



20 Art Dealers on Their First Jobs in the Art World

• Alina Cohen Jul 1, 2019 12:31pm

Gallery directors are an intimidating bunch. They sell objects worth millions of dollars, dress as though they just stepped off a private jet straight from the French Riviera (which, in a few cases, may actually be the case), and wield a versatile arsenal of art-historical knowledge. It's easy to forget that once upon a time, they were just naïfs, vying for their first jobs. They made mistakes, fell in love, became frustrated with unpaid internships, and struggled to advance. Gallerists: They're just like us.

Below, gallery directors from around the globe share the lessons they've learned—sartorial, managerial, and otherwise. Though their trajectories vary, their stories reveal an important common thread: They share a passion for working with art and artists that propels them through the roadblocks of sustaining a career in this singular, quirky industry.

Bridget Finn

Partner, Reyes | Finn



From left: Kyle Knodell, Bridget Finn, Erin Somerville (co-founded Cleopatra's with Bridget, is now White Columns' Deputy Director/Curator), Laura Finlay. Photo courtesy of Bridget Finn.

I moved to New York after I finished college in 2006. I was 22 and had \$1,800 in savings from a 60-hour-per-week summer job at the Hilton Garden Inn. I loaded up a U-Haul in Michigan with furniture and cats and moved into a Bushwick apartment with three friends.

My roommate, who had secured the only unpaid internship at Anton Kern Gallery, was promoted to Anton's assistant. The gallery hired me as a full-time, unpaid intern. By the end of the six-month gig, I accepted a job at a nonprofit where I worked for the next year and a half. I desperately missed working with artists, Anton, and the gang, so I called him up and asked him to hire me. He played hard to get, but I knew he needed an archivist. I stayed with the gallery for three years as a project coordinator and archivist.

I learned how to look very hard at artworks and artists' practices. Anton taught me that in this business, you have to embrace your opinions and never apologize for them. I also learned from the artists. I am forever grateful to Ellen Berkenblit, Anne Collier, Dan McCarthy, Brian Calvin, Matthew Monahan, and Jonas Wood. They each had a huge impact on shaping my ideas of what it meant to "work" with artists.

During that time, some friends—Erin Somerville, Bridget Donahue, and Kate McNamara—and I started our own gallery space called Cleopatra's (Colleen Grennan joined later). We were doing studio visits with our artist peers and felt this urgent desire to show their work. We ran that project alongside our respective art-world jobs for 10 years.

My heart broke when I left the gallery. I now look forward to running into Anton at art fairs, getting a little squint and a wave followed by a quick "Oh, Bridge, hi."

Terese Reyes
terese@reyesfinn.com
310 487 5436

Bridget Finn
bridget@reyesfinn.com
313 204 7814

1500 Trumbull Ave.
Detroit, MI 48216
www.reyesfinn.com

Gallery Hours
Tuesday–Saturday
12pm–6pm