

Russel Tovey ([00:00:05](#)):

Good afternoon. Good morning. Good evening. Whenever you are in the world, I'm Russell Tovey.

Robert Diament ([00:00:08](#)):

And I'm Robert Diament.

Russel Tovey ([00:00:09](#)):

And this is Talk Art.

Robert Diament ([00:00:10](#)):

Welcome to Talk Art.

Russel Tovey ([00:00:12](#)):

How are you, Rob?

Robert Diament ([00:00:14](#)):

I'm feeling like a rebel.

Russel Tovey ([00:00:16](#)):

Really?

Robert Diament ([00:00:17](#)):

Yes.

Russel Tovey ([00:00:17](#)):

In what way?

Robert Diament ([00:00:18](#)):

With a cause, because I love today's guest. I think he is someone that inspires me to speak out more than I usually would. Because sometimes it can be scary to criticize people especially in the art world or call them out.

Russel Tovey ([00:00:34](#)):

You quite like doing it though. Yeah, you like criticizing. You always criticize me.

Robert Diament ([00:00:39](#)):

I love criticizing you, Russ. But what I love about today's guest is that he is someone that calls out kind of bad behavior and people who are doing kind of crappy things in the art world actually and he writes an amazing column for Artnet, which has been going on for a long time. He's also just incredibly entertaining. Well, he's been called a provocateur before and that is quite a good description of him. I had a very funny experience once, years ago when we had the gallery in Shoreditch. We were at the Rivington Restaurant and I think I was talking about the work of our friend Tracy Emin because we used to have our print up and he actually was at another table and I overheard the conversation and

interrupted me and was like, "Excuse me, you have really good taste or something." And we had this whole hilarious very intense conversation across the tables about contemporary art. It was genius. So that just gives you an idea of what he's like, he loves to interact.

Russel Tovey ([00:01:34](#)):

Also, our guest is an artist himself, he's an art collector. He's an art dealer. He's an art writer. He's a curator, he's a teacher and he's a self proclaimed hoarder and he used to be based in London. Then he's gone back to the states then now I think he's somewhere else in Europe. So we're quite interested to talk to I guess today to find out where in the world he actually is now. So we would like to welcome to Talk Art. Kenny Schachter.

Kenny Schachter ([00:02:02](#)):

You putting so much pressure on me. Hi everybody, thank you so much for having me.

Russel Tovey ([00:02:06](#)):

That's all right, you've got [inaudible 00:02:07]. You've got to be everything for the whole art world right now.

Kenny Schachter ([00:02:12](#)):

Well I to say I'm such a fan and I think what you've done is emblematic of a lot of different things that are going on in the old world that I think are very important and I'd love to touch upon them. Well, number one you put a lot of pressure on me to be entertaining which is going to be tricky in the first of all places. But I mean I just think the audience that you've developed from your podcast has been extraordinary and it's really reflective of the overall expansion of the art world, which has grown more in the past 25 years than in the previous 250 years. So I think it's quite an amazing phenomenon that you guys are spearheading in part of yourselves.

Russel Tovey ([00:02:54](#)):

Thanks Kenny, that's amazing. Well, what an endorsement to come from you, like art world royalty, art world magic.

Kenny Schachter ([00:03:03](#)):

Asshole.

Russel Tovey ([00:03:05](#)):

Art world asshole, yeah. So where in the world are you right now?

Kenny Schachter ([00:03:10](#)):

Well, I'm in Spain with the family right now in the south of Spain.

Russel Tovey ([00:03:16](#)):

Have you been there since lockdown?

Kenny Schachter ([00:03:18](#)):

Since they never listened to me I always love a captive audience like you guys that I could speak to. I was in New York for three months during the quarantine and I have to say... I mean, I'm a professor at the School of Visual Arts and I had a Zoom class for two months into the quarantine and I was in New York City. You would imagine from reading the press that people were just keeling over in the street from illness. Which of course we suffered one of the greatest tragedies in the world and certainly in my lifetime and I'm quite old and I'm sure in most people and it's been a terrible thing. But it's certainly in New York City or in America, wasn't as bad as the press would make it out to be. There's a lot of fear mongering going on a lot of different fronts and also in art world I have to say for other reasons. But I was working, I was teaching, I was able to get out and walk every day, Central Park was filled with people.

Albeit there was a hospital in Central Park, which I don't [inaudible 00:04:18] hospital. Which I don't think ever really thankfully had much activity going on. But then I went to Europe because my kids were back in London. I went to see them and spent a little bit of time in London and now I've been in Spain.

Russel Tovey ([00:04:31](#)):

Oh, that's good. Talking about the art market then. During this whole pandemic there was fear that it was going to just cancel itself out and no one would buy work and everything would be a problem. But it felt like the art market has actually gone up another gear. It feels like, especially with what's going on in the auctions at the moment and the way that people are collecting. It feels like there isn't a fear of this bubble bursting anytime soon.

Kenny Schachter ([00:04:57](#)):

Well, the first point this is... You've touched upon a lot of issues in that one sentence and the most important issue is that there's not a... I could say emphatically, I don't want to scream and annoy your listeners more than I'm about to. But there's no bubble, there's never been a bubble and that's complete absurdity to even... I mean, I'm not saying you I'm not ready to get into a fight with you just yet. But there is no bubble and there's two and very important key factors about art and humanity. Number one, in terms of the market and collecting I'm so tired of all the time in the press whenever there's... During 2008 and all the talk was at that art world would be like you said canceled, that it would utterly evaporate. There's always going to be constrictions in a market in the same vein that all markets go up and down. But since art came off the wall of a cave it's been coveted, collecting is part of human nature. When I organized an auction at Sotheby's called The Hoarder, you mentioned hoarding. I collect art...

I mean, it's funny because I could tell you one thing in a 100 years from now when phones are embedded in our forearm, we are going to be talking into our arm saying, hello? Hello? Can you hear me? Hello?

Russel Tovey ([00:06:16](#)):

Yes.

Kenny Schachter ([00:06:16](#)):

I mean, I think there'll be technology glitches. The art world will be with us forever and so will technology problems when we're trying to communicate with each other.

Russel Tovey ([00:06:24](#)):

Yes.

Kenny Schachter ([00:06:25](#)):

But since art came off the wall of the cave it's been coveted by people, that's one thing. So art collecting is part of human nature, to live with art has already been medically proven to... They've done studies in the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, which is actually accredited as a museum. That they have a very proactive commissioning program in all of the rooms and public spaces and there's a Veronese old master in the chapel at the hospital. But most importantly they've done clinical studies that reveal that the patients being surrounded by art has resulted in shorter hospital stays and less medications required of the patients.

Russel Tovey ([00:07:07](#)):

No way.

Kenny Schachter ([00:07:07](#)):

So art has an actual physiological ameliorative effect on your lives and I have to say... I'm going to get sidetracked a million times. But during the lockdown it was the first time in 30 years of my career that I wasn't at an airport every two weeks. Literally it was the longest in 25, 30 years that I had not been to an airport traveling and I was able to rub my nose against the painting or a drawing every single day. I mean to take stock and to... We are always in a rush and we're always late but we are never going anywhere, really on this treadmill. Going to art fairs and going to auctions and running, running. But sometimes you just have to look, what's in front of your nose and you see the world. So anyway, back to this. I'm going to try to stay on track as much as I can. But collecting is as primal as breathing and it's part of human nature since trading, before money was even invented and the craziest thing is that.

I mean, there's actually studies that currency was created for a Chinese emperor to help him facilitate and continue and expand on his collecting practices.

Robert Diament ([00:08:25](#)):

No way.

Russel Tovey ([00:08:26](#)):

Wow.

Kenny Schachter ([00:08:26](#)):

He was such a big art collector, he had 7000 objects and he was also an artist. So the other thing is that art making is the same as taking a crap. I mean, it's part of living and it's like breathing, eating, sustenance. So people will always make art because it's a reaction. It's a means of communication above all else and the creative act is so ingrained in the human psyche. That it's part of what differentiates us as a species from animals say, so people will always make art and people will always appreciate it and whether we have to trade shells or anything else or food. During the pandemic I traded some books I had written for some paper towels when the pandemic first started, because there was a shortage of toilet paper and paper towels. So I found someone through Instagram to trade me three rolls of paper towels for four books.

