

# ART AND DEVELOPMENT A SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM

MICHAEL FINDLAY

Director of Acquavella Galleries  
New York



CÍRCULO ARTE Y MECENAZGO

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*Art and Development: A Sustainable Ecosystem*

Michael Findlay

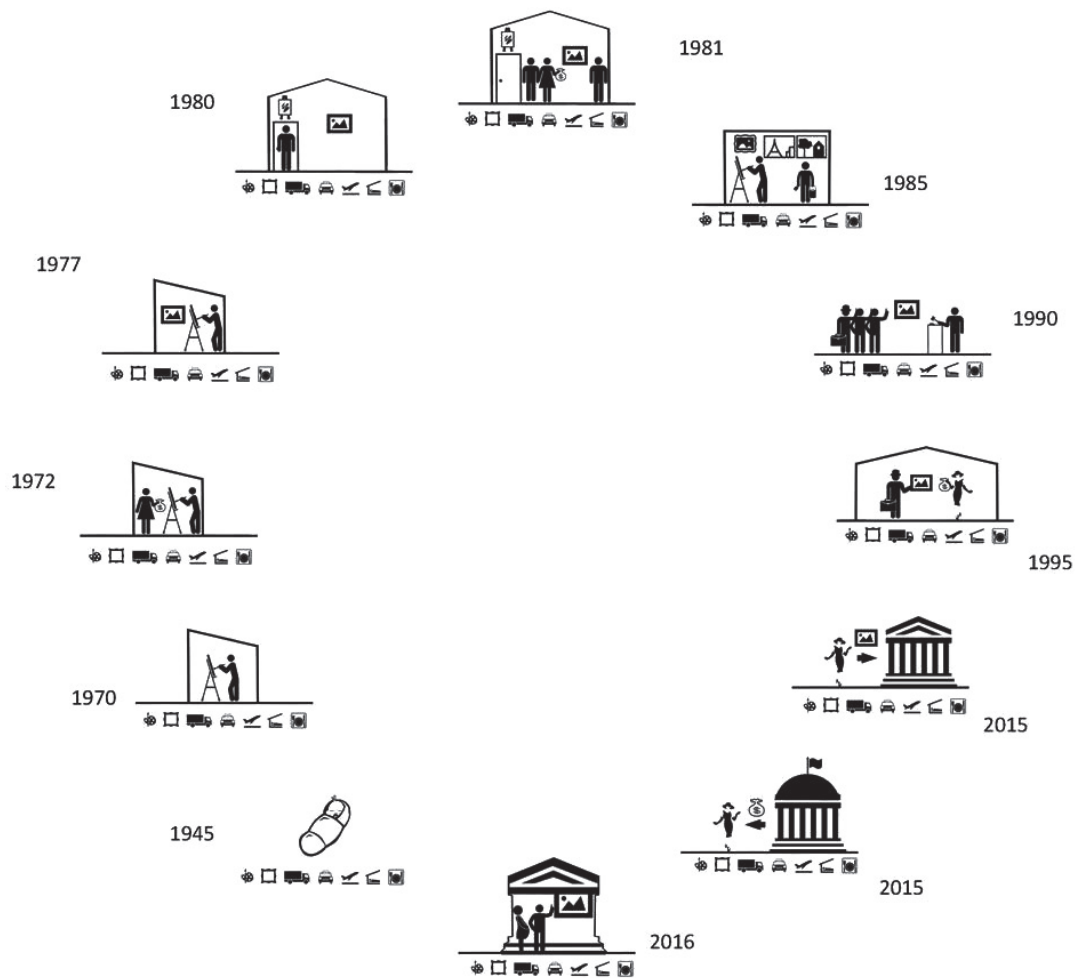
*Buenas tardes, señoras y señores.*

I am very, very grateful to be here, not only because of the invitation from the Trustees of the Art and Patronage Foundation, but because this is a city that I love. I haven't been here in maybe twelve years and I've already seen two fantastic exhibitions. I am going to see at least two more. Anything that I say which could be interpreted as remotely critical of the cultural ecosystem here is said either out of ignorance or out of some idea of friendly support.

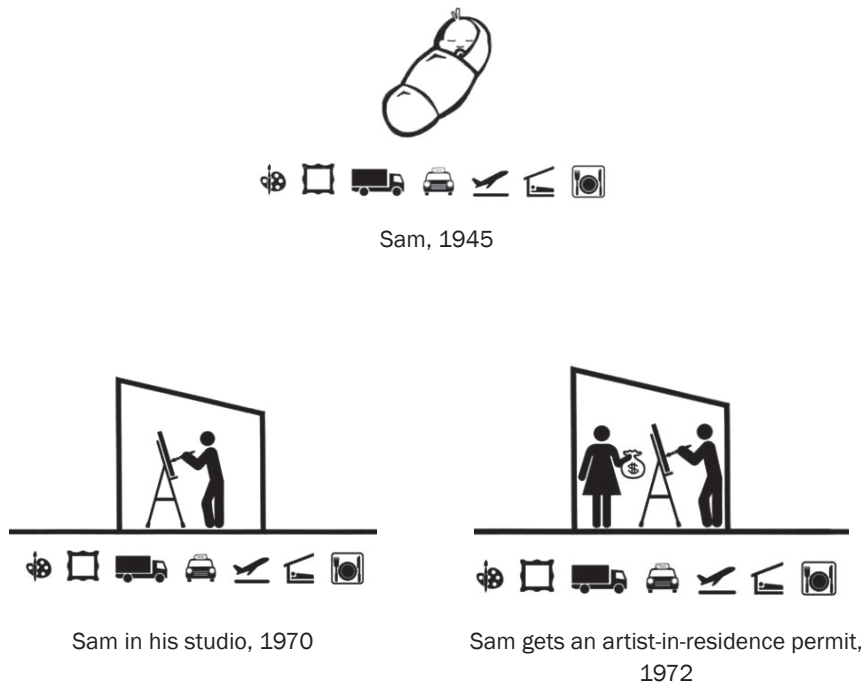
I think this Foundation is leading the way to establish new priorities for supporting art in Spain, and when Mercedes [Basso] asked me to talk it coincided with some ideas that I was putting together with colleagues of mine in New York, because we were trying to persuade the Mayor of the city of New York to support art in the same way that the city of New York supports Broadway theatre and supports the fashion industry. Which they do by spending a lot of money around the world, bringing people to the city of New York believing that the fashion industry and the Broadway theatre bring a lot of money into the ecosystem, or the economic system. And I took it upon myself, with the help of my 15-year-old daughter, to create a kind of cartoon parable of an idealised ecosystem that I believe has existed in New York.

