

Born an 'A

Art speaks to me, whilst
words are unable to explain

by Garance Massart-Blum



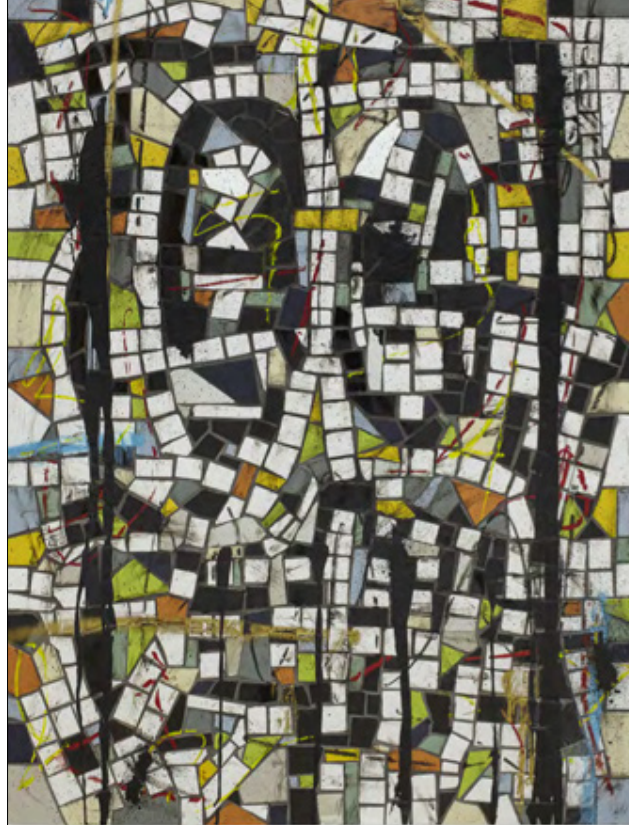
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For as long as I can remember, I have been an 'art junkie'. I was born in the seventies, in Paris, as the daughter of the first female auctioneer of France. A legacy that gave me no choice but to accept my destiny and heritage. I embraced art with passion, and later on, in adulthood, it became my career path.

My mother was a workaholic who held auctions every weekend. For me, as a child, this meant that I ended up spending most of my weekends looking - with curious eyes - at beautiful antiquities, ancient books, stunning paintings, and rare gemstones. From a tender age, my eyes became trained to appreciate the more refined things found in this world. Beauty was always an essential part of my upbringing. On Wednesdays after school, when I was not at the auction house, I would be helping with the layout and colour mood of Parisian printing company Copytop catalogues. These vivid memories remain engraved in my brain, making my art upbringing so very special.

One of my favourite winter-pastimes was to go through the upcoming Impressionist and Modern Art auction catalogues from *Sotheby's* or *Christies*. It was my entertainment when I was not visiting collectors, galleries, or museum exhibitions. To further amuse



myself, I would hide the description of the artwork on the left page. I would then try to guess from the image on the right, which artist it was, the year it was painted, and the price range estimate for that particular work. Some may find this a strange hobby for a 10-year-old. I found it fascinating as I immersed myself in a world of pure exquisiteness. Seeing all these artworks made me dream and taught my eye to recognise talent, styles, compositions, balance, and colours. In short, the ingredients that define a true masterpiece.

At the age of 11, we moved to London for my mother's art career. It was the beginning of my fascination with Contemporary Art and the *Tate Gallery*. I remember spending many rainy Saturdays meeting artists, going to exhibitions, and gallery openings. One year, at the *Tate*, the Gilbert and George show 'blew me away'; there was honesty, and the 'pictures' of these two diverse characters came across as massive and bold. My true love, however, combined with a deep fascination, lies solely with Francis Bacon whom I deeply admire. His tormented soul and fleshy paintings confronted me in my world through deep thought and perplexity, such as I had never seen before. For once, art could no longer be considered beautiful. Instead, it was intense and dynamic. Bacon's work is often overwhelming to look at, yet equally and at the same time, absorbing. I once had the incredible opportunity to meet him at the *Marlborough Gallery* - what an honour for a teenager to encounter one of Britain's most significant living artists (1909-1992). My peers at school dreamed of rendezvous with Madonna or Michael Jackson. Instead, I was excited to confront Francis Bacon. My other

Above, Rashid Johnson, *Untitled Broken Man*, 2018
 Left, Katharina Grosse, o.T., 2017
 Right, Günther Forg, *Ohne Titel*, 2007



dream would have been to meet Pablo Picasso, but sadly, I was born too late for that encounter.

