

# BLOUINARTINFO

## In Conversation With International Art Consultant Kate Chertavian

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Kate Chertavian  
(Christopher Schuch Photography)

Kate Chertavian is an internationally recognized art consultant responsible for shaping collections of individuals (David Bowie was a client), and institutions (including the Barr Foundation). Chertavian is bringing her more than 25 years of experience curating independent projects and building private collections to bear on a new project to put together a collection of important pictures for the Four Seasons/ One Dalton luxury hotel and residence in downtown Boston.

**There are many paths one can take to become an art advisor as it requires a diverse set of skills and a wide range of knowledge. What is your educational background, and how did you enter your current field? Was this something you knew you wanted to do for a long time?**

Great question. I have always had an interest in the art world, whether practicing art at school and in college or delving into art history. Art translates the world around you, and accessing different interpretations of the world through art fascinated me. Both Lucy Rosenburgh, my colleague on One Dalton, and I have worked for prominent auction rooms. I left Christie's in 1992 to start my consultancy firm, build my first collections in Contemporary and Modern Art, and host exhibitions in my London home.

**The title art advisor can mean many different things depending on the context of one's work. How would you define your role as an art advisor? How did you first define your work as an art advisor and how has that evolved over the years as the scope of your work expanded?**

As art advisors, we hope to help build meaningful collections that reflect the interests, personalities and values of our collectors and public institutions. We have the most fascinating job — each day we climb into our clients' heads and look around, to capture the spirit of the collector. With this information, we source material, always being mindful of the collectors' wishes, value systems, and intentions. We hope by having a collector centric approach the collections under our management look authentic. In the 25 years of working in the field my highly personal approach has not changed.

**You have worked to build both private and public collections. Notably, you were David Bowie's art advisor and oversaw the sale of his collection following his death. How would you characterize your relationship with him or your clients in general? For instance, do you ever suggest that they purchase a work that they aren't interested in, but that you feel strongly about?**

David was a great friend, an inspirational client, and incredibly private. I respect his privacy and that all of our clients. Obviously, our clients rely on our combined 40 years' experience in the art world and our daily working knowledge of current artists and secondary markets. At the same time, we are keen to make the experience a collaborative journey. With regards to offering material to clients and the feedback, this is an incredibly important process. The first few months of any engagement are a vocabulary building phase, and over time, we can channel interests through this shared vocabulary. There are surprisingly few misses with this model, but certainly there are individual works by artists of interest that don't resonate with a collector. The other thing to remember is that my taste, and that of any of my team is often vastly different to that of the collectors — we are not collecting with ourselves or the cool or fashionable market in mind.

**Building collections for individuals as well as institutions such as the Harvard Business School are about understanding a singular vision and working over longer periods of time to create a collection in line with that vision — to use your term, building a collection through a shared vocabulary. Currently, you are advising on the collection of One Dalton, a new luxury apartment and hotel in downtown Boston. The artworks collected will be on view in the building for the tenants and guests. Would you describe the difference in creating this sort of collection, which is to suit the tastes of many different people, and which is acquired over a much smaller period of time? How do you go about such a task, and will the artworks rotate regularly, or are you creating a more permanent and/or site-specific installation?**

I approached the collection for One Dalton by envisioning its residents as an embodiment of the Four Seasons brand: globally-minded yet appreciative of local attributes, timeless sophistication melded with modern innovation. What resonated with me above all else are Four Seasons' values in crafting memorable impressions through enriching experiences and connections. That became my starting point for the One Dalton collection.

Our goal is to be mindful of Four Seasons' global clientele while creating a meaningful experience in our city. Keeping this in mind, we're focusing on selecting a group of internationally important artists, some of who will create specially commissioned, site-specific pieces that reflect the beauty and assets of our incredible city.

**Would you comment on the role that the market plays in your work as an advisor. For instance, do you advise clients with regard to the projected long-term increase in value of a given work, or do you focus on the strength and value of the collection as a whole?**

I have been in the market for a very long time, as has my colleague, so I suppose we are less seduced by the fluctuations and vagaries of a fashion-driven art market and more interested in establishing value by using curatorial and long-sense assessment methods.

We have a simple motto in our office, that we seek “best piece, best price.” Each selection should be of the best possible quality and price point, depending on the budget at hand. David Bowie and many other clients have teased me about saying “no” more than “yes” on a work of art. I don’t feel this is a bad thing, consultants should discern and advise, not shop and sell.

**Do you have any relationships with artists directly or do you work mainly through galleries? For instance, for your work with the Barr Foundation to create a collection of socially-engaged art, most of the artists likely did not have gallery representation. How did you select the artists to collect?**

We have had the good fortune of having great relationships with local and international galleries and artists. Galleries play an incredibly important role in the selection of artwork and we are respectful of this ecosystem. Over many years of working with great galleries, you do get the opportunity to visit artist’s studios and, in some cases, become friendly with the artists, but this is not our goal — it is a fantastic byproduct. With regards to local projects, we have a long bench full of partners, talented local galleries, open studios and individual artists, all of whom help us generate a great portfolio of work to present to the likes of the Barr Foundation.