Of course, we all think things start when we start, so I've started it in 1945 when I was born and I conclude it in 2016. So this is a parable of an ecosystem that develops slowly and organically [See image on p. 4].

Here we are in 1945... this is the artist being born [See image on p. 5]. We have a painting that we will concentrate on and which I have called *The Magic Mountain*. We have some other characters that we will meet. So, in each of these cartoon images I have repeated these symbols along the bottom: art supplies, framing, shipping, transportation, hotels and restaurants, because one of my firm beliefs is that at all stages of this system of growth and re-growth, money is spent in any community, in any region and in any city that is visible to the authorities,



Art and Development: A Sustainable Ecosystem  
Image of cartoon icons representing the life and career of a fictional artist called 'Sam'

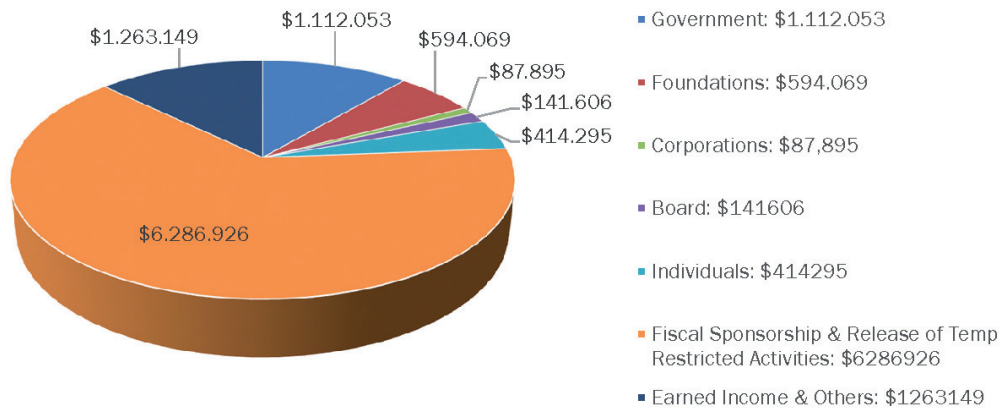


but invisible to the people who are saying we should pay less for culture because it is not really an important part of the economy. I want to emphasise that at every stage of my little story, money is being spent, not on incidentals but on things that become an essential part of the economic growth.

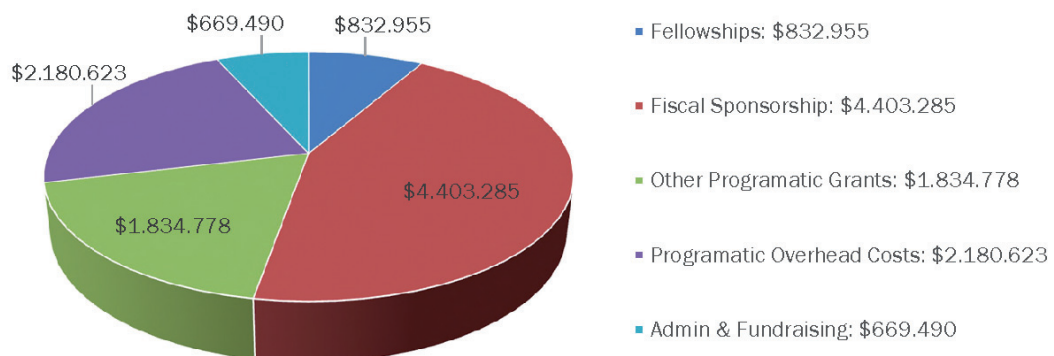
So, Sam is now 20 years old. He wants to be an artist. He has not a lot of money from his family, but he sets himself up in SoHo in New York in 1965. And the first benefit he gets from the local government is an A.I.R., an artist-in-residence permit, which allowed artists to live and work in industrial spaces. These were spaces that maybe didn't have hot water, didn't have heating, but artists were allowed to live and work – I think Richard Serra paid 50 dollars a month for his first loft – for very small amounts of money.

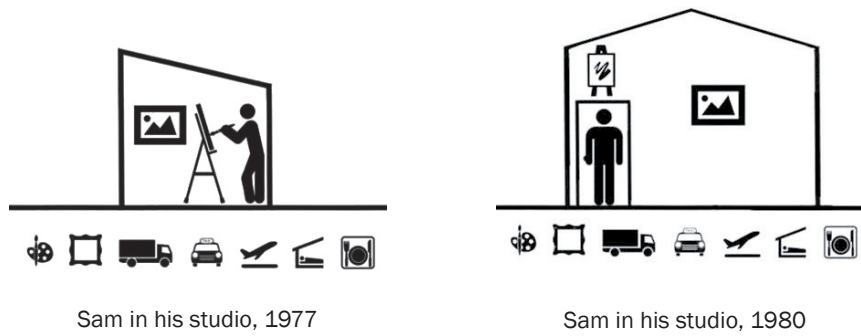
So, Sam has his little studio in SoHo and he's working away. He's probably a waiter because he doesn't have any income. So, then what happens is that he applies for a grant. I am on the board of the New York Foundation for the Arts, which provides grants to any artist in the State of New York, as well as providing information at what we call boot camps, which are ways in which artists can learn how to organise themselves. There are also boot camps for immigrant artists to the state or city of New York.

