



Peer Insights

R E P O R T

Q&A with Seol Park

Founder of Spark Assoc.
Art Management and
SPARK+

Principle Series:

Family Office Insights sits down with Seol Park, Founder of Spark Assoc. Art Management and SPARK+, for a glimpse into the illusive art market, tips on how to begin building a collection of substance and how to identify iconic international artists.



Family Office Insights is a voluntary, “opt-in” collaborative peer-to-peer community of single family offices, qualified investors and institutional investors.

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Q: Given the art world is a vast and complex space, which areas do you focus on as an art advisor?

A: I focus on identifying solid mid-career international artists with museum-level recognitions in their native regions, yet under-recognized in the US, and I introduce their work to my clients here, either via private presentations or curated exhibitions. Much of the works I recommend are directly from the artists' studios. I travel frequently to Europe and Asia Pacific to engage the artist community and curators. A good number of them also come here and set up studios when they reach a point in their careers and feel they need new challenges.

Q: What compels you to focus on international mid-career artists?

A: These artists are more likely to garner critical attention in major markets such as the U.S. in the coming years. To me, the most important thing is the respect I have for the artists who have a confident hand and voice in their practice—those with track records of creating great works of art for many years, of choosing to push the envelope and stilling landing on their feet, and of being hard at work every day. Those are the values I respect in people regardless of their professions, and I apply the same to the artists I choose to promote. I very much enjoy immersing myself in the development of artists' work and careers, and helping expand the audience of the ones I believe are truly worth spreading the word about.

Q: What about fledgling young talent?

A: I do come across great works of art by young artists. I keep them on my mental file and observe how they develop. It requires time to discern true future art-world participants from those that are talented but not likely to mature into enduring practitioners.

Q: What is your criteria for determining good art?

A: My acquisition recommendations to clients are filtered through my belief in the enduring strength of the artists whose work embody three things. The first is clarity of thought. What's the art about? Does the artist have a clear point-of-view about the subject? Without this, it may be more craftsmanship than art. Does the artist's take on the subject resonate with me/my client?

The second is mastery of the medium. Is the artist master of the medium he/she chose to employ—be it watercolor, spray paint, bronze, or computer graphics software—to create a visual expression of the concept? Without such mastery, it may be more 'talk' than 'art.'

And finally, it is originality that lingers and influences. Certain visual encounters stay with you. One gauge of an artist's influence, whether he/she would have a place in the history of art, may be to see if there are people trying to copy the artist's vision and expression. More than 100 years after Monet and a whole school of Impressionist painters that followed

him, there are still countless Sunday painters mimicking his color palette and brushworks.

Aside from these, I also enjoy seeing signs of ambition in artists. Not in an outlandish way, but how demanding the artist is of his/her own work.

Q: For those who don't speak the language of the art trade, how would you best explain what to look for when one considers buying art?

A: Honestly, it's not much different than evaluating whether to invest in a business. Before committing financial resources, you'd want to see whether the company in consideration has a clear and differentiated product/service ("clarity of thought"), whether the company can execute to a level of expertise that is hard to replicate ("mastery of the medium"), and whether the company has the power to make a broad and sustaining impact in the marketplace ("influence").

Q: Can art be a good investment vehicle?

A: Investing in art is like investing in anything else: it's a great investment vehicle if one is educated, disciplined, and a bit lucky, but very risky otherwise. In addition to the aforementioned criteria I use to determine promising artists and great artworks, I also believe that buyers should make sure that they personally enjoy keeping art they acquire. Good art has so much to offer beyond financial rewards.



Seol Park

Seol Park is an independent art curator-advisor and founder of Spark Assoc. Art Management. The firm specializes in art advisory and international artist liaison. Before founding Spark Associates, she previously worked for Christie's, had a leading role in a start-up offering online art-collecting platform, and advised American and Asian corporations on brand management. She studied art history and design in Korea, Canada, and the U.S., and earned a Master's degree with honors from Sotheby's Institute. Originally from Seoul, Korea, she is married to a Chinese-American businessman, and currently lives in New York City. For more information, please visit <http://www.sparkplusart.com>.



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Arthur Andrew Bavelas