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ArtBlitz Los Angeles

CONVERSATION | CLARESSINKA ANDERSON

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By Pauli Ochi

I spent a lovely afternoon visiting Claressinka Anderson, founder of Marine Projects, at her home/ gallery. Known for the salons she hosts in her intimate space Claressinka has successfully reinterpreted the concept of the salon for a contemporary audience. Brining home (pun intended) the idea of what it is like to really live with art the format is surprisingly refreshing. The large-scale Noah Davis painting that hangs in the living room feels all the more powerful in the context of a home versus a white-walled gallery. Read the interview below and be sure to make an appointment to visit the space.

Tell us about your background. How did you get into contemporary art?

I have been drawn to art since I was a child. I grew up in London, so I was lucky to have incredible resources. My parents would take me to all the museums and I've been told that I was always drawn to all the "weird" stuff. I remember being obsessed with Picasso when I was 6 years old and I used to draw his weeping women! I still have one of those drawings. My parents have it framed in their house. I also remember being fascinated by the sanctity of museum spaces. They inspired me – I wanted to be in and around art. I've been curating shows since I was in high school. I was also heavily interested in photography and studied it in college, along with art history. The relationships between things – both visually and conceptually – whether through art or writing are a life long passion. It really is no wonder that I love to curate exhibitions.

Why LA?

I ended up in LA on somewhat of a whim. I was moving back to London after a few years of living in New Zealand. I stopped off in LA to see some friends from college and after a week, I decided to rent an apartment. I think I was drawn to LA the way most outsiders are. It is a mythic place. I just immediately got the sense that there was a certain freedom here and that attracted me. London is so much more entrenched in ways of being, of living, of history. I wanted to be somewhere new and I felt like I could do something here. It was a gut instinct.

How did Marine Contemporary originally come about?

Marine Contemporary grew out of Marine Art Salon. It was a natural progression. I felt the time was right to expand into a more traditional space. I wanted to represent artists more formally and I felt that at the time Venice was the right location. We had a nice little community. But that was in 2011 and a lot has changed. L & M closed and everyone else migrated East and I no longer felt it was a good location for a gallery.



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L to R: Alison O'Daniel, Dwyer Kilcollin

Dwyer Kilcollin, 1280 Sanderg

You recently closed your gallery space on Abbot Kinney to move the gallery in a new direction. What were your motivations behind that decision?

Well, aside from no longer feeling Venice was the right location, I wanted to move towards a more flexible model for engaging with contemporary art. I wanted to capitalize on what had been a successful model for me – the salons I have been holding since 2009 in my home – with an expanded vision that encompasses the values of a more traditional gallery. I'm moving forward with a new model. One that I feel encourages artistic innovation and collaboration and creates a tailored experience for developing, viewing and collecting contemporary works.

Tell us about the gallery in its new format.

The new format is based on adaptability. Whereas before I did predominantly solo exhibitions at the gallery and group exhibitions, talks, performances etc.. at the salon, I will now focus on intimate viewings in the domestic setting, salon-style group exhibitions, and wide ranging solo-presentations. I also want to be more about and in the community in some ways. I was so tied to the gallery space physically, that it did not allow me to really be involved in the way that I would like. I'm interested in mobile exhibitions and collaborations with other spaces. I have always been most passionate about inspiring young collectors to start collections. That mission works best for me in the format of showing work in the domestic arena and also being able to advise without being tied to a specific roster and schedule.

Favorite parts of installing the current Salon show?

I honestly loved all of it. It's such a strong group of artists and they all worked so hard to produce the work. Alison O'Daniel's site specific installation took an entire day to install and it looks incredible in this slightly odd space, a raised enclave above the front entrance of the house. It's a dynamic space and her lyrical sculptures do very well there. Fay Ray made one of her "sculpture a day" works on site while installing, which was a treat to witness. This show also has a very special component – The FriendsWithYou installation in the bedroom. They created an all immersive healing experience and seeing the small bedroom in my house transform into this magical space was really inspiring. It reminded me what was so special about the salon. There is just an intimacy that one cannot experience in a gallery. We all sit around on the sofa together, we look at books, we talk, we eat, we even cook! It was never that comfortable at the gallery. The salon is truly a space about living with art. That is what I have wanted to do since I was a child, so it is continually inspiring