting. She is also the brains behind Shanghai's Art021 Art Fair, which held its successful second edition in November 2014 and is scheduled to hold its third edition later in 2015. Hosted in a historical building in Shanghai's waterfront Bund area, the nascent fair attracted more than 60 galleries and institutions, including international gallery heavyweights such as the White Cube, Marian Goodman and Lehmann Maupin, as well the shining stars of China's domestic gallery scene, such as Shanghart, Long March, and Pace Beijing. The name of the fair, Ying explains, "comes from the zip code for Shanghai, and also now we are in the 21st century."

Shanghai already had its own well-established and long-running art fair, but as the ever-prosperous city continues to play an important part both in China's cultural development, and in the global art market, Ying feels there is room for more development. "We just felt that an international city like Shanghai needs an exquisite, international, and young art fair," she says.

As Ying continues to grow her own collection, one wonders what strategies or tips she might share with the next generation of budding young collectors. "In my opinion, the people who just start their collection should not rush," advises Ying. "They should see more artworks, listen to other people's advice and go to as many exhibitions as they can. They should have a thorough understanding about the artworks and artists before starting the collection. And they should also know what they want eventually." ✈