Robert Diament ([00:09:26](#)):

That's good.

Russel Tovey ([00:09:26](#)):

It's like wartime.

Robert Diament ([00:09:31](#)):

That's the dealer side of you, that's negotiating power. I like that.

Kenny Schachter ([00:09:35](#)):

But I mean, have to say I always say I'm the worst art dealer that ever sold a piece of art. I can't sell crack to a crackhead, that's the least interesting part of my career is I love to buy art but I hate to sell it.

Robert Diament ([00:09:51](#)):

Okay.

Kenny Schachter ([00:09:51](#)):

I'm not a salesman.

Robert Diament ([00:09:52](#)):

So you were talking about having your nose up to artworks every day and when I mentioned that we were interviewing you to an artist that I know yesterday. She said to me, "I've always loved him because we sat next to each other at a dinner and he spoke so eloquently about Paul Thek." That artist is someone that everybody mentions. If you mention Kenny Schachter, Paul Thek.

Russel Tovey ([00:10:13](#)):

Yeah.

Robert Diament ([00:10:13](#)):

Can you talk a bit about how you came to collect his work and discover him? Because I feel like you were one of the first people I ever heard about his work through.

Kenny Schachter ([00:10:21](#)):

Well, I'm so happy that you asked me that because I was ready for all the worst, most insidious kind of questions and when you said you brought my name up to someone half the time you'll get a reaction that's much different from niceties and talking about an artist. I mean, I love me or hate me there's usually little middle ground. But I mean, first and foremost I am an intense psychopathic lover of art and I'm so wildly passionate about art and really everything else is a kind of offshoot that originates and stems from what art does to me. Whether it's making it, writing about it, teaching it, looking at it, talking about it, all of these things you mentioned are conversations based that are underpinned by speaking about art. Sometimes I even hate what I do in terms of my writing because the art market is something I analyze and I feel compelled to write about it in a forthright and honest way, because nobody else speaks the truth in the art world. In fact, the art world is probably the only profession where people embrace lies willfully more than they do the truth.

I mean, the art world welcomes fake news in that regard. But back to Paul Thek. It touches on a lot of different bases for me and things that come to the core of my existence in so many ways. In the first way, not to bring up personal stories so much or news but I lost my mother when I was 13 years old with degenerative disease. To see someone deteriorate before your eyes when you're a child is one of the most... I mean from then on everything was couched in my experience based on having seen someone that was so dear and I love so much to pass away through this disease of cancer. When I first saw the Meat Pieces of Paul Thek. So he made these sculptures in the 60s and they were created with wax pigment pieces of plastic and they emulated the cross section of flesh and then he housed them in these very minimalistic vitrines made a plexiglass in yellow often. But they were sort of imprisoned in this box and frozen and number one, it expresses the...

When you're young and you're racing around going to parties and staying out, you think you're invincible and you forget about the vulnerability of life. You're always looking outside of yourself and you never really think about your organs, what lies within and that's your heart, your lungs, your kidneys and liver. In a way I've never seen a depiction in art that so finely represents this kind of hair. It's like the width of a hair that separates between life and death. So in a way the work is very alive because it's an artwork that you see, it's a physical presence that's so riveting. I also love the fact that it's another fine line between repulsion and seduction. Because for me they're some of the most exquisitely, beautiful aesthetically pleasing objects I've ever seen. Number two, it comes the closest from anything I have ever seen as an artistic representation of life and death simultaneously coexisting and also it's a handmade object which looks so stunningly realistic and it's also encased in this glass vitrine which is a very cold object.

In a way he's also doing a very subtle critique of pop art, which is consumerism and ready made objects and minimalism. Which is machine rendered, taking the humanity out of art like Donald Judd just making a metal box, having it fabricated by a machinist. So I so touched by the work of Paul Thek, it was even more than an epiphany. It just touched me. I mean, it's made cry standing in front of the work before and once I saw that work I started to... What I love about art is that art is a lifetime accrual of gaining knowledge and information and people forget about it so much. Today, even though the market's expanded and the audience has expanded so much everyone thinks about art and we're going to touch upon this shortly. But everyone thinks that art is this immediate situation, the newest hottest artist going for this kind of money and that kind of money and what's the newest? Who's the latest undiscovered artist? But art is a slow burning process that takes a lifetime to gain insight and information about.

That's really what I love more than anything is just, it has this kind of... The best part of school and academics is that every day more art is being made and every day there's something else to learn about. The more I learned about Paul Thek the more I just fell head over heels in love with the artist and his practice and also it reflects a lot of very important components about some of these ancillary issues we're talking about the market. Because Paul Thek in 1964 had a show in New York at Pace Gallery. By the way you started me so if I talk for three hours, it's your fault because

Robert Diament ([00:15:49](#)):

You just go for it we love it.

Kenny Schachter ([00:15:50](#)):

You kicked it off

Robert Diament ([00:15:51](#)):

This is the best and also we feel very similar to you. The whole thing you're saying about constant knowledge accrual or whatever the word is. We feel exactly the same and that's the reason Russell and I became friends. So yeah, we totally get it.

Kenny Schachter ([00:16:06](#)):

I'm going to sound like a complete moron, but I lived in London for 15 years and I saw one theater performance. I don't go to theater, I don't go to movies.

Russel Tovey ([00:16:19](#)):

Shocking.

Kenny Schachter ([00:16:21](#)):

I don't read novels, I read books I'm not like posh or anything spice. But everything I do is there's so much for me to learn. I teach so I learn. I write so I look at things harder and think about things harder. There's so much for me to learn and I know only a fragment of the art world, the art world-

Russel Tovey ([00:16:41](#)):

I'm going to jump in now. What it is about you though is that you've made it kind of mission of your life to analyze the art world and you are a dealer, but you are fundamentally a collector and a lover of art. But it is this analytical eye that you have and you're talking about your writing and we just need to let the listeners know that you have an opinion column for Artnet News. Which is a regular column that you write which is about the art market, which is telling the truths of it and reveals and the honesty of it all which a lot of people really admire you for and appreciate. But what is it about the analytical side of really trying to get into the nuts and bolts of the way that the commercial art market operates that kind of gets... It's like the B is in your bonnet for that for how to kind break down the hierarchies and to reveal the honesty-

Robert Diament ([00:17:30](#)):

And agitate.

Russel Tovey ([00:17:33](#)):

And agitate. Fundamentally the corruption that is involved in all of that and where is the future of the art market now during the current climate going forwards>

Kenny Schachter ([00:17:41](#)):

Are you serious? That was about 47 questions. How much time do you have?

Russel Tovey ([00:17:47](#)):

Four minutes.

Robert Diament ([00:17:47](#)):

Forever. We can go-

Russel Tovey ([00:17:48](#)):

No, I was just saying what is it about then-

Kenny Schachter ([00:17:51](#)):

I gotcha. Okay, so let me just finish with Paul Thek. Paul Thek showed at Pace in 1964 and became an art star. He was a gorgeous guy, he died of AIDS in 1988 when AIDS killed David Wojnarowicz. I met Keith Haring when he had Kaposi sarcoma from AIDS and spoke to him. He was one of the first people to just say, I have AIDS when AIDS you were like a pariah. I mean, you guys are too young but when AIDS first came out in New York City 25% of the art world just disappeared. Not only that, but there was suspicion that it was so contagious that you can get it from kissing somebody. David Wojnarowicz wrote this incredible article that touched me so much that one of his friends was thrown out of a restaurant in the East Village, a very famous Polish restaurant by the proprietor because he had visible signs of the illness. I mean, that's why all of this activist art sprung up in the 80s and anyway, Paul Thek died destitute.

He went to Italy, he lived in Europe and the impact of Instagram and people like criticize Instagram, blah, blah. But Paul Thek lived in Europe and America completely lost sight of his work and the artist himself. When he moved back he was working in a supermarket after he had been in five of the biggest biennials in the world and died penniless really living in a little hovel in the East Village. So the fact is that people... Back to the money thing. People don't realize that the market is not a quantifier of quality. That's a super important fact that the art market for contemporary art is by definition fashion and temporary. Like we said before art takes time and history by definition is something that resolves itself over the course of time and for artists to be canonized. You can't say an artist who's 30 years old or 40 or 50 even could be worth 15 million because that's absurd. Art takes time and so does a market to define itself.

