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BASEL IS FOR ME MR. BEYELER
By Georg Schmidt

About ten percent of exhibitors at the art fair are participating for the first time (or again after a long absence). LA Louver Gallery belongs to this group. This fair is not new territory for the gallerists from the West Coast.

He is not a newcomer to art, but as a gallerist, Peter Goulds is taking part in the Basle Art Fair for the first time. However, the fair is familiar to him as he first walked the fair's corridors in 1977.

"It is naturally very useful and nice to have the whole art world collected in one place", says Goulds, and as proof uses this opportunity during our talk to shake hands with acquaintances and friends in the exhibition booth.

This Londoner found his way to the United States in 1972: he came to teach in the Art Department of the University of California in Los Angeles. In 1975 he founded his own gallery in Venice; a part of the city that since 1945 has been populated by artists, authors and gallerists. He has run the gallery for the last 18 years with his partner Kimberly Davis.

Venice, says Goulds, is also a laboratory for architects: Frank Gehry has recently purchased land there to build his "personal home", and Goulds' gallery, one block away from the beach, was built by Fred Fisher.

By way of explaining what the fair means to him Goulds says "The fair has always helped us to build up our gallery and our programming".

That this is the first time the gallery is participating in the fair has to do with the history of LA Louver (the name of the gallery is a word play from Marcel Duchamp): Goulds regular participation in the Chicago Art Fair in the 1980's helped to expand his clientele in the USA. Whereas his European clientele was built and groomed through his many trips through Europe.

BIGGER BORDERLESS ACCESSIBLE

Meanwhile, Goulds says that the fall of the Berlin wall made Europe bigger, wider and more accessible - and at the same time the many museum directors and curators that he had built relationships with retired.

"At the fair we want to strengthen our old connections, and also meet the new generation of curators, collectors and museum people". Even when this sounds like the typical American thinking of "blazing the trail", Goulds impresses his visitors a British gentleman.

Asked about the city of Basel, Goulds answers as though shooting from the hip with, "In my opinion, Basel is Mr. Beyeler". The reputation of the collector and museum founder has apparently reached the West Coast.

Yes, Goulds is referring to the savings account (bank account) the Basel Government has made available to the Foundation. Goulds also thinks that the great cooperation of the city has played a big part in the Art fair game. The organization of the fair is described by Goulds as "dreamily efficient".

CAMPBELL FUJITA HAMMERSLEY

Los Angeles is a very important city for art as it has very active art schools. Two of the artists that LA Louver is showing at the fair, Rebecca Campbell and Gajin Fujita, are products of these schools.

Frederick Hammersley, another artist represented by the gallery, had for a long time taught in these schools. LA Louver also works with artists such as Georg Baselitz and David Hockney.

Goulds hopes to participate in the fair next year, and in December, he will be taking part in Art Basel Miami Beach "as a visitor". If history repeats itself, Goulds will one day be there as an exhibitor as well, shaking the hands of friends and acquaintances.

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