**In addition to working as art advisor, you also curate projects, and you co-founded an education non-profit called Year Up. You are also a trustee of the Gardner Museum. May you speak about the relationship between all of these roles and interests? Or, more simply, how does philanthropy and non-profit activity play into your work as an art advisor?**

I don’t think of art, philanthropy, or museum leadership as separate silos; they are so deeply connected, and the collectors and institutions that we work with feel the same way. We hope to always build diverse and interesting collections that reflect our local and international ecosystem. We love working with collectors who view their art as a means to further the conversation of pressing social and environmental issues. So many Contemporary artists are working to understand the fields of social justice — these are the important topics and we are lucky to be able to include many socially-engaged artists in our collections. Our collectors are — in almost all cases — also serious philanthropists, so using art as a vehicle for this discussion is what we are known for.

**Luxury residential spaces like One Dalton are taking on a larger role within the field of Contemporary art. The Contemporary art market has expanded over the last decade, it is due in part to the growth of the financial class for which residential spaces like One Dalton are being built. May you comment on the relationship between the luxury real estate market and the art market? For instance, how do you ensure that corporate clients are responsible art collectors? Do you see that as part of your role as an art advisor?**

The relationship between luxury real estate market and the art market depends on the brand identity as well as the values and vision of the developer. For example, the developer of One Dalton, Richard Friedman, founder of Carpenter & Company, Inc., saw the need to craft a thoughtful art collection that reflects its future residents as these spaces act as an extension of their own personal home. He understood that a buyer of this caliber is drawn to culture, innovation, and has expectations of what the lifestyle experience will be at One Dalton.

With curating collections for a real estate project, it’s also imperative to bear in mind the actual appearance of the building. For example, One Dalton’s silhouette is a modern, glass-clad “soft triangle” designed by renowned architect Henry Cobb, while some of the interior spaces such as the residential

club lounge and lobby were crafted with a handsome and stately approach by designer extraordinaire Thierry Despont. The art collection needs to effectively “marry” these design attributes all while reflecting local heritage and global values.

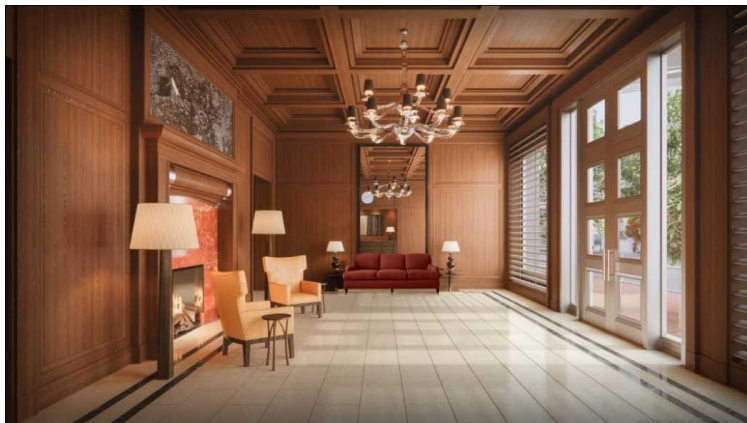
*This interview appears in the July edition of Modern Painters.*



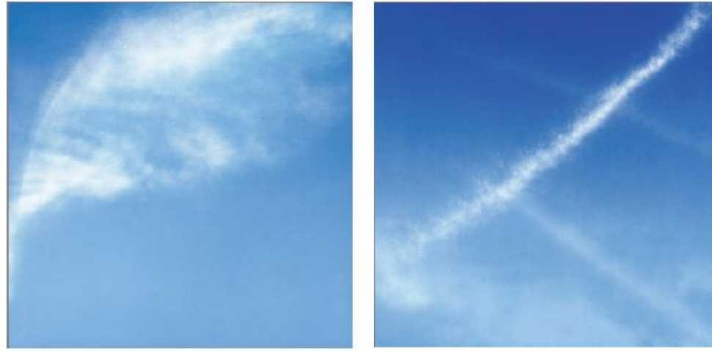
*The Four Seasons Hotel & Private Residences, One Dalton will be the tallest residential tower in New England upon completion.*



*One Dalton's 50th-floor Club Lounge, designed by Thierry Despont, overlooks the Charles River and Boston skyline.*



*One Dalton's Private Residences Lobby is being designed by Thierry Despont.*



*Left: LA Exuberance 3, 2016, Tacita Dean, Edition 35/36, Hand-drawn 3 color blend lithograph, 29 7/8 x 29 7/8 in. (75.9 x 75.9 cm),  
Right: LA Exuberance 15, 2016, Edition 35/36, Tacita Dean, Hand-drawn 3 color blend lithograph, 29 7/8 x 29 7/8 in. (75.9 x 75.9 cm),*