What I say also is that sometimes to be too good or to be too far ahead of the time is even worse than being behind the time. Because the art market works like a collective herd of sheep and oftentimes what drives the markets are not inherent quality of a piece of art. So back to my criticism fact, I mean I never set out to be the zealot, this messianic lunatic who I've had death threats from my writing. I've had someone try to threaten to beat me up, a 75 year old lawyer in the middle of a restaurant on Madison Avenue. His name might be Richard Golub, but I'm not going to mention anything.

Russel Tovey ([00:20:40](#)):

Well, what was that about though? Why? What had you written? What was he upset about?

Kenny Schachter ([00:20:44](#)):

Because I wrote about the last time he tried to beat me up in the middle of a Basel Art Fair, but I'll get-

Russel Tovey ([00:20:51](#)):

What was that for then? Why did he want to beat you up then?

Kenny Schachter ([00:20:54](#)):

Because we were friendly and I introduced... I mean, it's a very stupid thing. I introduced him to an art dealer friend of mine and he had introduced me to a couple of friends. I even recommended a book agent for him which he seemed to forget where he got his novel published and he's made a couple of really garish music videos that you should most definitely look for on YouTube. His name is Richard G-O-L-U-B. But anyway, we actually own three pieces together to this day and when he made a connection

with my friend I thought that he was going to buy a piece of Asian art and that's why I made the introduction and then my friend told me that they actually did a co-investment deal together. This is another issue which we could touch upon on how art has changed. But Saatchi been doing this since the 70s where people partner up and buy art to sell it. So when I found out from my friend that Richard Golub didn't just buy a painting to hang in his house but he bought art as an investment.

I simply asked my friend for a small percentage of his side of the transaction, which is very typical in the course of business as an art dealer to get such an introductory fee. In fact, if you-

Russel Tovey (00:22:09):

A finders fee or something.

Kenny Schachter (00:22:09):

Yes. If you bring a client to Sotheby's or Christie's or Phillips, if you introduce them to someone who wants to sell a Picasso, you are entitled to a finder's fee. Anyway, so I did that which is all normal and then the art dealer did something that's very typical in the art world. He tried to shitster and set my friend against me by telling him that I actually had the gall to ask for a commission from the introduction and Richard Golub went crazy because he had introduced me to people like Simon Lee. The art dealer in London who has become a close friend and we've done business. Anyway, he got very incensed about that. But let me just state that this lawyer is world famous for being... You think I'm an agitator, he's gotten into more fights than Muhammad Ali. He is worldwide famous for being one of the most intransigent, argumentative, aggressive human beings and a bully on the planet earth.

Anyway, so I was in Basel one year in Miami and in the booth was some DJ and then Richard Golub started screaming at me in the top of his lungs, even back then and that was in 2015 and of course I'm a writer so that's all fodder for my writing. So I wrote about this encounter where I just said, "Perhaps you should look into some anger management." Which just seemed to set him off a little more and I wrote about it and then from then every time he saw me subsequent to that he would threaten me including last November. I developed this platform in my writing where I create short narrative videos that never last for more than say a minute and their narratives, but they're framed for the short Instagram attention spans that as humans we're evolving into. Anyway, so every time he engaged with me I would just make art about it or write about it. To the point where the last time I saw him he finally caught on after five years where he was just mumbling under his breath.

But all joking aside I've had death threats, other people throwing fists at me and starting fights. I just last week had two lawsuits threatened against me and nothing... I was just saying to the lawyer at Artnet, I was on the phone for an hour last night with the lawyer and I said, "Look, nothing's going to stop me." I mean, I almost felt like stopping, writing these kinds of columns altogether from the anxiety.

Russel Tovey (00:24:35):

It must worry you. Yeah, the anxiety from it. Is there a part of that feels like is it worth it the anxiety to-

Kenny Schachter (00:24:43):

You know what? I don't care if I get shot doing what I'm doing, I just don't care. It worries me and it bothers me of course, but I just said to Artnet I'm like, "You know what? I'll sign an agreement where I personally assume the liability for this threat of a lawsuit or any other one." Because I said to my kids two days ago that I just can't deal with it anymore, I need to take a hiatus. It's just too much, there's no upside. I get paid so little for my writing, but I do it because... And then like I said to the lawyer and I said

to this agitating person. The last person who instigated a lawsuit and I said, "Nothing is going to throttle me. I'm not even going to let myself throttle me." The reason I do it is because the art world is veiled, it's like the mafia omerta.

It's a code of secrecy where nobody talks about the machinations of the... I never set out to be this kind of person. I mean, I've been writing for 30 years. For the first 15 years or 20 years of my writing I wouldn't have even called myself a writer for one very good reason, nobody read me. Nobody read anything I wrote because the iPhone only began in 2007 and Instagram which I think is by far the most revolutionary art platform in the history of art up to this stage. Where it is a-

History of art up to this stage where it is a democratic wrecking ball, which is deeply affecting the ingrained entrenched hierarchies that are so prevalent in the art world. But as a result of the writing, every time... So when I started writing, I took a break after a while because Art Debt closed their magazine and they literally closed it and went out of business for a few years and then they relaunched it.

But when I started to write again in around 2000 and let's say 12, 13, 14, I would write something and it was really what I had always done. Except this time my work was much more accessible and the audience for art has mushroomed, like we've said before and grown so substantially. And I remember in particular, I was mistreated by some person who calls themselves a collector and nowadays, if you ever found a collector that has never resold a piece of art, they belong in a vitrine in the natural history museum.

I mean, there's so few and far between and basically like I said before, I could be both of your dads. I'm old, I've been through a lot of shit. I've been through some awful family tragedies in the past couple of years. I've been through a lot, I've been in the art world for 30 years. I've been collecting art for 30 years. I don't rely on anyone for my sustenance or anything other than my own activities and actions. And I have nothing to lose. I have my life to lose but I have nothing to lose. I don't feel beholden to anyone in the art world.

And I started writing these columns again, phase two of my writing career and it started to resonate with people. And I just remember, I wrote about this one Belgian collector who mistreated me and another collector badly. And I remember going to FIAC, the art fair in Paris, and walking down the aisle and just people kept coming up to me and thanking me. And I thought it was the craziest thing because I was really touching a nerve with people where they were grateful and showing their appreciation for the fact of my honesty and forthrightness-

Russel Tovey ([00:28:13](#)):

An exposé, yes.

Kenny Schachter ([00:28:15](#)):

Yeah but I mean, the fact is that I was saying before, the art world operates on a code of secrecy, nobody talks about the percentages and deals. Nobody talks about what really drives the behind the scenes activities in the market of buying and selling art. And I'm a lawyer by training, I studied philosophy, I've been in the fashion business. You would never know it by looking at the way I present myself, which is very scraggly with my pants dragging on the floor, picking up dirt in my old track pants. But the fact is that again, back to the exclusivities of the art world, you walk into a gallery and they look you up and down and make all of these determinations about you and judgment. So the art world has its own-

Russel Tovey ([00:28:59](#)):

It doesn't feel like that now, but it doesn't feel like that now though, I feel like we're in generation now-

Kenny Schachter ([00:29:04](#)):

I disagree. I disagree.

Russel Tovey ([00:29:04](#)):

Really?

Kenny Schachter ([00:29:05](#)):

It doesn't feel like that. You guys are famous, I'm sorry. But if you are a run of the mill Joe, that walks into a gallery and tries to buy something, they're going to give you the third degree. And if you look like me, they're not even barely want to open the door and let you in. They make all of these assumptions.

Robert Diament ([00:29:19](#)):

Also, I feel like the galleries that we go are often so tiny, Russ. Do you know what I mean? You're supporting a lot of very young but emerging artists-

Kenny Schachter ([00:29:31](#)):

But still... no, no. Some of these galleries, once an artist is coveted, no matter if they're 20 years old or 120, whether the gallery is one person working for it or 10, it gives a balance of power to the dealer and the whole power of art dealers is in access. And the art world still operates on a very hierarchical foundation and it's rife with hypocrisy. The art world has its own brand of hypocrisy.

And I don't care how small or big the gallery is, if they have an artist that everybody wants, they are going to behave in a way where they... It's like you can't help yourself. They have a so-called waiting list, but a waiting list is a misnomer. A waiting list means whoever's more important than you, which for me is everybody, that means they're all going to be ahead of me on the list because that's the way the art world works. I'm sorry.