New York Foundation for the Arts  
Revenues Average 2013 – 2015



New York Foundation for the Arts  
Expenses Average 2013 – 2015





And the grants we give are very small, but we give a lot of them to a lot of artists. Maybe five, six, seven thousand. Artists at the beginning of their careers. It gives them great encouragement and it may let them live for six months without having to take a job. They apply for it, they send their work in. Their work is reviewed by other artists and many of them see that small amount of money.

Where does that money come from? I won't go into this in too much detail, but basically in the two years from 2013 to 2015 our Foundation took in and dispensed about six million dollars [See graphics on p. 6]. Some of this money came from the State. Some of it came from other foundations, such as the Ford and Warhol Foundations. Many foundations in America who want to give money to the arts don't actually want to give money, because that's too complicated, too personal and too difficult. We do that. We find the artists, we shake their hand and we give them the money. So, it's not always our money, although we do also raise money and those of us on the board are expected to give a certain amount ourselves. We have fund-raising events.

So, six million goes in and six million goes out. And seven thousand dollars of that went to Sam. Sam is now living in SoHo and has quit his job as a waiter, so he's started to paint. With the money he has bought more supplies. Maybe he had work framed. Maybe he's too avant garde to need a frame, that doesn't really matter, but he's discovered by a small, progressive gallery.

This is my gallery in SoHo, which dated from the early-to-mid sixties. My rent was very low. I patronised Fanelli's, which was a working-class bar on the corner. There was nothing fancy in the neighbourhood, but there was beginning to be an economy. Young people were renting trucks to move paintings backwards and forwards. In fact, brave collectors would come down to SoHo – Joe Hirschhorn for instance – in limousines, which had never been seen in that neighbourhood, I think ever. And so Sam has his first exhibition. The small gallery pays rent. It employs people. It becomes part of a small ecosystem.





View of Michael Findlay's gallery in SoHo, 1971

This is outside my gallery in 1971. It looked like that. This gentleman [indicates man with hosepipe] was a jazz musician, but he also worked an elevator and he was my art handler. I paid very little rent, but I didn't need to make very much money.

So, imagine Sam is living in SoHo. He's showing in a gallery like this, and what his presence does, over a period of years, is this. [Refers to an image of a gallery in SoHo.] Now we have SoHo in 2016. The buildings sell for unimaginable sums of money. Very few artists can afford to live there. But it is all because the artists moved into that neighbourhood. They made it chic. The same thing happened, although it took longer, with Chelsea in London, with the Village and, I will come to this later, Montmartre in Paris.

Now what happens it that George and Martha turn up. George and Martha are a young couple. They're decorating their house. They don't have a great deal of money, but they come into this gallery and they buy *The Magic Mountain*, the first painting that Sam is successful with. He's happy about it and it's his first sale. It's followed by a number of other sales, so Sam moves to a bigger studio. He quits his job. He does more painting and hires an assistant. And all of this adds to this burgeoning economy, which is being largely supported by emerging artists and by small galleries.

We now jump to 1990 and George and Marta have had this painting for quite a long time. They have some financial difficulties. Now, a very important part of my urban ecosystem, as well as the galleries, are the auction houses, because auction houses spend a lot of money on marketing, they spend a lot of money on employing a lot of people.



Sam sells his painting, 1981



Sam employs an assistant, 1985



Auction of Sam's painting, 1990



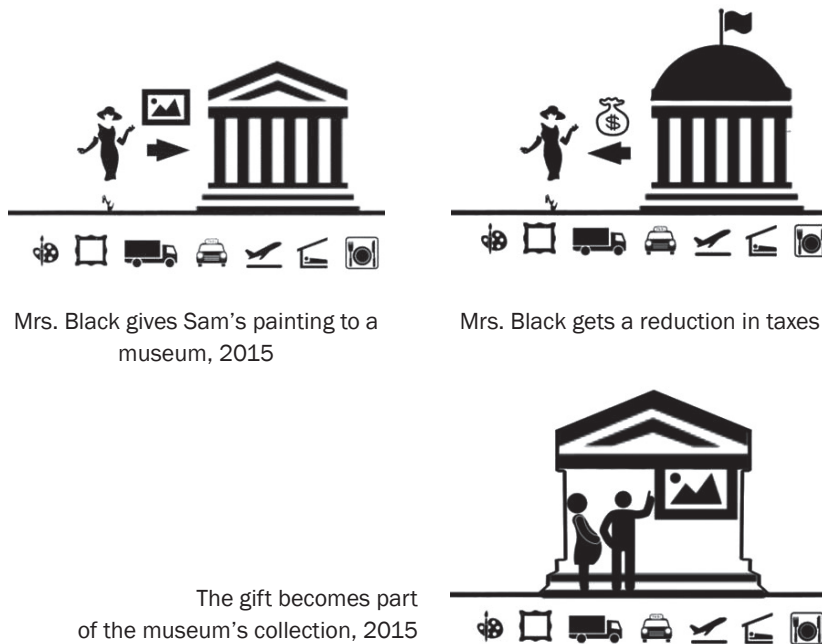
Sam's painting sold to Mrs. Black,  
1995

And so here we have *The Magic Mountain*, which is sold at auction to this gentleman – that's me in my bowler hat. I'm an art dealer, so I buy this painting at auction in 1990. Sam is in mid-career. He's not unhappy to see his painting sell for a quite significant amount of money, and the auction activity spans all of this and more. The presence of the auction house is a vital part of the economy.

So, I buy the painting and hang it in my gallery next to paintings by Jim Dine and Roy Lichtenstein. I don't sell it right away. I'm not the kind of dealer who buys a painting one day and tries to sell it the next for an awful lot of money. I keep it for five years and maybe I take it to an art fair, where I meet Mrs. Black.

