

Vito Schnabel on His New Dan Colen Show and Playing Pro Basketball | The young gallerist discusses his rising career

by Henri Neuendorf
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Dan Colen *Madonna and the Fairy* ("First they exchanged anecdotes and inclinations") (2002-03). Photo: courtesy Vito Schnabel Gallery.

After a decade-long curatorial career where he organized several pop-up exhibitions in New York, Vito Schnabel opened his own full-fledged gallery in the Swiss Alps in 2015, taking over the space previously occupied by the legendary Bruno Bischofsberger in the fashionable ski resort town of St. Moritz.

Representing a mixture of established artists such as Jeff Elrod, Urs Fischer, Sterling Ruby, and father Julian Schnabel, as well as mid-career artists Terence Koh and Harmony Korine, the young dealer's program flaunts both rigor and star power.

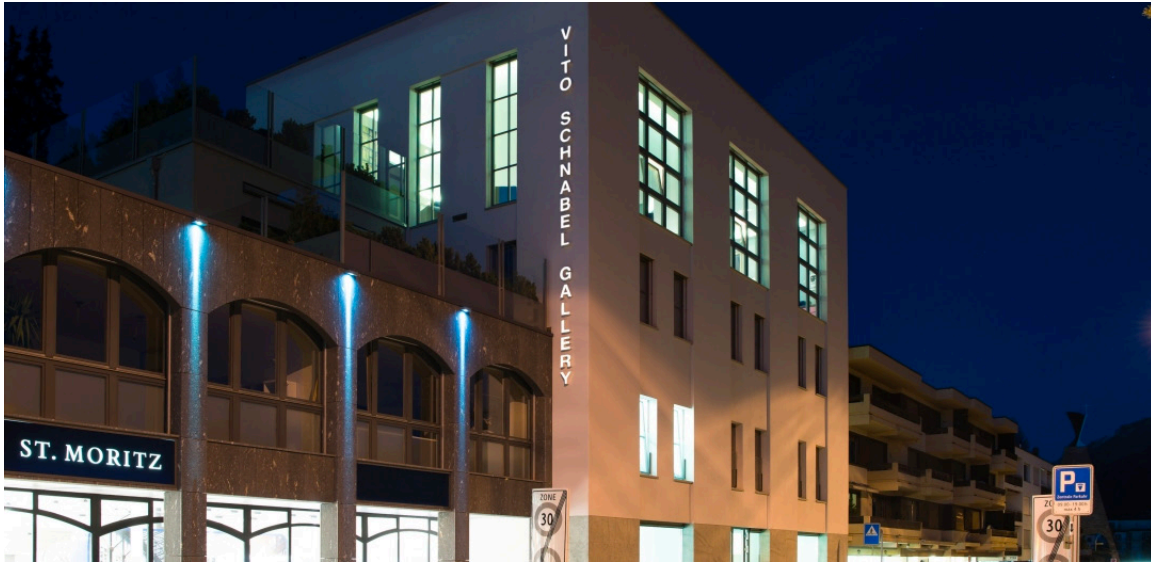
However, lately it seems like the gallerist is returning to his New York roots, opening a project space in Manhattan's West Village. On Tuesday, Schnabel opened an exhibition of paintings and sculpture by Dan Colen at the West Village gallery, a show that has been 15 years in the making.

And then there's the recently announced solo show of the octogenarian New York school painter Ron Gorchov, which will appear at Schnabel's West Village apartment, and opens in November.

As his latest exhibition gets underway, artnet News spoke to Schnabel about his gallery, his role models, and his dreams of playing professional basketball.

Can you speak about the development of your gallery from the pop-up format to your spaces in St. Moritz and New York?

I started off in 2005 presenting exhibitions in spaces that lent themselves to the art I was thinking about. The first show I put together was called Incubator, and featured some obscure and some more well-known art that I wanted to see together. Later, I looked for unique spaces that presented opportunities to hold exhibitions in.



Vito Schnabel Gallery, St Moritz. Photo: courtesy Vito Schnabel.

What is the differentiation between your project space in New York and the gallery in St. Moritz?

New York is my hometown. I have always had an office here and three years ago, I moved into a new space on Clarkson Street where we built out a gallery. I present shows here as well as in offsite locations, such as at the Moynihan Station, the Germania Bank Building on the Bowery, a cloistered garden in Venice, and the Tramshed in London.

The gallery in Switzerland, which opened in 2015, has an incredible history, having belonged to Bruno Bischofberger for many years. St. Moritz is also an incredibly special place—on the border of Switzerland and Italy, there is a very international population. It also has a rich history with artists—from Alberto Giacometti to Jean-Michel Basquiat to Andy Warhol to my father, many artists have spent a significant amount of time making work there.

How would you describe your program?

I always look for art that resonates with me. It's definitely a very personal process. From a Rene Ricard poem in the form of a painting, a Jeff Elrod Blur, a Ron Gorchov shield, a drawing of Laurie Anderson's—it is about the power of the work.

I have always admired the way in which Arne Glimcher transcended the role of gallerist. His relationship with his artists is based not only on his recognition of their genius, but also mutual respect and deep friendship. This is something I strive towards.

What do you look for in an artist?

Something I haven't seen before.

How did the exhibition with Dan Colen come about?

I have been collecting Dan's work for the past fifteen years. His work has been included in six group shows that I have organized. When I was 16, he said we could possibly do a show together when I was 29. I'm now 30. I'm very proud to show these incredibly important works.

How would you describe the significance of Dan Colen within contemporary art?

Dan is part of a group of artists who came out of NYC post-9/11, which I believe to be a very important moment in art in New York City. Over the past fifteen years, his work has continued to evolve and I always look forward to seeing what's next.

If you weren't a gallerist, what would you be?

Professional basketball player.