

Perrotin

*The Art Newspaper,
Emmanuel Perrotin enters the bar pit*

October 2013

ART MARKET
US & Americas

NEW GALLERY

New York. There's something pucky about Emmanuel Perrotin. The 43-year-old Frenchman played the role of giddy ringmaster at the carnival-themed launch of his first New York gallery last month, where gallery artists such as Takashi Murakami, KAWS and Daniel Arsham created amusements for the guests.

In person, though, Perrotin exudes more the concentrated energy of a professional gambler preoccupied with calculations of risk (a word he uses nine times within an hour of our meeting). Bold moves have defined his career since he opened a gallery in his Parisian apartment when he was 21. "Retrospectively, I feel that was crazy. I didn't have any money. I was the kind of guy who would go to a nightclub until 6am – and I didn't even drink alcohol," he says.

Perrotin gave the young Damien Hirst one of his first commercial gallery shows in 1991, transporting the works on the roof of his mum's car. He carried art to international fairs in his luggage. "It was great; it was beautiful. But I was suffering a lot to do it. It was really taking a risk day after day," he says.

High stakes

The stakes are even higher now. "It's difficult to imagine how much risk we will take at this level. I'm not really a big gallery. I'm not small, either, and I'm not young any more. But I was at a point where I said, 'OK, let's do it.'" The new gallery is his fourth: in addition to two spaces in Paris, Perrotin opened in Hong Kong last year (he opened in Miami in 2004, and closed in 2010). "It has been a dream to open in Manhattan since the very beginning because New York is the capital of the art world," Perrotin says. "But I know it is very dangerous. You can burn yourself. Sometimes the dream can be *trap* – too big."

The New York move points to a generational shift unfolding in the city. There are whispers about which dealers will become the next power-players as the pioneers of the Chelsea scene creep towards retirement with no apparent succession plans. It is no coincidence



Biography

Emmanuel Perrotin

1985-89 Works as an assistant at the Charles Cartwright contemporary gallery, Paris
1989 Opens his own gallery in a rented apartment
1991 Holds Damien Hirst's first solo exhibition in a commercial gallery
1994 Shows Takashi Murakami at the Gramercy International Art Fair
1999 Funds production of Maurizio Cattelan's *La Nona Ora* sculpture
2004 Opens in Miami (closed in 2010)
2005 Opens at 76 Rue de Turenne, Paris
2007 Opens in the facing Impasse Saint Claude
2010 Takes over the upper floor of 76 Rue de Turenne and opens a bookshop in the same mansion house
2012 Opens in Hong Kong
2013 Opens in New York

Perrotin engages with Paola Pivi's *Who told you white men can jump?*, 2013. Below, Swizz Beatz and Pharrell Williams at his New York opening

Emmanuel Perrotin
enters the bear pit

Opening in New York may be the French gallerist's bravest move yet

that dealers of a similar generation to Perrotin are jockeying for position. "I'm sure the moves of different galleries here are completely based on this. That earlier generation had real success with their galleries when they were aged between 40 and 45. I am 45 years old when I open here, so things are possible," Perrotin says. "If I don't do it now, it would be such an effort later."

There are other, practical reasons for the Manhattan opening. New York dealers poach other galleries' artists so aggressively it may as well be a blood sport, and Perrotin feels the pressure. "My dream is to be able to keep my artists and to not feel so much the shadow

of someone who wants to take what you have. It's not an egomaniac situation. I don't want to be the biggest; I just don't want to lose. So I need to make a move."

Perrotin has worked with many of his artists – such as Cattelan and Murakami, whose careers have gone from negligible to supersonic – from a young age. "When you really invest your energy to develop the career of an artist and you finally create a nice situation for them, you push them to do a great show for another gallery in a different city like New York because you know it's important for them. But then you have to wait three years for new work – and every artist keeps their best for New York," Perrotin says.

Many of his artists are without American representation, which has made the decision to open in New

York an easier one. In the past, he was approached by Manhattan galleries that wanted to work with his artists, such as Paola Pivi, whose exhibition "OK, You are better than me, so what?" (until 26 October) is the first in Perrotin's Manhattan space. "We weren't really interested in showing her, but they wanted a project that was already accomplished or to produce an easy work. But an artist like Paola comes to you and says she wants to have two zebras on a mountain in the snow, and you find a way to do it," he says. "The first piece I produced with Paola is still in storage. It didn't sell because the production costs were so high, which made the price a lot for her at that time. But we made the work because it's the kind of piece that makes her so impor-

tant. You take your risk and that's it."