Mrs. Black is a wonderful client. Her husband unfortunately died and left her pots of money. She has a very philanthropic attitude towards life. She's always loved this painting. She missed it when it came up for auction, so she buys it from me and keeps it another twenty years, until she decides to plan her estate. She wants to give some of her paintings to an institution.

Now, this is where the government support, which started with giving the artist an artist-in-residence permit, really comes to play a vital role in the ecosystem in the United States. Because, when she decides to give her painting to the museum she gets a tax benefit.



How does this work? I am also on the Art Advisory Panel for the Internal Revenue System, which is the thing in America that everybody is afraid of because it collects the taxes. But the IRS allows a collector to reduce their taxes according to a formula that is based on the value of the work that they give. They get an appraisal, which goes to the authorities. I'm part of the panel that advises the authorities and if, for instance, she claims that the painting is worth a million dollars, and we agree, then she will get a very significant reduction in either her personal taxes or, if she's dead, in her estate taxes. So, the government forfeits a certain amount of tax and by doing so they encourage people to give to museums and they build collections in these museums.

So, the painting goes into a museum – this is the end of my eco system – and it's admired by this young couple. And of course she's going to have a baby who will of course be an artist.

In the life of this artist, this painting, these collectors, this auction house, this dealer... a huge amount of money has been spent. A huge amount of money has changed hands, which has helped the local economy. It has not all been philanthropic. Much of it has supported a lot of industries in that city, so when this system works...

We use the wording branding a lot now. I don't really like the expression, but branding is certainly something that increases the value and the economy of

any city and the most indelible example of this is the city of Paris. We think of Montmartre as a romantic place where artists like Utrillo and Chagall, or Picasso and Dalí, invented new ways of looking, had wild affairs, stayed up all night, got drunk, whatever, and even though it's over a hundred years ago since Montmartre, which was a working neighbourhood of Paris, became briefly the centre of an art scene, Paris is still branded absolutely as a centre for art.

So, what does a community need for this ecosystem to work? It needs existing museums, and Madrid certainly has that. Artists need to be inspired and challenged by art of the ancient and recent past. Artists need company, they need companionship. They need to be with other artists, both those who are further along than they are, so they can aspire to that, and ones who will be critical of each other in and out of their studios: mutual admiration, mutual consolation.

They also need access to a market. They need a network of dealers and galleries willing to take risks. Now, not every region has that right now, but the only way I think it can work is if there is a partnership between the private collector and the government, whether it's local or national government, that recognises the way that encouraging the acquisition of art, encouraging the making of art, encouraging the giving of art, encouraging the exhibiting of art, is not simply cultural icing on the cake of a nation's or region's economy, but a very vital part of that.

I think it is most effective when it grows slowly, but I will now contrast what I have said about an organic ecosystem with what seems to be happening in other parts of the world, recently, that have adopted the master-plan approach. I think the master-plan approach was probably pioneered in Japan. It has been brought to a state of, if not perfection, sophistication in China, right now.

This is an example [See images on p. 12]. There is a company based in Hong Kong called K11. K11 creates huge developments within part of both new and old cities – commercial and residential buildings, shopping malls, entertainment centres – and within this company they have the non-profit-making K11 Foundation, which introduces museums into these 'instant' developments.

Obviously they take several years to build, but there's one in Hong Kong that opened in 2008. There is one in Shanghai that opened three years ago. And they have plans for one in Beijing and they will build them, if it is successful, in many other cities.

The appeal to anyone who wants to be a part of that, as a commercial resident or visitor, from overseas or not, is that it feels cultural. There's a great emphasis on





K11 Developments in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai

24 THE ART NEWSPAPER Number 279, May 2016

## Museums International

# One country, two billionaires, three museums—in just four years

Chinese collectors look beyond Shanghai as Long Museum opens in vast but lesser-known city of Chongqing

**OPENINGS**

**Chongqing.** The Chinese collectors Wang Wei and Liu Yiqian are building museums almost as quickly as they are breaking auction records. The billionaire couple will open their third museum in four years, in the south-western metropolis Chongqing, on 26 May. The Long Museum Chongqing is the institution's first branch outside Shanghai.

An independent municipality of around 30 million people surrounded by Sichuan Province, Chongqing is one of the world's largest cities, but few outside China have ever heard of it. Known for its dense hills, spicy food and proximity to the Three Gorges Dam, it is an inland trade hub with a rich ancient culture and a renowned art academy, the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Many Chinese contemporary artists have roots in the city, including Luo Zhongli, Yan Xing and Zhou Shuei.

Like the two Shanghai locations, which opened in the Pudong district in 2012 and in the Xuhui district in 2014, the Long Museum Chongqing will be led by Wang Wei. Its structure will parallel its predecessors, with galleries dedicated to traditional Chinese art, **revolutionary painting** and contemporary art. It will also focus on art of the Sichuan region.

A high-school dropout and former taxi driver, Liu made his fortune in the **stock market** in the 1990s and 90s. He and Wang started collecting calligraphy and traditional Chinese art. In the mid-2000s, they began to buy contemporary work by artists including Yayoi Kusama

**Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei with a silk thangka bought in 2014 for \$45m**

and Olafur Eliasson. Last autumn, the couple paid \$704m for Amedeo Modigliani's portrait Nu Couché (1973/8). "We need to collect foreign art so that our museums can be on a par with their foreign peers," Wang told the Financial Times in January.

The 10,000 sq. m museum will occupy the first three floors of the Guohua Financial Centre, an office building owned by Liu, according to the property listings site Baidu Property. The inaugural exhibition will examine Chinese oil painting after the 1911 revolution (100 Years of Art History: 1911-2011). A long-term display will spotlight work from the collection by artists from Chongqing and Sichuan Province. Curators are also organising a loan show of work by three generations of Sichuanese artists.