Anyway, so I'm just saying that.

Russel Tovey ([00:30:25](#)):

[inaudible 00:30:25].

Kenny Schachter ([00:30:24](#)):

Yeah, go ahead.

Russel Tovey ([00:30:26](#)):

I was going to say, in the hierarchy of the art world then, who for you is at the top of the pyramid and who's at the bottom of the pyramid?

Kenny Schachter ([00:30:37](#)):

Two veins to the answer of that question of that. You guys don't even get a chance to get a question in with me. All you do is wind me up and I go on automatic pilot.

Russel Tovey ([00:30:47](#)):

That's all right.

Kenny Schachter ([00:30:48](#)):

You can just shut your microphones off and I'll just finish by myself. But the fact is, okay, so in the commercial art world, Roberta Smith is a writer for the New York Times. She also is married to Jerry Saltz, but let's talk about Roberta. When I curated my very first show in 1990 before you guys were probably alive, Roberta walked into my-

Russel Tovey ([00:31:13](#)):

We were alive. Yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([00:31:14](#)):

So I used to do these, we called them hit and run shows. Because that was even before the word popup existed. And I would take over an empty space, trade a few paintings that I had managed to collect when I was a part-time lawyer and I would take over space and stage and exhibition. I showed Cecily Brown in the nineties, Wade Guyton, a lot of artists that have gone on to great acclaim. Rachel Harrison-

Russel Tovey ([00:31:36](#)):

Joe Bradley was one of yours, wasn't he?

Kenny Schachter ([00:31:38](#)):

Joe Bradley, gave him his first show. Katherine Bernhardt her first show. All in these kind of guerrilla popup spaces. And somehow I don't even know how, but I clocked Roberta Smith. And this was the very first show I ever curated and I walked up to her and I said, "This is a painting by an artist, Walter Steding and this is about..." And as soon as I said the word about, she turned on her heels and looked at me and said, "If I needed anyone to explain the art to me in a gallery, I would never leave my house and go to a gallery again."

And then she looked at the show and walked out and a single tear welled up in the corner of my eye and started trickling down my cheek, like from this famous TV commercial in America about pollution and there's an Indian standing in the street. And some asshole throws a bag of garbage at his feet and a tear drops on his face and that was me. And then literally 20 years later, Roberta wrote me a letter. I got to the point where whenever I saw her, I would be cowering under my desk hiding from her.

And at one point, Jerry said, "Roberta wants to speak to you," and I was so petrified. And I went up to her and she wanted to know about a Mini car that I had when I imported one of the first Minis into the US. But then 20 years later, she wrote me an article and saying how much she really liked and appreciated my writing for these very reasons we're talking about. And I just broke down in hysterics crying again, for the opposite reason. It made me so happy I can-

Russel Tovey ([00:33:07](#)):

That's an endorsement, isn't it? Yeah. That's someone you really respect.

Kenny Schachter ([00:33:07](#)):

Yeah, she continues... Yeah. And she continues to be one of my most supportive readers. And then I know I'm doing something right. So back to your question, which miraculously I've managed to remember.

There are two tiers to the art world. There's the commercial sector, which I critique. And then there's the art-loving [inaudible 00:33:26]-tech [inaudible 00:33:27] world of just pure passion, which is really what drives me. So Roberta Smith used to be the most powerful person on the planet earth in the planet art earth. And I remember a dealer running up to me, waving a newspaper in her hand and I said, "What happened? What happened?" And she said, "My artist just got a review by Roberta Smith." And it was one of the nastiest critical reviews I've ever seen. But she was so happy just to be reviewed by Roberta, even when it was a negative review.

Russel Tovey ([00:33:55](#)):

Oh, God.

Kenny Schachter ([00:33:57](#)):

So critics used to be omnipotent. Critics and museums used to be at the head of the fray. They used to be at the top of the pyramid. Then the art market and the money side literally took over, not just the speculating side of things, but it went much deeper than that. And then there's another issue that sets me off, which I'm sure is going to make a whole other lot of people hate me for all new reasons but I generally despise private museums.

The only private museums that should exist are not in Los Angeles, not in New York, not in London, but in China or in the middle of America or in the middle of England, where there's not ready access to art galleries and museums. So when you have a gallery, a museum in Los Angeles... I'm going to say this and I'm probably going to get sued again, but I should keep a lawyer on staff. But there was a Marciano Museum owned by the people, the owners of Guess Jeans.

So they're presenting themselves as a, "Museum." In America, you get it's replete with tax breaks so they're saving money on storing and insuring their collection, all kinds of tax breaks they receive. And at the same time, it's curatorship minus something very important called scholarship. And I'm really, to be honest, I'm not that interested in the collection of someone who began collecting art 10 years ago.

And seems to again, I'm not picking on this family in any sense. I know it sounds like that, but ignore me. But what I'm trying to say is that when you have a private museum in the middle of a domain where there's a lot of public institutions, the art world operates on a zero sum game. Which means that a lot of people that will go to visit a private museum in the smack middle of Los Angeles, will do so at the expense of the two gigantic long established museums, LACMA and MOCA, the Museums of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

Even The Broad museum which has a great collection, but it's really a night sale auction derived collection. And the fact that really annoys me is that those museums are sucking away an audience that would, if there were no these fake museums existing in the middle of town, the audience would go to where they should be going, which is the public institutions.

And also a lot of that art that ends up in the private museums like The Broad, he was the head of one of the LA's museums and the art in his museum would've for shit sure ended up in the collection of the public institutions that have painstakingly built up their constituencies over decades.

So anyway, it used to be that critics and museums like the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum Of Modern Art and The Tate, were the all powerful, at the very top of the mountain when it

comes to legitimizing art. And then when the market took over and really, there's a vein of art which you could probably use as the poster child for this type of art, The Diamond Skull by Damien Hirst, where the money is not.. It's not just about the money, it is the money. The diamonds and the value of the diamonds he affixed to his skull, 8,000 of them worth god knows how many millions. You'll never get the truth from anyone involved in the transaction. Not even what ultimately happened to it and the consortium that ended up buying it. But we won't get into that. I hope you guys have a good insurance policy, but anyway. It's like instead of Pop Art or Abstract Expressionism it's economics-ism today. So oftentimes the art is the discord. This is another really important thing, when I teach, I teach so I can learn. And I usually teach seminars on art and economics and this kind of market conversation we're having. But I started teaching at the School of Visual Art, Fine Art students. And that was as scary for me as having my life threatened because I really never took an art class in my entire life, I'm completely self taught.

And I said to my students the first day, "I feel so lucky to be able to sit in front of you." Because I never get to talk about art because I'm in the art world and nobody wants to hear about art. They just want to hear where is the artist showing, who's buying it, who's selling it. So the whole discourse on art has almost become dissected or divorced from the art itself. So back to the powers that be, the top of the pile today are collectors. I was going to curate a show at the Metropolitan Museum Of Art and they had no money to paint the walls between exhibitions because they're being robbed of the financial resources, tragically, by the private sector. So today, the collectors have all the power. The galleries that have artists that everybody wants to buy, gives them this disproportionate power of access.

So a lot of art dealers will say, "You could buy the artist you want if you buy three artists you don't want from my gallery, then I'll consider you." This is bull shit. And also imagine going to a fashion designer and you go into a boutique and they say, "You know what? We're not going to sell you this dress because we just don't think you are the kind of person we want to project the image of our brand."

And that's basically what art galleries do when they would this fake waiting list. And they would rather sell to someone who has a private museum because that'll give the art some more prestige and some more PR and some more visibility. More than you can as a mere lover of art that simply wants to adorn your wall with the painting.

So really, the hierarchy is, it goes like collector first, then I would say artist because of... I mean-

Russel Tovey ([00:39:55](#)):

Okay, good. I was waiting for you to say the artist. Where does the artist stand in all of this?

Kenny Schachter ([00:39:59](#)):

Yeah, but you know what? 95% of the artists are in the lowest possible position, I'm afraid. We always read about all the art stars and all the artists that are attaining these giant sums of money. But no, I'm afraid that 90% of the artists in the world or 95, are at the lowest strata of this flow chart.

