



St. Moritz is a wonderful place to exhibit art

by Marina U. Fuchs
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Verrät seine weiteren Pläne: Galerist Vito Schnabel wird in St. Moritz ab Juli eine Gruppenausstellung zeigen.

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The art dealer and curator Vito Schnabel, son of the artist and film director Julian Schnabel, is based in New York. Since the winter of 2015/16, the 29 year old runs his first gallery in the former space of Bruno Bischofberger's former gallery.

Marina U. Fuchs in conversation with Vito Schnabel

Vito Schnabel Gallery is a new highlight in the top-class gallery scene in the upper Engadine. The youngest gallerist in the valley showed works by Urs Fischer (including a slow-burning sculpture of Bruno and Yoyo Bischofberger, made completely of wax), Sterling Ruby's enormous black stoves, Julian Schnabel's plate paintings and Ron Gorchov's abstract works that are currently on view.

Mr. Schnabel, you are an art dealer and curator from New York where you have a showroom, so why did you choose now and why St. Moritz to open your first gallery?

Bruno Bischofberger, who has had a gallery in St. Moritz since 1963, asked me if I was interested in his exhibition space in St. Moritz. I had already been looking for a place

outside of New York, for a new platform in Europe in order to exhibit there, and so I agreed. I took over the space last July. After doing some renovations, I opened the gallery in December 2015, with an exhibition of the Swiss artist Urs Fischer, who to me is one of the best artists in the world. In a way, you can say that I brought him home—his last exhibition in Switzerland was a while back. The entire show was an acknowledgment to Bruno Bischofberger and his wife Yoyo, who are not only friends to me, but who are family to me.

It has been almost 100 days since the opening of the gallery. Can you provide us a quick summary of how things have been going?

It was a successful start, I am very happy about the way everything has happened, and also the artists are very enthusiastic. That's the most important to me.

Do you have a personal connection to St. Moritz?

I have a long-time connection to St. Moritz. I was here as a child and also came later when I was younger to visit Bruno, to discuss art and art history with him, who he is and how he gets along with artists. It is a dialogue that

has never ended. He was and continues to be my mentor. My father and Bruno are old friends and have worked together for a long time, including working on the creation of my father's plate-paintings. I also have many friends here: collectors, gallerists, all kinds of people.

What is your gallery program, what drives you, and where does your success come from?

The most important thing to me is the art. I would like to show what I love and admire, what I stand for. It is a very personal connection. The business aspect is of secondary importance. Urs Fischer, for example, is a good friend of mine, and the opening exhibition was not only homage to Bruno but also to the history of the place.

Would you say that St. Moritz is an especially good place to sell art?

Not necessarily to sell art, but St. Moritz is a wonderful place to exhibit art. There are many people here who are interested in art. The Engadin is a place with a rich story and history: consider Giacometti, Nietzsche, Not Vital, and Warhol and Basquiat, who painted in the valley. It is simply a central place of global significance to the international public.

With a storm of flash, prominence, and a curious collection of people at the gallery for the opening among worldwide press, you've brought back a piece of the glamour that St. Moritz was known for in the past.

Do you have a reason / explanation for this?

No, I can't explain this but it is great that I can bring fresh new energy to St. Moritz. I very much enjoy the friendly and warm reception here. Perhaps the enthusiasm comes simply from the fact that I like to present new things

Could you say something about Ron Gorchoy, who you are currently showing in your new exhibition "Concord"?

I appreciate his work very much. I had my first solo exhibition with him eleven years ago, and since then have always wanted to work with him again. I wanted to have him here again at the beginning of this new chapter. It is his first solo exhibition in Switzerland. Unfortunately, he couldn't make it to the opening, but he will stop by during the course of the exhibition. Gorchoy is an American artist born in 1930. Since 1967 he has been a pioneer in painting curved surfaces and shaped canvases that recall shields of saddles. He was a member of a group of abstract painters that included Frank Stella, Blinky Palermo, and Ellsworth Kelly. He is included globally in many important collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art.

What makes a good artist in your opinion?

Anything that I haven't seen before catches my attention.

Do you have a favorite artist or artwork that you especially appreciate?

No, I am constantly looking to learn and discover something new. I find Jeff Elrod and Neo Rauch interesting. I appreciate Albert Oehlen a lot.

What inspires you in addition to your role as an art dealer, curator and gallerist?

I love films and great food; I have three restaurants in New York with a partner. I enjoy architecture. I just like to have creative people around me. I enjoy reading, writing stories for myself, listening to music, playing golf and tennis, and surfing.

What is important for you in life?

My family, satisfaction and freedom.