While the museum building boom in the coastal centres of Shanghai and Beijing has slowed in recent years, new museums are rising quickly in inland, second- and third-tier cities, fuelled by a growing appetite for culture and unflagging property developments. Chongqing is already home to the state-owned Guotai Arts Centre, the Chongqing Art Museum and the private institutions Chongqing Yu'ao International Art Centre and the Changjiang Museum of Contemporary Art, which last year launched an ambitious photography and video biennial.

Wang has said that the couple initially planned to build just one museum, but decided to open the second **after the government offered them a discount on a parcel of land**. The building includes a two-storey atrium and exhibition hall, with a shop, lecture hall and gallery space on the upper two floors.

**Lisa Mervis**

**THE COUPLE'S BIGGEST MOST CONTROVERSIAL**

**Meiyintang "chicken cup" (Ming dynasty)**

The couple famously paid for porcelain cup, bought at an auction in 2014 for \$36.3m, with an Express credit card. A photo of the couple drinking tea from the vessel stirred Chinese media.

**Gong Fa calligraphy (Song)**

The auction of the couple's collection for \$8.2m was quickly sold to Shanghai. Liu held a conference to present the work and defend the work's value.

**Tibetan bronze seated yogi (11th-12th century)**

The couple bought the sculpture, which belonged to the Asian art dealer Robert Elsworth, in 2015 for \$4.9m. The day before the sale, Liu's daughter posted a picture of him on social media sitting in the statue's lotus pose. J.H.

Chinese collectors Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei

things being environmentally friendly, of things being green. However, apart from the art, everything else is pretty much a high-end, retail operation, and the art is obviously premium to the cost of the space.

Now, is that any different to artists who moved into SoHo in 1965 and were kicked out because it became too expensive? I don't really know. It's too soon to tell whether K11 is the ecosystem of the future or not, but I can tell you that K11 cannot, and does not, exist without very, very strong government support. In China, government support is to some extent indirect.

This is an image of a newspaper article featuring Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei [See image on p. 12]. This gentleman made the news recently because he has been buying paintings at auction for very large sums of money. He's a charming gentleman and he and his wife have now built four museums in China. The most recent, which is not finished yet, is a 10,000 sq ft museum and will occupy the first three floors of a financial centre, an office building that he owns, but he has been given very substantial benefits from the government for putting his museum there, and he was allowed to build it or given the land very cheaply.

There you have an immediate and very direct patronage of an individual who has become known to the world very quickly as someone who spends vast amounts of money on paintings, but, in sense – and I am not saying there is anything remotely sinister about this – he is being allowed and encouraged to do that believing it is to everyone's financial advantage.

Not dissimilarly, Acquavella Galleries goes every year to the Abu Dhabi Art Festival. The Abu Dhabi Art Festival is slightly different from any others. It occupies a manmade island where there already exists a museum of Islamic art. A Louvre Museum is being built, a franchise of the Louvre, and there will be built another Frank Gehry Guggenheim Museum. [See images on p. 14]

This is the model of it being examined by some of the sheiks in Abu Dhabi and these three museums will exist on Saadiyat Island, along with space for convention centres and some very expensive condominiums designed for many people, including Europeans, because the Ministry for Tourism and Development, which is in charge of this entire project, sees this as a way to bring tourism to Abu Dhabi. Not necessarily only from London, Madrid or Paris, but certainly from Beirut, or Cairo or anywhere else in Asia. So, this again is a sort of master-plan approach. The only thing that's missing from this is that there are no artists. There are artists who come to the art fair and there are certainly artists in the region, but there is very little space planned for artists in Abu Dhabi.



## CÍRCULO ARTE Y MECENAZGO



Architect's model and rendering  
for the Guggenheim Museum in  
Abu Dhabi



Views of Xavier Corberó's  
Centre in Esplugues  
(Barcelona, Spain)



View of the National Gallery  
of Art in Washington



Now I'm going to get into very delicate territory. I spent the morning learning a little bit about how things seem to be working here. What is missing from the ideal ecosystem. Certainly, the art is not missing. The museums are not missing. The great art of the past is not missing. The artists are not missing. But do the artists stay here? I'm not sure if the artists stay here.

This is a view of Miquel Barceló's exhibition at Acquavella Galleries in 2014 [Refers to Barceló's painting series depicting and distorted portraits of the artist's family and friends such Eric Mézil, Adam Zagajewski and Dore Ashton]. I'm using this as a kind of commercial break for the gallery... we are going to have another show of his new work in the fall. Here is an artist who works and lives in Majorca, but also in Mali and Paris, and moves around. It is normal for artists to be itinerant these days. I think Sean Scully has studios in five or six countries. You also have my dear friend Xavier Corberó who created a one-man SoHo by taking over 40 years ago what was described to me as an off-ramp from a highway, developing it into what is probably a never-to-be finished arcade of extraordinary buildings, as a home and studio, but certainly as a place to be [See images on p. 14].

Spain has the artists. It has the tradition. But it doesn't seem to have the government support. I was told there is a 21 % tax on works of art. I think the only reason for that would be to actively prevent people from buying, because it's almost ludicrous. I think that most collectors that I know... nobody likes to pay tax. A lot of collectors try to avoid paying any tax. But to pay a tax of 10% or 8% is probably something they won't choke on. In the United States, most states charge a sales tax and it's no more than 10%.

By having a system of the government supporting gifts to museums the National Gallery of Art in Washington was created, which is one of the few government-run museums. Mostly museums are private. How does this happen? Because Paul Mellon and his father gave their collections to the nation, over 50 years ago. And the grateful nation said, 'We'll build a museum and call it the Paul Mellon Museum.' He said, 'No, no. If you call it the Paul Mellon Museum, no one else will give their paintings.' He was both humble and very, very smart. 'Call it the National Gallery.' So the core of the National Gallery is his collection, but now it is a destination for tourists. It is also a destination for philanthropists who want to give works of art and believe me they get tax benefits [See image on p. 14].