Instagram is very empowering for artists today because when I first started when you guys were in diapers, if you wanted to communicate... Sorry to keep making fun of that but I'm just upset that I'm so old. But when I started, if you wanted to convey an image, if you wanted to communicate an artwork from one human being to another, you would have to take a tiny photographic slide that was no exaggeration, one inch square. And you would have to put 20 of them in a plastic sleeve and send them to a gallery to try to get a foothold into the system.

Because there was no Instagram and there was no email and there was no JPEG. So literally, you had to rely on regular mail. And most galleries would not even entertain looking at unsolicited material by an artist. And when there was a recession in the world in 1990, from 1990 to 1995 to 1997, there was maybe one or two galleries in all of New York City that would entertain opening that envelope and even looking, casting eyes on the material that you had send to them. Today the opportun-

Russel Tovey ([00:41:44](#)):

But that's still the same. You can't cold call galleries now, that isn't something where artists can just-

Kenny Schachter ([00:41:49](#)):

No. No but-

Russel Tovey ([00:41:49](#)):

That's been a r-

Go on.

Kenny Schachter ([00:41:52](#)):

No, of course. I agree with you completely. That's why I'm saying that generally for the most part, the majority of artists occupy the lowest rung of this hierarchy even today. But, and there's a very important but, tools like social media... As much as people say that social media is a scourge of society and it's causing pollution in the minds of children and there's a new documentary about how people are addicted to their screens.

But during the pandemic, if it wasn't for the screens, we'd all be visually illiterate for four months, which is a big chunk of time in the big scheme of things in our lives. So the point is that art, I have found, I'm sure you have too, I have found so many artists through surfing on Instagram.

And there's one artist that comes to mind and her name is Eva Beresin and she just turned 65 years old. And because of the fact that her husband is in firm, she doesn't barely ever travel. She has a small gallery in Vienna, but her work was entirely unknown on an international level. And somehow we found each other, I can't even describe how. Neither of us can define exactly the point on Instagram we met, but we are certain that's where it happened.

And since then, I've showcased her work in an art fair in Los Angeles that occurred simultaneously with freeze called Felix. And the work is sold to private museums. Sorry to... I'm a walking contradiction in terms, but if you can't contradict yourself, who are you going to? And the work has been widely dispersed. I just sold a piece this morning. I staged an exhibition on Instagram. I wrote an essay which you could read on my website, which is just my name.art and put some additional work on the website.

And now the woman's been offered four gallery shows. So using nothing more than your telephone and what's at hand, you take a simple photograph of your work. The tools are now in the hands of artists that give them strength unprecedented in the history of art. I can unequivocally say that even though it's as difficult as ever in the art world is a very, very tough place to break through and get a foothold into the system.

And again, that reverts back to why I'm even in front of you people, it's because of my writing largely. And the fact is that I want to be again, when I came to stopping two days ago, what I'm doing because of this onslaught of threats that I received. I get the feedback I get from Instagram.

And by the way, anyone who's listening can get in touch with me. I always say to every lecture, I lecture all over the world, all the time when you're allowed to give lectures to a live audience and I've done too many Zoom conferences and live Instagram talks, and anyone wants to hear anything more about me. But I will get any single person from any corner of the globe that contacts me. It's my duty and I'm compelled to answer them and I always do.

I've given lectures for kids at my kids' school and I said the same exact thing to these 14 and 15 year olds. And then one day my son said to me, "What are you doing today?" And I said, "I have a meeting." And he said, "Who's your meeting with?" I'm like, "I don't know, it's one of the kids from your class." And he said, "What the hell is wrong with you? Why are you meeting with one of the kids from my class?" And I said, "Well, he wanted to. He asked me to talk and pick my brain," which doesn't take very long.

But I literally return every single DM, every single inquiry to me, I've met literally hundreds of people face-to-face from Instagram and I return everyone's query. And it's my responsibility and my duty and with my writing, I feel like I would've stopped a hundred times if it wasn't for the heartfelt feedback that comes to me at this stage of my career. Every day I get an email or DM from someone, "Please don't stop. You're the only person that tells things and inspires people."

You can cut through all the and all this terrible behavior and find what's underneath it all, which is so alluring. My passion has never abated for one second. I get chills talking to the both of you. That really defines my-

Russel Tovey (00:46:03):

Let's talk about your passion, Kenny. Let's talk about your passion then. Let's talk about you being a collector. You started collecting very early on and you have amassed the biggest collection. And then last year you had a sale at Sotheby's where you sold a lot of your work and you are collecting again with the money from that. Let's talk about how you got a master collection and what that was like, then selling it all.

Kenny Schachter (00:46:29):

I would say 80% of what you just said is wrong.

Russel Tovey (00:46:33):

Oh, okay. Go, correct me.

Kenny Schachter (00:46:35):

We did have a little tiff about this on Instagram, didn't we?

Russel Tovey (00:46:38):

Yeah, we did.

Kenny Schachter (00:46:39):

Russell?

Russel Tovey (00:46:41):

Yeah, we did. Yes.

Kenny Schachter (00:46:42):

Before you renewed-

Robert Diament (00:46:43):

[inaudible 00:46:43] it's sad. Didn't he?

Kenny Schachter (00:46:44):

No, I believe the word he used... All he wrote aside. Look, I love both of you now. And I'm a loyal friend for life, but the first word you ever said to me was, shameful, I believe.

Robert Diament (00:46:58):

Is that what you said or-

Russel Tovey (00:46:58):

It's a shame. I said, it's a shame. I said, it's a shame for the artists, is what I said.

Kenny Schachter (00:47:00):

Yeah, but let me just... Okay, so that really pisses me off. I have a great deal of respect. We have a lot of mutual friends together like Tracey Emin, who I think is one of the most brilliant, profound human beings I've ever had the pleasure of meeting in my entire life and she inspires me every day. And because of that alone, I'll love you forever. But you really did piss me off to no end.

Russel Tovey (00:47:20):

Go on then.

Robert Diament (00:47:21):

When Russell wrote that-

Kenny Schachter (00:47:21):

No, wait-

Robert Diament (00:47:22):

I actually contacted him because I thought he hadn't understood what was going on. I think he had basically misunderstood what the premise-

Kenny Schachter (00:47:28):

So let me just explain. Okay, so I lived in London for 15 years. I thought my house was going to sink into the foundation and I had so much stuff. I thought that I was going to be one of these people you read about in the Daily Mail where they hoarded so much crap that a pile of it falls over and suffocates them to death.

And I honestly thought there was a chance that's way I was going to lose my life from my collecting. I had car magazines and auction catalogs and art books and all kinds of detritus, as well as first edition books and art. I love art and I always say, "No money is not an impediment to the best

collector collecting." You'll find a way to beg, borrow and steal, and a lot of people have actually stolen to buy art.

The most famous one, which I use an example is a surgeon in Boston who is the head of a children's heart surgery foundation. And he amassed one of the greatest collections of contemporary art in the nineties. And in fact, he stands as a symbol for someone who launched the whole sector of the art market, contemporary, into the money making machine it is now. Because he loved art so much, even when he had no money, he found a way to collect it.

Unfortunately he stole the money from a fund that was meant to help children have heart surgery. That didn't stop him from collecting and when he went to jail where he belonged, his collection, Christie's made a determination to stage the first time in history in 1996, that contemporary art was offered at an evening sale at Christie's. And it hadn't been done at Sotheby's and it would've been a year later until Sotheby's jumped on board.

But the point being that contemporary art was never a profit center for the auction houses. It was a market defined by modern and impressionist art where the big bucks were. So when this surgeon who was like, I joke in the most cynical terrible way and say he was the best collector because he had to steal money, but he still had to have it. So it's not terribly funny, but often I'm not.

Anyway, at this auction was the first time that Jeff Koons was sold at auction and he made a world record in 1996. And you know what it was? \$260,000. Kiki Smith, an amazing American artist who must be in her sixties right now, she sold a piece for slightly above Jeff at 270,000. Robert Gober, who for me is probably one of the very greatest artists alive today, he was also in the auction and Jeff Koons' record was 260,000 and 25 years later, it moved to \$90 million. But that was the first time that contemporary art ended up on the radar of the auction houses as a place where they could make money. And here we are today where oftentimes it's the only discourse that surrounds the art.