Throughout my adolescence, my mother continued to busily travel the world, selling important Impressionist and Modern works of art. Some of these can still be viewed at various museums today.

In avoidance of unceasing globe-trotting, I enrolled in a Swiss boarding school for my A-Levels. Here, as part of my four subject choices, Art History and Art were, of course, included, with my main project being based on portraits by none other than naturally, Francis Bacon.



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Garance Massart-Blum





So as not to disappoint the ‘master’, I obtained an ‘A’ grade. My dissertation naturally continued down the same path as, at this point, I was living and breathing through Bacon’s work and his life. My college years in Boston were a continuance with a double major: in Art History and International Relations. This solely for reasons that I was not convinced of the possibilities to earn a living through only my passion. The International Relations bit was never actually used, but it looks good on paper. I spent my college years a little less artsy with a lot of socialising instead. My summer internships, however, were at various art galleries and museums.

My pre-destined US art career path changed as love conquered, and I moved to Germany to get married. Luckily, we were based part-time in Cologne (the ‘art capital’ of Germany), permitting me to continue my passion, albeit this time, from a collector’s perspective. My husband and I took pride in attending art fairs. Beginning with *Cologne Art Fair*, then *TEFAF Maastricht*, and later, a must – Art Basel. We began purchasing art together, building on a collection that my mother had so generously started. For every important event in my life, she had gifted me with a work of art. By the age of 25, my art-buying addiction was going full throttle, with emerging artists becoming progressively attractive and valuable. Time moved on, and with the ever-increasing limit to our wall space, a moment for proactivity arrived. I decided the time had come to start using my eyes, my new talent spotting intuition, as well as my art history knowledge. Combining these with my valuable contacts in a world of closed networks, I began advising clients in Europe.

The life of a junkie art nerd, however, needs nurturing. Having relocated to the beautiful town of Zurich, I enrolled in the master’s program of *Art Curating Zurich*. I managed to attend classes over the weekends, all while taking care of my two young children, and, on a part-time basis, advising my Middle-Eastern clients on their art purchases. It was thus that my Swiss art advising career began to blossom.

During this time, I met my future business partner. We wrote our master’s thesis on ‘airport art’ together. Its content was an account of how art can communicate, transporting transit passengers into another, parallel world. At this point, we founded our Swiss-based company, with our initial client being one of Europe’s most notable airport providers. A tailor-made art program for their new corporate headquarters came to life. The theme resonated travel, time, space, and transit, amongst others. We worked with emerging artists from the regions and countries to which our client had strong ties and relationships, combining these with world-famous contemporary ones.

It was a fascinating time and a ‘full-on’ project that spanned two and a half years. It taught me an incredible amount about corporate collecting and the creation of complicated, monumental, site-specific artworks. Creativity and the close working relationships with artists, are incredibly fulfilling and undoubtedly, the most inspiring side of my job. Nevertheless, I also love to browse through multiple international fairs and gallery openings. In my attempts to create magnificent collections for my clients, visiting the world’s biggest auctions each year is an additional plus. I have never advertised my endeavours. Instead, the art advising has grown organically over time, from Dubai, where I began in the early 2000s to today, and Zurich, where my office is based.

My clients are situated throughout the world and collect anything from Contemporary to Modern, some even Impressionist masterpieces. It is an enriching life, to not only be surrounded by beauty but also, to sell it. Knowing that an artwork that I sourced has found a new home makes me smile. It is a happiness that stems from the knowledge that a work’s ‘spirit’ may live on at a collector’s residence. To have made my passion into my career makes me, without a doubt, the luckiest art junkie in the world! H EDITION

Above, Francis Bacon, *Three Studies of George Dyer*, 1966.
Left, Gilbert & George, *England*, 1980