Here's a situation where one gentleman sold another gentleman two paintings for 500 million dollars [Refers to De Kooning's *Interchange* (1955) and Pollock's *Number 17A* (1948)]. I was not part of this. I'm not speculating on any kind of inside knowledge. But I doubt any tax was involved in this exchange. Whether we



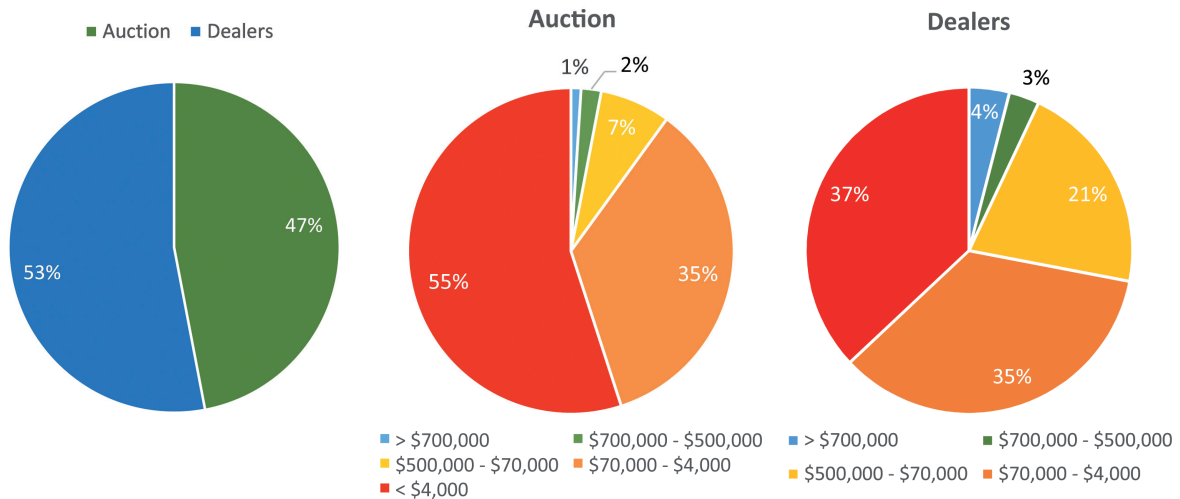
think these works of art are worth 500 million, is probably the subject of two more talks. We don't have time, but Mr. Geffen who owned these sold them to Mr. Griffin... Mr. Geffen is in California and Mr. Griffin is in Chicago. Incidentally, when Mr. Geffen got his 500 million dollars he gave 100 million dollars of that to a concert hall in Lincoln Center, New York City, which took off the former donor's name and put his name on it. And that was a gift for which he got a tax deduction.

So why did Mr. Griffin probably not pay any sales tax? When the news of this sale emerged these two paintings could be seen at the Art Institute of Chicago, which is Mr. Griffin's hometown. Now there is a perfectly legitimate clause in the sales tax agreements for some states that if the works of art that you are buying are publicly exhibited for a reasonable period of time before you take possession of them, then the sales tax is forgiven. It may well be, and I'm only speculating, that these two paintings will stay at the Art Institute forever. They may be a promised gift to the Art Institute. He won't have to pay the insurance bill if he keeps the paintings at the Art Institute. So this is another instance of the government funding, let's say, the public exhibition of art and possibly when Mr. Griffin, who is a young man in the fullness of life... maybe when he does pass away, the Art Institute of Chicago will greatly benefit.

This is a gratuitous image of the Internal Revenue Service, where I work for no money two days a year. As an aside, I'd say that so efficient is the bureaucracy of the American tax service that in over ten years of doing this I have yet to even have my taxi fare refunded, but again that's another story.



Internal Revenue Service U.S. Treasury Department in Washington D.C.



Global Fine Art Sales (Courtesy Arts Economics)

So, I was going to point out that the global art market is about 62 billion dollars... most people probably don't realise that. The distribution of prices between auctions tends to be slightly lopsided in terms of dealers. In other words, auction houses have a little bit of the top of the market and a lot of the bottom of the market. It all adds up to a great deal of money.

Jumping forward to education, I would say that just to plug for both auction houses where I have worked and galleries where I have also spent most of the years of my life, that they are both vital parts of the ecosystem, supporting young artists, supporting the secondary market, supporting art fairs, which bring a lot of people into important art fairs.

I know that Mercedes asked me to say something about education, because at the beginning of this you don't have artists and you don't have people going to museums unless you have an educational system that promotes the engagement of art, and so Mercedes asked me to say a few words about this, which is a kind of a passion mine, although I have absolutely no expertise in it whatsoever, other than I have had children and I talk to children and I kind of believe that children, at this age, are probably more able to engage directly with a lot of modern art than those of us whose heads have been filled with meaning and information.

So, the chronology is that these are our children and they are playing and they make a mess. And they bring the mess home and we say it's fantastic, it's fabulous, and we put it up and we tell our friends and we dote on them. And sometime we think that looks pretty good... it looks like a Rothko, a bit like a Jackson Pollock. But mostly we are encouraging our children because we love them.



A museum educator holding an information sheet before a group of seated children

What are they doing? They're playing, right? So, I think that play is an essential element in art. I think it is where... it's what every artist does in their studio. They would not categorize it that way, but without play there is no art. So, we take our child's painting home and we say it's very nice, but it's not 'real art' because it's categorically different from the art we see in museums, it's categorically different from the art of a professional artist, it's categorically different from, for instance, a painting by – another advertisement for my upcoming show – Miquel Barceló [Image of Barceló's painting *Trop mûre* (2013)].