He has taken a ten-year lease on a 4,300 sq. ft space at 73rd Street and Madison Avenue – an unusual choice for a dealer focused on the primary market, since the area is more commonly associated with secondary market galleries. "It's more exotic for me to be here, because it's such a contrast between my programme and the area," he says. "I like Chelsea. It's efficient because you can visit many galleries in one visit. But you don't have time to refresh your eyes between one show and another, and, from the outside, every gallery looks the same. And if you want to exist in Chelsea, you need

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to open a very big gallery, and I'm not ready for that. It would look arrogant." New York gives Perrotin the potential to develop the secondary sales side of his business. "We are big compared with many galleries. But our capital is no comparison next to some of the really big fish that make huge amounts of money from the secondary market," he says.

For now, Perrotin is celebrating 25 years in business with a show at the Tripostal, Lille, entitled "Happy Birthday Galerie Perrotin/25 Years" (11 October-12 January 2014) – and focusing on making his most recent gamble pay off. "Maybe I will fail, but you know, I want to accomplish the complete story. I have to do it." Charlotte Burns



Paola Pivi's *Untitled (zebras)*, 2012, has been shown in New York's High Line park

Emmanuel Perrotin

“People imagine it must be easy for me now...”

ART GALLERIES
INTERVIEW

Emmanuel Perrotin is one of the foremost contemporary art dealers, having represented some of the world's most popular artists, most notably Takashi Murakami and Maurizio Cattelan, for over 20 years. The Parisian dealer was one of the first to tap into the Asian markets, and now counts Chiho Aoshima (Japan), Mr. (Japan) and Bharti Kher (who lives in India) among his artists. He also now represents some of France's leading living artists, including Sophie Calle and Tatiana Trouvé, as well as market darlings Matthew Day Jackson and Elmgreen & Dragset. His clients include Christie's owner François Pinault, who is known to collect around half of Perrotin's 36 artists.

The gallery is based in two floors in Paris's trendy Marais district, with an adjoining exhibition space across the road. In 2004 Perrotin opened a gallery in Miami, but this closed just after the global economic crisis in 2010. He is now actively looking for a space in Hong Kong, a market in which his artists have proved popular.

Fresh from success at Art Basel, where he sold works by artists including Wim Delvoye and Tatiana Trouvé, he is now busy with an exhibition on the history of editions which focuses on works by Murakami alongside Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys (until 30 July).

The Art Newspaper: How do you define your success?
Emmanuel Perrotin: My passion has always been to make artists' projects possible. At the beginning, because I didn't have family money behind me, the only way to show the outside world that I'd had success was to show that I was a commercial success. I needed to give my existing artists confidence and encourage others to join the gallery. When you have money from the beginning, you can hide your commercial success, you don't need to talk about turnover, which is preferred in France. They are very sceptical of success here—[Raymond] Poulidor, the cyclist, was very popular with the French public because he always came second...

But now you measure success differently?

Of course. Success is not only about money. There are many other ways to define success. I am, for example, very proud to have so many French artists who are now known internationally. Trouvé, Xavier Veilhan, Jean-Michel Othoniel are now in so many museums, that is a great success.

How would you characterise your programme?

My artists are all very different: young, old, unknown and very well-known. I have one deceased artist, Duane Hanson, whose estate I look after. It's an interesting new intellectual exercise to think about how to relaunch the career of an artist who is dead. It is very different from starting someone's career from scratch.

Do you like being described as “risky”?

Yes, it's a good word. But every day it is more difficult to explain why we take a risk. The gallery looks great, we're in a good place, people imagine it must be easy for me now, but every day is more difficult. Expectations are higher, and you're still only as good as your last show. Because I know every stage [of the process of building an artist's career], I know they are all difficult. I don't know how you find a balance for less stress.

You gave Hirst his first solo exhibition in 1991, why didn't he stay with you?
We included him in a group show in 1990, then he had his own solo show (“When Logics Die”) in 1991. It included autopsy tables, complete with photographs of suicide victims—and went well. But only six months later, he had become really well known so while it had gone very well

between us, I was just starting out and didn't have any money for him to produce works. So of course, he went elsewhere, that was natural. The exhibition for Damien did more for me than it did for him so I've never reproached him for anything. The only thing I regret is not being entrusted with more of his works at that time—just one would



Perrotin is selling Duchamp *boîtes-en-valise* in his summer show

have represented two years of turnover for me during the more difficult years.