Anyway, I've been collecting art for 30 years and what I sold at this auction at Sotheby's called The Hoarder was 116 pieces in a collection. I love art and I love to collect. I can't tell you, I honestly cannot tell you how much money I have made since my first and second year out of law school in '87, '88. Or '88, '89, sorry. I'm such a bad business person. I don't define myself by money and if I did, I have a pretty low impression of myself. But I don't care about the deals, I don't care about the money. I get more satisfaction writing and teaching than I do from selling a van Gogh or a Monet or [inaudible 00:51:12] I've done-

Russel Tovey ([00:51:14](#)):

I read that you know your net worth. I read that your net worth by how much your art storage increases over time. How much you're paying every year for your art storage?

Kenny Schachter ([00:51:22](#)):

Yeah, and to this day, I can't tell you how much art I have. I can tell you that I have, as I'm sitting here talking to you, I have somewhere around 600 pieces to 1,000 pieces. So I sold 116 Lots, Mr. Tovey. And that constituted about 1% of my collection, 1%.

In my house, I moved to New York and already there's not... I'm a maximalist, so in my house in New York, if you wanted to hang a piece of art that was 30 centimeters square, you'd have to fight to find the place to put it. I am smothered in art. I'd rather look at art than out of the-

... smothered in art. I'd rather look at art than out of a window at a sea. That's how sick I am. I mean...

Robert Diament ([00:52:06](#)):

So what was the premise then? The premise was to free the works...

Kenny Schachter ([00:52:09](#)):

I have too much shit. [inaudible 00:52:11]-

Robert Diament ([00:52:11](#)):

...that were just in cupboards basically or in storage...

Kenny Schachter ([00:52:13](#)):

No. No. No.

Robert Diament ([00:52:13](#)):

... so that other people could enjoy them.

Kenny Schachter ([00:52:16](#)):

I mean, look, I have three children and a family, and I've been married for 25 years. I have to make a living. And I don't know anything else to do. I was the worst lawyer that ever lived. I'm the worst art dealer that ever dealt a piece of art. I loved fashion, but I couldn't... I'm not a salesman by nature. I love to read. I love to think. I love philosophy, and you can't make a living as a philosopher other than a teacher. My writing pays peanuts. My teaching pays peanuts. I just lost one of my teaching jobs because of the pandemic at School of Visual Arts. The admission is down by 50%, and they're probably going to end up in another year of Zoom classes. So art is my sustenance.

I have been in the art game for 30 years. My blood and my sweat is in art. It took four months to dig out of the crap in my house. I call all of my art crap in the most loving, caring, kind way. But I just think, look, if you're not curing a disease, it's something extra. I mean, for me, art is philosophy. It's a physical, aesthetic, illustrative manifestation of thought, of psychological, historical, sociological, economic, everything. Art is my life. I make a living selling art.

I make art. I sell very little of my own art. I don't make art to sell it. I make it because I have to. And I think it's better to be in a position... I finally had a few pieces that really started to sell well in my career as an artist, and I could so easily see how you can get stuck into the position of repeating yourself because when one piece of art that you've made starts to sell, people want one thing, the same thing you just sold five minutes before, and you get stuck into this pattern of making 3000 paintings that are indistinguishable amongst one another. Okay. So, I move...

Robert Diament ([00:54:05](#)):

But you'd also-

Kenny Schachter ([00:54:06](#)):

Wait, wait.

Robert Diament ([00:54:06](#)):

Sorry. Oh.

Kenny Schachter ([00:54:07](#)):

It took me four months to dig out of the stuff that I had in London, and I sold a tiny fraction of my stuff. And I did something, which, again, I think you... First of all, nothing I sold I had owned less than four or five years. One piece I owned for 30 years, okay? That's number one. I believe it's immoral to buy something from a gallery under the pretense of wanting to keep it and then selling it, at least within the first three or four years you've owned it. That's unethical, practically. So I don't do that. That's not how I make a living.

And then second most important thing was that I sold it with no reserve. You know what? I never even calculated how much... I probably lost money in that auction. Everything sold. It had a great response. It went super well. Something...

Russel Tovey ([00:54:57](#)):

I think that was what my comment came from, though. That's why I made that comment.

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:00](#)):

Yeah. But that's bullshit. That's bullshit. I mean, sorry.

Russel Tovey ([00:55:02](#)):

No, you're all right.

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:03](#)):

But what I did was something so important. I gave everybody the chance to buy work.

Robert Diament ([00:55:09](#)):

Chance to own something, yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:10](#)):

I gave everybody the chance, and I'm going to do it again. So get your nasty comments loaded up because I'm going to do it again.

Russel Tovey ([00:55:17](#)):

It wasn't nasty. Do you know what? I didn't know the story behind it, but my thing was is that I said I felt it was a shame for a lot of the artists because there wasn't a reserve.

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:25](#)):

Why? Yeah. Yeah, but-

Russel Tovey ([00:55:26](#)):

My fear was that a lot of these artists' works would sell for \$200 or \$1000 and there are these artists that then... It's that whole speculative market of the commercial art world-

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:34](#)):

Of course. Yep, I understand.

Russel Tovey ([00:55:35](#)):

... where if they undersell their primary prices, then they're fucked. And I think that was what it was. Then I think you got really upset at me that I was making a personal attack on you, but it was to do with the artist.

Kenny Schachter ([00:55:45](#)):

It wasn't a... What I did was actually pretty noble because, if I say so myself, like I said, even to this day, I don't know if I lost or made money, but a lot of people got to buy art that they really loved, that they could not afford. Also, one of my stupid little pieces, I don't mean... Again, I'm being flippant. None of the artworks that I sold for whatever price is going to materially affect the market or the life of an artist. If you are selling 20 Boafos, Amoako Bofo, who you had on your show, yeah?

Russel Tovey ([00:56:20](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([00:56:20](#)):

One of the brightest most...

Robert Diament ([00:56:22](#)):

I think Russell [inaudible 00:56:23] as well before he was well known.

Kenny Schachter ([00:56:24](#)):

Okay. One of the most stunningly successful young artists. Okay. So I didn't sell any recently made art. There was one artist.

Robert Diament ([00:56:33](#)):

[Inaudible 00:56:33].

Kenny Schachter ([00:56:33](#)):

Okay. But let me just say there was one artist out of 116 artists that complained to me. And I had bought his piece. And then I spoke to him, Oliver Osborne, who's a friend of mine, I did not buy his piece on the primary art market. He sold his piece. His gallery was negligent in selling the piece to one of the most notorious, shitty, hideous speculators, known to the art world. They sold it to this person, which they are guilty for even selling a piece to this person. That person flipped it. It ended up in auction before the gallery even got paid. That's how disgusting it was.

So another speculator bought it at auction, I bought it from them and I loved the piece so much, but the piece started to fall apart. And it was only like a four year old, three year old piece. And I got the artist to remake it, but he remade it and gave me a different piece, not the piece that I initially fell for. And I sold that. And that was the only complaint. And I bought that, that piece has been sold three times before I bought it. So like I said, I did not one iota of a thing that I regret, or that was disrespectful to anybody. And so many people thank me for having the opportunity to buy art they loved, that they ordinarily would never have the opportunity to afford. And I did nobody any damage. If anything, I probably lost money to end that discussion.

Robert Diament ([00:57:58](#)):

But I also feel like you'd also just had a really bad experience with the whole Inigo Philbrick case where he was like selling work that he didn't even own or whatever the story is. But I think, didn't you lose quite a lot of money from that? Because I also feel sometimes, if people have lost money and they need to make money in order to that [inaudible 00:58:19] [inaudible 00:58:19]

Kenny Schachter ([00:58:19](#)):

Had nothing. Yeah. I mean...

Robert Diament ([00:58:19](#)):

That wasn't related to it, right?

Kenny Schachter ([00:58:20](#)):

No, Inigo is important because it talks about a lot the other problems in the art world. He's endemic of the financial discourse that has stifled and suffocated the art world. This was a young guy that stole somewhere between \$50 and \$100 million dollars from people, but really the biggest victims of his fraud were two art lending companies. And it was really the perfect storm. And I think he's going to come to symbolize a kind of bookend of the last 25 years. So it started with this surgeon who stole money from children to fuel his art collection. And it ended with this 33 year old guy, he only just turned 33, and he was partners with Jay Jopling. Until the day he was arrested by the FBI, he was still owning a lot of assets and in partnership with Jay Jopling, who's one of the great art dealers.

Russel Tovey ([00:59:15](#)):

White Cube.

