

MONEY MAKERS



ARTISTIC ENCOUNTER

Sukanya Rajaratnam, 39, was hired by legendary art dealer Robert Mnuchin during a breakfast meeting at a "hole-in-the-wall" restaurant on the Upper East Side. "He took a chance on me, and it worked out," she says.

COLLECTING THOUGHTS

The glamour of the New York art scene is amplified through its power players. We canvass the alluring, lucrative subject with a trio of dealers—all of whom happen to be women—at the top of the gallery world.

By Thomas P. Farley

Sukanya Rajaratnam

Partner, Mnuchin Gallery, 45 E. 78 St., mnuchingallery.com

What attracted you to a career in the art world? I grew up in Sri Lanka in the midst of a 25-year civil war. At the age of 18, with no exposure to Western art at all, I went to study at Cambridge, which happens to have a fantastic museum with a nude sculpture by Henry Moore. I thought it looked like a giant lobster and hated it enough that I was compelled to look at it more closely to understand it. That incident shaped the rest of my life. I know that if I have a visceral dislike of something, that's a litmus test for me: It's something I should investigate.

Does being a non-American shape your perspective of the NYC art world? I'm the only Sri Lankan female working in the contemporary art world. The market is now so global that it has become an asset not to be from what 50 years ago was 'the art world.'

What upcoming exhibits do you have at Mnuchin? In March, we have an exhibition by Japanese artist Kazuo Shiraga. Following that, we'll be staging Simon Hantaï, the Hungarian abstract artist.

What's the one thing aspiring collectors must know?

Know your mind and your heart because sometimes they don't align. The art has to resonate with you. CONTINUED...