But I say no! It is categorically, exactly the same. It is not categorically different. It is the same! The difference is that this artist employs a technique of genius, of eloquence and of clarity. It is the same, but we don't tell our children that. We don't want to tell our children that because about the time they learn there's no Père Noel, there no Father Christmas, they also begin to understand that what they have been doing is not real art. That real art is in museums, that real art is serious. Real art costs a lot of money and real art needs to be explained. So we take or we send our children to museums and we tell them to be quiet and sit down and shut up, and we stand in front of the paintings and we speak for the paintings. We say what we think the painting is saying.

In this case this woman, a nice teacher, has yet something else for the children to look at, though I doubt they can actually see what it is from where they are sitting, but she's obscuring the paintings they should be looking at and she's telling them

something that she has in her hand. To me this is extraordinary because if the paintings are... if they are good bad or indifferent, you ask the children to sit in front of them and ask the children to engage, and you sit behind the children. And they will tell you very quickly if they are excited by them or bored by them or what they are about.

I don't think there are a lot of artists who would necessarily disagree with that approach. Later, when they are teenagers – and I am talking about an American system, I don't know what it's like here – it gets even worse because the paintings are left in the museums, the paintings are left in the galleries.

These children are sitting at their desks [Refers to an image of a school class for teenagers]. The works of art are now reproductions pinned up on the wall or perhaps they are pixelated on their laptops, and they are gathering information, they are writing, they are using words, they are not engaged with images at all.

So I think what happens is we end up with a population, even if they have been moderately well educated, who believe that engaging with art is somehow a learning chore; that you have to have someone talk to you when looking at a painting.

I'm sorry, I don't agree that it is necessary to talk to people who are authorities, who will tell you what to think and what to feel. My very, very strong feeling is that if we don't encourage our children to engage with art in the same way that they seem effortlessly to engage with music... My daughter can listen to all kinds of different types of music, has a very broad catholic taste in music and I'm not saying she's an expert in any particular type of music.

Why does that not happen with a wide range of art with children? It should because this is about enjoyment. I'm all for information; I'm all for expertise; I'm all for curatorial input... but this is only valuable if it follows our own deep, passionate, direct engagement with the works of art themselves.

I had to throw this in because it's about teaching artists. I've got three minutes left... I am going to use them quickly. So how should artists be taught, okay? I have a young artist called Heman Chong. He's from Singapore, he works all over the world. He wrote an essay in an art magazine recently, based on his intuition about Singapore's involvement... their support of art, which is very significant. And I'm quoting... What if the idea of an art school isn't exactly a school? What if this school becomes something that has no apparent start or end or is woven into the fabric of the everyday? A place where artists can come together and teach each other something?

Now, that place existed briefly in North Carolina in the United States. It was called Black Mountain College and it existed from 1933 to 1957 [Refers to an image of Josef Albers with students at Black Mountain College]. One of the teachers fleeing Hitler's Europe was Josef Albers and his wife Anni Albers. They barely spoke English and yet they became the two principal teachers and nurtured many of the artists who were to have a huge impact on twentieth-century American art: Willem de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, the dancer Merce Cunningham, the composer John Cage.

Someone who deserves to be better known, Jack Tworkov, described the school in 1952. 'In essence there exists the utmost freedom for people to do what they please. There is simply no pattern of behaviour, no criteria to live up to. People study what they please, as long as they want, idle if they want to, graduate whenever they are willing to stand on examination, even after only a month, or a year, or whenever, or they can waive all examinations, and graduations. They can attend classes or stay away. They can work by themselves, they need not work. Instructors can hold classes or tutor individually, meet their classes as often or as little as they want.'

Now is my punch line. 'Yet much work is being done here. Hard work.' Lots of work [Refers to an image of Buckminster Fuller with students at Black Mountain College]. This looks like play. These are students testing Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome. Now, obviously they are having fun but these were people who were coming from different directions and many different disciplines were exchanging ideas, which fermented into, I think, much of the modern art that we see today. Was this play? I'd say it was play, but play with very serious consequences. And the consequences we enjoy all the time.

This slide is purely gratuitous [Refers to Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) and Picasso's *Bread and Fruit Dish on a Table* (1909)]. These are probably two of my favourite paintings in the world. I hope I am going to see them tomorrow, and I'd simply like to show them to you while I answer your questions.

*Muchísimas gracias por haber venido y haberme escuchado.*



QUESTIONS

Q: Very interesting, I really enjoyed it. Thank you very much. So, how do you think the new generation of both philanthropists and art collectors – millennials basically – might affect the ecosystem of the art you have just presented?

MF: I don't want to be critical of the generation because I don't want to be the grumpy old man. My experience is that because they have grown up in very monetized society that they, and it's a huge generalization, but that many of them believe the fallacy that if great art is expensive, expensive art is great. And that when they choose to spend their money as collectors they have an investment strategy. They are more investment minded than previous generations, because almost everything we read is about art and money. So unless they have been brought up with some kind of personal passion... If they are people in New York who have become quite wealthy quite young, and they are drawn to buying art, they are often influenced by friends who will describe to them this or that artist who is a good artist to buy now, in the way they imagine that it was a good idea to buy Andy Warhol in 1964. But no one who bought Andy Warhol in 1964 felt they were making any kind of investment! They sort of felt they were throwing their money away on something that looked like it was going to be fun in their house. I don't want to be glib, but buying something with money you can afford because you think it would be fun or nice to have in your house is really what collecting is all about. And following the advice of another because they have discovered an artist that some other people are buying, who is currently hot, is going to disrupt the ecosystem because what you have now, in that market, is a big bubble. Now, I think the bubble is slowly deflating, because I see more people, and some millennials, who instead of buying what they've been told is the cutting edge, they are doing what we were discussing before... becoming more interested in artists of the late twentieth century who are not so highly recognized at the moment. They are looking to make choices that are their choices, not the choices of some kind of operating or marketing system.

Q: Thank you also for this great presentation. The Asian museums that are being built. Are they collecting Western art and if so...?

MF: Abu Dhabi, for instance?

Q: No, more the Chinese.