Kenny Schachter ([00:59:15](#)):

Again, I have the utmost admiration and respect for the owner of White Cube gallery. But Inigo, what people don't understand, was a bright, capable, intelligent, personable person who just went off the rails because of mental illness, drugs, and alcohol addiction and greed and hubris, just pure arrogance. But the fact was, it's the people... Everyone wants to make a quick dollar. Everybody reads the headlines that at a stupid painting by the studio of Leonardo da Vinci sold for 450 million and then ends up in the perfect place as like soft cultural capital in Saudi Arabia, where journalists get murdered for doing the kinds of things that I do.

And it draws people into art, thinking that art is a place with no regulation, the wild-wild west, a free wheeling place where anyone could turn a quick dollar in five minutes. And that is the furthest thing from the truth possible. Larry Gagosian, who has 300 employees and 18 galleries spread across the world so much so that there's never a period when one of the galleries is closed during the regular course of business. But Larry Gagosian is not someone who just popped into the art world to make money. He's been in business for 30 years or more, and he's one of the smartest, most passionate art loving people that exist, and the world's most successful dealer for a reason.

He had on payroll for five or seven years, John Richardson, who's the world's foremost Picasso scholar, paying him a half a million-

Russel Tovey ([01:00:48](#)):

Yeah. [inaudible 01:00:49] On the payroll.

Kenny Schachter ([01:00:50](#)):

... for \$500,000 a year for like ten years. And he only ever did three shows and they were shows a museum could never do. And I know John Richardson.

Russel Tovey ([01:01:02](#)):

[inaudible 01:01:02]. Tracy took me to his apartment. Yeah, Tracy, I mean, took me to his apartment [inaudible 01:01:05] I met the best thing.

Kenny Schachter ([01:01:05](#)):

The coolest thing in the world is that what a passionate...

Russel Tovey ([01:01:08](#)):

[inaudible 01:01:08].

Kenny Schachter ([01:01:07](#)):

I mean, again, I'm getting the hair standing up on my body right now, speaking about him.

Russel Tovey ([01:01:12](#)):

Yeah. Loved him.

Kenny Schachter ([01:01:12](#)):

And the thing is that museums, for whatever sad reason, don't have the resources and the flexibility and the nimbleness of a gallery like Gagosian afforded a private institution or commercial institution to stage exhibitions that could never have been done. And they supported John Richardson in the latter part of his life, which was, I mean, it enabled him to continue his scholarship and it was extraordinary, the exhibitions he curated. Museums just didn't have the flexibility or the financial resources. Anyway...

Robert Diament ([01:01:43](#)):

No. I mean, the [inaudible 01:01:44] Picasso show in Kings Cross and it's one of the greatest shows I ever saw.

Russel Tovey ([01:01:47](#)):

Yeah. Mine too.

Kenny Schachter ([01:01:48](#)):

Yeah [inaudible 01:01:48].

Robert Diament ([01:01:48](#)):

And I thought the whole installation of it, like all the walls they built, all that kind of thing, like when they had those recessed shelves and stuff, it was so beautifully done. And I agree, a museum wouldn't even have had the budget anymore sadly to have done a show like that.

Kenny Schachter ([01:02:01](#)):

I mean, some of the stipulation from the Picasso family just has a little side story. There was a contractual stipulation that once the gallery was painted for the exhibition, none of the crates could be open for a period of between three and four weeks until the paint had a chance to utterly and completely dry. So there wouldn't be a chemical interaction between the paint and the artwork. No museum can afford to sit idle for a month, like a gallery could, like Gagosian. Anyway, what I'm saying is that Inigo is just an example of rife greed and that's endemic. I mean, the art world is the only place that celebrates the seven deadly sins.

Robert Diament ([01:02:42](#)):

Yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([01:02:43](#)):

And there'll always be crime. I mean, there's a bell's curve of morality and ethics in the world, and there's always going to be someone who breaches it, no matter how regulated the world is. And the great writer Georgina Adam, for the FT and The Art Newspaper, she stated in a seminar that people say that the art world is unregulated, but there's 165 laws, commercial statutes that are applicable to any given art transaction. So I think that Inigo is endemic of, in our world, that's gone money crazy where these lenders loan money to him without doing their due diligence, and they just chucked money at him. And he went off the rails for his own sad reasons.

Robert Diament ([01:03:25](#)):

I remember him really early on because he came to our gallery and we did a group show with Virginia Overton in it. And he bought, I think one or two of... No, I think one of the Virginia Overton sculptures from that show. And I remember him seeming like, he was actually quite nice at that point. And then about a year later I saw him and I remember just thinking, My God, he'd been so corrupted by the power. You can see it in the way someone behaves and also the way they distance themselves from you even though they knew you a year before. Do you know what I mean? It's very odd. Because if you are not part of that power structure, then you're not useful to them. And I remember being very disappointed by him. I find it incredibly sad, that story.

Kenny Schachter ([01:04:03](#)):

If you stop right there, if I could define myself, it would just be in the sentiment of what you just expressed. I don't care where I am in my career... And I always think I'm the biggest loser in the world and the biggest failure more or less. But I will spend any single person that ever reaches out to me for anything. I feel it's my obligation to give back. I spend my whole life accumulating the knowledge that I have, however small it is. And it takes about three minutes to pick my brain. But it's my responsibility and my duty. And the reason I won't stop writing, even if it's the death of me, is that I owe it, I love art so much, I want to give the... I call myself cynically idealistic.

And really art, it's the fabric that keeps my family together. It's my duty. If anyone has a question, I want people to come away from my article or speaking to me or listening to me, however bored they may be, it's a good cure for insomnia. At the same time, I want to give people... Like I said, I'm cynically idealistic. I hate everyone. I don't trust anyone until they give me reason to think otherwise. But I always give people the benefit of the doubt. And if they have any query or any curiosity about the art world, I want to be the person that inspires them about what the possibilities and the opportunities

really are, because I have not lost one iota of love and passion. It's as simple and as corny as that, for what I do from the first day I started.

Robert Diament ([01:05:34](#)):

By staying open like that, I think you learn, and that's obviously something that is important to you to learn and grow.

Kenny Schachter ([01:05:40](#)):

100%.

Robert Diament ([01:05:40](#)):

And that's also what you just explained about Larry Gagosian, because by working with Richardson, he's able to learn, because it's knowledge and that is actually what we should all be holding up is this idea of knowledge. And that's what [inaudible 01:05:53] is. That's why we like people like Jerry Saltz, that's why we like all these artists that you've championed over the years, like [inaudible 01:06:00] Tracey Emin, and Joe Bradley, Ava [inaudible 01:06:02], all these artists, Catherine Bernhardt.

Like you were the one that had the McDonald's painting by her, when everyone told me that she was a rubbish painter. And I remember seeing that work and being like, I love this. Because to me, it just felt pure and genuine and like she had something to say, but also it was about shape and form. And the way that she was creating paintings was really fucking interesting. And I feel like you've always championed these kinds of artists. And that's all that's important to me.

And yes, all the other stuff, you analyzing the art world. It's a side of the art world I try and hide from, which is why I'm in Margate, working for Carl Freedman and doing what we do because we are our own little thing, like a family. And I don't have to interact with all the bullshit.

Kenny Schachter ([01:06:42](#)):

A big thing now.

Robert Diament ([01:06:43](#)):

Yeah. And that's what I mean. I feel like our being true to ourselves like Russell being friends with him and all that stuff, we've also created our own art world, which is now safe for me to be able to exist in because I'm too sensitive for all that stuff. Like the whole Ingo bullshit.

Kenny Schachter ([01:06:59](#)):

People are shocked to find out that I'm a sensitive coward underneath it all.

Robert Diament ([01:07:03](#)):

Yeah. But it's not very difficult to find that out, is it?

Russel Tovey ([01:07:06](#)):

No, I [inaudible 01:07:06].

Robert Diament ([01:07:05](#)):

I mean, if you look at the art you've shown and championed, it's all incredibly sensitive, expressive work. It's not like it's cynical. It's not even that conceptual. A lot of it is very expressionist, I think. So yeah. Anyway, cheers to you.

Russel Tovey ([01:07:21](#)):

So you're still collecting Kenny?

Kenny Schachter ([01:07:25](#)):

100%. I will never stop. I'll have another [inaudible 01:07:28].