Were you not going to collaborate again this year?

Yes, we were going to. He very generously suggested re-doing the exhibition 20 years on. He had some ideas, but after 20 years, I wanted to do something that was a real renewal of Hirst's career, rather than works that people were more used to. I had wanted people to go “Wow!” This series

is wonderful,” so in the end I decided against the show. Maybe I was wrong. Other galleries are good at doing certain projects to enable the financing of others. Sometimes I think I should have brought in the money, been attacked by the Paris critics, but then financed more ambitious projects for other artists. Maybe if I am lucky, he will offer me another project.

You met Takashi Murakami and Maurizio Cattelan very early on. What difference did that make?

The huge advantage I had with Maurizio and Takashi is that their real, big commercial success came after ten years, so we all grew together, did everything together, we were and are connected. The worst thing is if success comes immediately to one of your artists, there's much less rapport that way. You have to remain helpful to your artists throughout, not just at the beginning, but at every moment. That is what makes this job so difficult. You can never take yourself away from the gallery. If you are not totally behind your artist, they'll find somewhere else. You have to be 100% all the time for all of them, it's very difficult. Having said that, Maurizio and Takashi are my best motivation to keep up this crazy rhythm. Plus they have two completely

different personalities (although they get on well) so that between them, I think you can understand all artists.

Are you still looking for new, young artists?

I still do work with very young artists, but not all the time, I don't have the same energy as I did when I was younger. JR [some of whose work sold at Art Basel] is one recent example of a new young artist [he is 28]. And we now do “projects with” younger artists, which is a good place to start. That way they don't have the pressure to produce work to the gallery's standard—and also it avoids a catastrophe if we stop working with them. Ivan Argote is a good example: he is a 27-year-old Colombian artist and had a pretty successful exhibition in our gallery recently.

Have you dropped many artists?

Not many, no. Of course, there have been some, but really not many. Sometimes the evolution of an artist's work doesn't go the way you'd like. And with young artists, because there's such a volume of work, there's a greater chance that you won't like more of it. You have to be careful. I don't want to have 100 names on my list and have some artists that I don't really work with or bring to fairs, etc. Tell me about your new show, which unusually combines Duchamp and Beuys with Murakami.

I've had this editions project in my head for a long time. But what I imagined needed to be in a museum, based around all the people who have ever done prints and to look at these in a different way, through the prism of the art market. But it works on a smaller scale too because the common theme—doing prints—is what made these artists even more popular, as their work was disseminated more. Duchamp loved doing edition work, he did posters, the *boîtes-en-valise* (suitcase boxes), etc. Lots of Duchamp's original works are lost, so these are increasingly important. Beuys managed to emphasise the fact that making editions was generous, enabling people with less money to access his

work. When I was a gallery assistant I remember thinking I could just afford a Beuys print, but everyone said “there are 200 examples, they won't have any value.” And now I regret not getting them. For Takashi, editions were a very important part of his work from the beginning. When I met him he was already doing t-shirts, carrying them into every shop, asking if they would sell them.

This show would enable a collector or museum, say in Asia, to have a collection straight away. I will have examples from 80 series that Duchamp did and will sell them as a group only [for €1.8m], as well as all of Murakami's prints (2001-11).

Is the contemporary market moving to Asia?

I have Asian artists, and have

entrance to, and inside, the central pavilion], have clearly copulated a lot: there were around 250 in 1997 and now there are nearer 2,200!

Pinault is a major client of yours—how did you meet?

I can never remember. It was a long time ago, he was an early patron. At the time, I never said that he was buying this or that artist from me, because people would speculate on that. But once he showed the artist, then I was happy to talk about it. For many of the early years, nobody knew he was collecting art from me. So maybe because I took it so seriously, he was comfortable with that and stuck with me. The context of this extraordinary collection promoted many of my artists.

What did you make of the criticism that artists that were

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had for a long time, and I had very successful fairs [ArthK and Singapore]. You need to have a very trusted relationship with the Asian collector and then you can also encourage them to look at other works. These collectors are not stupid, if you are opportunistic with the works you bring, they know that you don't really have their interests at heart.

