

<https://forbes.cz/mick-jagger-aukni-sceny-jak-vnima-simon-de-pury-digitalizaci-umeleckeho-trhu/>

**Simon de Pury, “Mick Jagger” a real star of the art market allowed us to take a look behind the scenes of the world's biggest auction houses, art fairs and art collections**



**Intro:**

Simon de Pury is an internationally renowned art dealer and legendary auctioneer of Swiss origin. His expertise and professional activities reach out to curating, collecting, DJ-ing and photography. Among art professionals he is well known by the title “Mick Jagger of art auctions”, which was given to him thanks to his passionate, masterful and exciting style of selling art and conducting auctions. He is most probably the world’s best known auctioneer, who gets booked by the most rich and famous in the art business, but he is just as passionate about charity work and he helped to raise billions of Dollars for art and health institutions like amfAR, the Elton John AIDS Foundation, the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, MTV’s Staying Alive and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, just to name a few. De Pury enjoyed an artistic education in Switzerland and in Japan, but after failing to establish himself as an artist, he started to work at the auction house Kornfeld in Bern, Switzerland,

which became his life's fate. Simone De Pury's career path seems so natural. He worked his way up from a Swiss regional auction house to become chairman and chief auctioneer worldwide at Sotheby's, one of the two biggest auction houses in the world. In 2001 he became the co-owner of Philips De Pury, the third largest auction house in the world, before he took the step into the private sector in 2013 when he founded a private art advisory company.

**1. Who fuelled your career? Who was your mentor or the motor \*who fuelled? behind your endless energy and focus on your career growth?**

I had the privilege of looking up to three individuals who became role models and mentors without them realizing it. These were Ernst Beyeler, the best art dealer of his time and founder of ArtBasel, Peter Wilson the Chairman of Sotheby's to whose vision we owe the art market as it is today and Baron H.H. Thyssen-Bornemisza, the greatest collector of his time who used his collection to conduct cultural diplomacy. I didn't even get anywhere close to equal their achievements, but if you set yourself high goals you will still end up somewhere better than if you have no ambition at all. The engine? Passion coupled in the early days with ambition. The passion never fades, the ambition though does.

**2. What was the hardest aspect of leaving the corporate world and starting a fresh independent business?**

In my career I have by coincidence started something new once every ten years. This forces you to question yourself and never taking anything for granted. In a way you start each time from scratch. Past successes or failures don't mean you will necessarily repeat them. Experience and hard work help but never as much as luck and coincidences.

**3. Do you remember the first art work that struck you so deeply, so that you realised that art must become a part of your life?**

When I was 12 years old my mother took me to Arezzo where the art of Piero della Francesca was a shock and revelation that triggered my lifelong passion for art

**4. What is the main aspect that you love about working in the art world?**

That you never get bored. You never stop learning and discovering new things. Finally people who are passionate about art and culture tend to be stimulating people to hang out with.

**5. It always seems to me that you know truly everybody in this business. You fly around the world, where you hold auctions and conduct sales with the most interesting people involved. Do you recall when you were star struck, by meeting a client for the first time?**

I had the privilege of meeting many 'known' people in my long professional life. I have never been overly impressed or intimidated by it since when you meet them you realize that they are not much different from any of us. There is however one big exception. I was introduced to Yoko Ono when for a short time she lived in Geneva many years ago. I was totally starstruck. The Beatles were the soundtrack to my youth. I had listened to everyone of their albums until the vinyls and needles were completely used up. So meeting the person who was the big love of John Lennon impressed me so much that I was hardly able to overcome my natural shyness.

**6. During the past few months, the art world was shaken up by the hype of NFT art work sales (Non Fungible Token art, are digital art works certified and linked to block chains). Last week you have lounded the first NFT artist residence in Monaco. At the moment the NFT offers are so wast, it is hard to orient in as an outsider. What is your outlook on the NFT markets and how it might start to "separate the grain from the chaff".**

The NFT's give 'unicity' to an artwork that can digitally be reproduced infinitely. This is of course what collectors are looking for. It therefore opens up the possibility of making and collecting NFT's in so many different areas. The initial fever has already receded and the still short existing track record allows us to start figuring out the relative merits and qualitative differences between the flood of NFT's being offered.

**7. In recent years, we have seen an enormous boom of contemporary art sales worldwide. What would you advise to an established czech collector of old masters or classic modern art these days? Would you recommend them to hold on to their works and wait, or to sell and buy contemporary?**

The market of postwar and contemporary art will be the financially biggest part of the art market for at least the next twenty years. There simply are not enough outstanding old masters left in private hands to fuel a long-standing boom. As a collector you should stick to what you love and have affinity for. If you buy the very best in any area regardless of general taste and fashion you may end up owning 'trophies' which are immune to the constant evolution of taste.

**9. You work for and with the most famous collectors in the world. Can someone who is just starting to collect ask you for your recommendation and what would you recommend to a starting collector from Czech Republic?**

Whenever I start working with someone who would like to start collecting I try to understand what makes them tick and what their personal taste is. This I find out by taking them to an art fair or a museum or simply by going together thru art books. Once I

understand their taste I make recommendations that have a good value growth potential while being something they will enjoy living with. I do not believe in people buying with their ears only.

### **10. Did you come across any Czech art or gallery that stuck in your memory?**

Prag is not only one of my favorite cities in the world but one the most exciting cultural destinations anywhere. The last time I was there was to conduct an auction for the foundation of Petra Nemcova. I am sadly not sufficiently current on the contemporary art scene in the Czech Republic, but of course I recollect names like Alphonse Mucha, Frantisek Kupka, Vaclav Brozik, Zdenek Sykora, Oto Coubin, Toyen and similar artists that are already established on the secondary international art market.

Since I have not been travelling to the Czech Republic a lot, I sometimes notice some Czech galleries exhibiting on internationally renown art fairs such as Art Basel and its smaller contemporaries. Which is always a good lead, or a quality control, for new collectors interested in the central and eastern European art scene.

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#### **QUICK QUESTIONS:**

1. My all time favourite art work is...

Picasso's weeping woman at Tate Modern

2. I collect...

Children (I am a father of five)

Superstitions

Dinosaurs and Godzilla's

Figure ceramic mugs

Contemporary art

Contemporary design

Photography

etc etc

3. My insider tip to overcome jet lag...

I was living in permanent jet lag for 50 years. Thanks to the pandemic I finally discovered what it is to be without it! The trick is don't go to sleep when you are tired but immediately adjust to the time of the new location. Go out already the first night!

4. My favourite design piece...the iPhone

5. The artist(s) we should have on our watchlist...this is what I make a living off so like with a chef don't expect him or her to divulge their favorite recipe