MF: Chinese and Western art. They are multi-purpose museums. Mrs. Wang

Wei and her husband now have four museums, some of which are devoted exclusively to Chinese art – Chinese contemporary art, Chinese ancient art and Western art. So, it's pretty much across the board. When it comes to Western art the choices tend not to be particularly subtle... you know, by very famous artists. That's better than beginning at the other end I suppose.

Q: Are there enough quality works on the market for them to build a great museum?

MF: That's interesting because people think that, for instance, the market is running out of Impressionist paintings. Well, I've been in the business 52 years and have followed and been a part of the Impressionist market. In those 52 years, of the major paintings that I know that have been sold, either privately or at auction, very, very few went into museums. Museums that have Impressionist pictures have had them a long, long, long time. And they have great paintings. But a lot of the paintings that have come up and been sold in the last 50 years are still, as we say in the business, out there. There are not many dealers handling them. Auction houses, obviously, have a big share of the market, but there are a lot of people, relatively speaking, who will stand up for major pictures by Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet, Cézanne, when they come up.

Q: As a journalist in communication, I find your presentation brilliant. Don't you think the media, like bloggers, journalists, Youtubers, have a big responsibility in that fact you said it is not to explain art, it is to explore art. It's very different to explain... if I explain to you that I explore with you. Don't you think the media has this responsibility also?

MF: In America there are no longer writers for either newspapers or magazines – just general purpose ones, I'm not talking about art magazines – there are no longer writers for the general public who seem to be able to visit exhibitions, whether they are museums or gallery shows, and to write a column in a reasonably understandable English about whether they like it, whether they don't like it, what it relates to, what it doesn't relate to, without talking about money. Every single article I read in the popular press about art has to do with it being forged or being sold for a lot of money. We are teaching our children that this is what art represents. There were some brilliant writers in the English language. Robert Hughes, who I didn't always agree with and who wrote for *Time* magazine, which was a magazine read by the general public and he wrote in a very opinionated way, but often an illuminating way, about art. It never crossed his mind to discuss what it cost. It was irrelevant. But now that is an essential part of almost everything written for the public about art. In scholarship, in the museum world,

even in the gallery world there are plenty of opportunities to read, or debate, or have discussions about art, but what the general public hears is money, money, money. It must sound strange to hear an art dealer complain about that! But frankly, I know very well that it's a tiny, tiny fraction of the population that will ever be able to be interested in buying art. And that's fine. For them there are many people in this room, including myself, who can give them very, very good advice and direction, but for everybody else, in many parts of the country, it's either free or it costs very, very little, and I think everybody should be encouraged to enjoy it.

Mercedes Basso: You have talked about support from the government that permits art to develop consistently, but what is the way, precisely, that museums can attract donations? How do they get donations from collectors?

MF: In the United States most museums have very highly trained staff who are called development officers. And development officers basically fish for wealthy people. What is the bait they have for the wealthy people? The bait is – I'm putting this crudely but to some degree accurately – the bait is a degree of social prestige and acceptance. The Metropolitan Museum has now opened a contemporary wing in a building that used to be called the Whitney Museum and is now called the Met Bruer. The first exhibition was supported by a number of people, by new collectors, and for a donation of 100,000 dollars or whatever, their names were displayed fairly prominently in the literature for that exhibition, they were invited to dinners, they were invited to lunches, and if they cared for some degree of social position or acknowledgement, or something to mention discreetly or not discreetly, this is how the museums build a base of support. Most of the trustees of major museums in New York are active in the sense that they are actively giving. They are not politicians and they are not bureaucrats. They may well be people who have some degree of scholarship, but the majority are people whose work is discreetly called in the business a 'give' of many thousands of dollars a year. And in return for that they get paid constant attention by the museum.

MB: I'm not sure we are going to have that kind of manager here. We need to find another solution for our museums to attract...

MF: Okay, no comment!

[CaixaForum Madrid, 20th June 2016]







Michael Findlay is a Director of Acquavella Galleries, which specializes in Impressionist and Modern European works of art and post-war American painting and sculpture. The gallery represents Wayne Thiebaud and shows leading contemporary artists including the work of the late Lucian Freud, as well as major loan exhibitions of works from museums and private collections such as *Picasso's Marie-Thérèse* (2008), *Georges Braque: Pioneer of Modernism* (2011) and currently *Jean Dubuffet: Anticultural Positions*.

Born in Scotland in 1945 Mr. Findlay directed one of the first galleries in SoHo, New York City, in the 1960's and ran his own gallery there 1969–1977. He was the first dealer in the United States to show the work of Joseph Beuys, Sean Scully and other European artists and gave American artists such as John Baldessari, Hannah Wilke, Stephen Mueller and Billy Sullivan their first solo exhibitions as well as representing Abstract Expressionist Ray Parker. From 1964 until 1984 bought and sold Impressionist and Twentieth century works of art on behalf of American and European private collectors and secured early portrait commissions for Andy Warhol.

In 1984 he joined Christie's auction house and was head of the Impressionist and Modern paintings department until 1992 when he became International Director of Fine Arts and a member of Christie's Board of Directors until 2000. He supervised the sale of many important collections such Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Hal B. Wallis, Victor and Sally Ganz, as well as the sale of *Le docteur Paul Gachet* by Vincent van Gogh for \$82,500,000 in 1990. In 1994 he opened Christie's office in Shanghai with an exhibition of Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary masterpieces and in 1995 was part of a small team assisting the creation of a Western art program at the Shanghai Museum.

Since 2001 Mr. Findlay has served on the Art Advisory Panel for the Internal Revenue Service of the Treasury Department of the U.S. Government. He is on the Board of several academic foundations such the New York Foundation for the Arts, among others. He has lectured at diverse museums and universities including Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation as keynote speaker at the international seminar on authentication in 2011. He is a contributing author of *The Expert versus The Object: Judging Fakes and False Attributions in the Visual Arts* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and author of *The Value of Art* (Prestel, 2012).



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