Are you still planning to open in Hong Kong?

Yes, I want to. I'd wanted to open in the Pedder Building [where Ben Brown, Gagosian and Hanart galleries are], but for various reasons I can't go there. But these things happen for a reason, the rents in that building have now doubled.

Would you open in the old Central police building [being restored and turned into a centre for contemporary art]?

Yes, I would be happy to be there when it's ready in 2014, but we have to open before. I have someone working there already. We'll open a little office and a modest gallery where we can have small projects at least. Real estate prices in Hong Kong don't give us many possibilities.

I heard you were opening another space in Paris?

I was thinking about it, but that hasn't worked out. I will buy some storage space though.

How did you find the Venice Biennale?

There were so many people at the professional day that there was almost no reason to go there. I think they should arrange for the people who really need to be there first to go for the first few days, and then have three professional days afterwards. Also, I didn't feel that there was as much to discover artistically this year. Every time I was disappointed by the number of artists who are invited to do something so important, but don't take on the scale of the opportunity they have. But of course, I love the fact that Maurizio's pigeons [stuffed and positioned on the

in Pinault's collection and your gallery were being favoured to show in Versailles?

You tell me a museum that doesn't have a good relationship with other people in the art market. And how many artists does Pinault collect? I did understand the concerns, but there were a few stupid things said—I read in one magazine that I represent Jeff Koons. Also, it's tricky to find artists that can show in Versailles: you need to show big works that are lightweight and don't take up too much

space, and you can't put anything on the walls or furniture. So, Cattelan was cancelled because people were making a big deal about there being three of my artists [Xavier Veilhan and Takashi Murakami were selected previously]. But some dealers had three artists in a row at the Venice Biennale French Pavilion, two in Monumenta [and] no one complains... I wouldn't dream of complaining. I would imagine such decisions are made based on the artists, not the galleries. And when two of the three artists in question are two of the five biggest artists in the world, is there really a problem? Jean-Jacques Aillagon [the president of the Château de Versailles] did a very good job.

How do you feel about being called “Gagosian à la Française”?

On one level it's a compliment. But on the other I know people are insulting me! But all these people who laughed at Larry are now losing their artists to him. I am a very small gallerist but I take my artists before they are famous so we are different. I hope I will keep them.

What has been the highlight of your career?

I think that the highlight is going to be in the future! Perhaps the Cattelan exhibition coming to the Guggenheim in New York [4 November-22 January 2012].

Interview by Melanie Gerlis

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Gallery history

- 1985-89: Perrotin works as an assistant at contemporary gallery Charles Cartwright, Paris
- 1989: Opens his own gallery in a rented apartment
- 1991: Holds Damien Hirst's first solo exhibition
- 1993: First group show including Maurizio Cattelan. Meets Takashi Murakami in Yokohama, Japan
- 1995: Shows Murakami on his stand at the Gramercy Art Fair (now The Armory Show). Holds his first solo shows for Murakami and Cattelan in Paris gallery
- 1999: Funds the production of Cattelan's *La Nona Ora* Pope John-Paul II sculpture
- 2004: Opens a space in Miami (closed in 2010)
- 2006: Opens at 76 Rue de Turenne, Paris
- 2007: Opens exhibition space in the facing Impasse Saint-Claude
- 2010: Takes over upper floor of 76 Rue de Turenne building; launches artists' books collection



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French tornado arrives in Miami

MIAMI. Hip French dealer **Emmanuel Perrotin**, who handles some of the hottest contemporary artists of the moment, has opened a new gallery in Miami's Wynwood art district with his friend and fellow art dealer, Cathy Vedovi. Strategically positioned just one block from the Rubell Family Collection, the gallery, currently undergoing renovation, will show the likes of Maurizio Cattelan and



Takashi Murakami. How are the locals reacting to this French invasion? The Miami art collector George Lindemann, who recently curated the exhibition "Miami nice" at the Parisian venue, says, "The more the merrier" and is pleased that Mr Perrotin, his personal friend, will bring international artists to Miami, as well as showing Miami artists in Europe. Nick Cindric, director of Rocket Projects said, "I welcome the arrival of such an important gallery as Perrotin, I see it as the first of many more venues for contemporary art moving to our district. We haven't even started to realise the influx of galleries that I believe will be coming". "Perrotin is good for us all. Let's see how long a shadow he casts", said another local gallerist. **Jose Diaz**

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