Russel Tovey ([01:07:31](#)):

[inaudible 01:07:31].

Kenny Schachter ([01:07:32](#)):

I bought two of the [inaudible 01:07:34] Barison paintings, again, to add to my collection. They're very reasonable price. I mean, great art is not expensive. A lot of people don't understand that you could buy incredible art for \$500, \$200, I bought something. So I bought a Tracey Emin. I was lucky enough to be able to get a piece from her show, very small paintings that she made during the lockdown at White Cube.

Robert Diament ([01:07:55](#)):

My God, I love those. [inaudible 01:07:56]. I think that's one of the best shows she's ever done.

Kenny Schachter ([01:08:00](#)):

Yes. I mean, again, this is an important fact. Art is not big flashy.

Robert Diament ([01:08:04](#)):

Yes.

Kenny Schachter ([01:08:06](#)):

Some of the biggest statements could be made in the smallest means. And so I bought a piece of hers. I bought another emerging artist from a young dealer called Kate Wong. The artist has a very long name, which I can't pronounce, but contact me and I'll give you a list of the things I got. And I'm always getting stuff. For me, buying...

Russel Tovey ([01:08:29](#)):

What do you look for? What do you look for in an artist? And how often are you buying?

Kenny Schachter ([01:08:31](#)):

That's a great question. Because I studied law, there's a famous case of pornography in the Supreme Court of the United States. And in the '50s, there was a prosecution of someone who created pornography. And the judge writing the decision said, you know, I can't describe pornography, but I know it when I see it. So I think, for me, what turns me on about art or what makes me decide to buy something... For me, the ideal artist studio visit is a visit... I mean, this is going to sound terrible, but a

visit without the artist present, because I do critiques in schools all the time. And a lot of times the artist will blah, blah.

But the point is, art speaks for itself. And when you judge a piece of art, all of the variables that go into what constitutes a successful artist or a piece of art that's historical on some level, what defines the art, or you judge it, you make a million different calculations in your head, if that's the right word, of you look at everything that's happened in art history, everything that's happening now, and how you think that art relates to the historical continuum of art over time.

I mean, it's something that touches you. It has to be intuitive. You have to feel it in your heart. At the same time, it has to be like all of the organs in your body combined. And through your eyes, through your brain and through your heart, you have an experience which is a visceral, indescribable experience that results in this very basic hallmark card emotion where you get excited, you get... The blood circulates coursing through your circulatory system.

Russel Tovey ([01:10:18](#)):

Like a dopamine, isn't it? It's a dopamine.

Kenny Schachter ([01:10:19](#)):

Exactly. Not in the bad way of two idiots in a pissy match at auction where they're outbidding each other just because it's a machismo display of dopamine addiction. But you're right. It's a chemical reaction, but it's an intellectual, it's everything that you live for in life combined into one beautiful aesthetic manifestation, which is ultimately indescribable.

Russel Tovey ([01:10:41](#)):

Have you ever looked into the psychology of collecting? Why we collect? I mean, I'm an addict. I don't know why. I just do. Whereas my brother is no interest at all.

Robert Diament ([01:10:50](#)):

[inaudible 01:10:50] and I have been like it since we were kids as well. We've both had that bug.

Kenny Schachter ([01:10:52](#)):

That's amazing.

Robert Diament ([01:10:53](#)):

[inaudible 01:10:53] young children. It's really...

Kenny Schachter ([01:10:54](#)):

That's so funny because...

Russel Tovey ([01:10:55](#)):

What is it? What are we?

Kenny Schachter ([01:10:57](#)):

Yeah. If I tell you what Freud said, you really think I'm nuts. But I actually read what... Sigmund Freud wrote that hoarding and collecting results from bad toilet training when you're a child.

Robert Diament ([01:11:09](#)):

Really?

Russel Tovey ([01:11:09](#)):

Wow.

Kenny Schachter ([01:11:10](#)):

Like some kind of anal retentive disorder.

Russel Tovey ([01:11:15](#)):

Wow.

Kenny Schachter ([01:11:15](#)):

But in a way, I mean, in the worst case, you're filling... I mean, you could dismiss it and say you're filling an emotional hole in your life. I mean, I've seen people that shop so much and don't even open the boxes. I know someone that bought so much stuff from Amazon, I was expecting Jeff Bezos, or however you say his name, to show up at their door and congratulate them on being the biggest purchaser of crap from Amazon.

Robert Diament ([01:11:41](#)):

[inaudible 01:11:41].

Kenny Schachter ([01:11:41](#)):

But I mean, look, it does give you that kind of hit in the same way that something bad does, but it's such a positive thing because, like I said, it has curative effects on the psychic, on the psyche. I can't say that word. Right? But anyway, I don't know. I love to collect because what I think is most important about collecting contemporary art and for young artists, art is like history unfolding before our eyes in real time. And buying art is a way of participating. First of all, you're helping artists to survive. You're helping the art world to stay above ground. And number two is, it's like a newspaper or politics or just human in technology. Art is a reflection of who we are at a given point in space and time, socially, economically, psychologically, politically. So some of the best art of the last 100 years will emanate from the past six months, I could say.

Russel Tovey ([01:12:42](#)):

Really.

Kenny Schachter ([01:12:42](#)):

Over the next, we are going to see the effects of Black Lives Matter and the pandemic, this is germinating in the minds of artists and already coming to fruition through various works of art. I love the pro... Like Nicole Eisenman, an extraordinary artist in America, a painter who paints social realism. This is art that is timely talks about gender issues and sexuality issues and gay rights and all of these different issues that have come to the fore right now. And I think that, again, if there was an artist who was president of the United States, instead of that embarrassment war mongering, hateful, spiteful, small

minded, hideous, orange menace... If we had a artist, imagine what a better place the world would be today.

You never see also female serial killers or all of these lunatic killing each other. There were protestors in America that walked into a fast food restaurant with a shoulder carried anti-aircraft missile weapons, protesting about having to wear a mask. Not only to protect themselves, but protect their fellow persons on the street, others. What the fuck is wrong with the world we live in? It's so shocking. And art is the only thing that gives me solace besides my family and my friends.

Robert Diament ([01:14:13](#)):

Me too. And you know what I was just thinking when you were talking about your experience with what art means. Art for me gives meaning somehow to this crazy world.

Kenny Schachter ([01:14:24](#)):

[inaudible 01:14:24].

Robert Diament ([01:14:24](#)):

Recently we're both obsessed with Shawanda Corbett's work, who shows with Tommaso Corvi-Mora, and I've just got a tiny little ceramic by her. Well, it's might maybe not tiny, but it's like 50 centimeters or something because something in my gut, when I see that ceramic, I love it so much. And like you say, it wasn't that much money at all, but it's something that I feel incredibly compelled that I have to live with it. And I think that's the kind of collection that I love and admire is when you feel that it is also a reflection of someone's own journey through this crazy fucking world.

Kenny Schachter ([01:14:58](#)):

That's why... Just one thing. That's why I love prints and drawings. Drawings is so spectacular because it's the most intimate continuation of a thought to a piece of paper through the hand of the artist and people don't understand... Julian Schnabel, I have a lot of respect for, but an art piece doesn't exist unless it's the size of a house for him. And I just think for me, some of the most profound expressions of creativity come in the smallest form and you know, size matters, small is as powerful and as meaningful and as profound for me as big and sometimes even much better because it takes up less volume in a world that's flooded with things.

Robert Diament ([01:15:39](#)):

Yeah. Well we Russel and my whole friendship is based on drawings because we bonded over Tracey's drawing titles. And it's been something that we've... It's followed our friendship even to [inaudible 01:15:51] we now have tiny drawings by her. There's something about the intimacy of drawing [inaudible 01:15:57].

Kenny Schachter ([01:15:56](#)):

Plus they cheap as hell love as well. They're cheap and they're so...

Robert Diament ([01:15:59](#)):

They're accessible.

Kenny Schachter ([01:15:59](#)):

You can buy a great, right. I mean you could start a collection with \$1,000. You can have ten pieces.

Robert Diament ([01:16:05](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. That's true.

Russel Tovey ([01:16:06](#)):

And even more so the only thing I love about Instagram right now is the whole artist support pledge thing where you can get a collage or a drawing for like a hundred pounds, you know, it's really quite [inaudible 01:16:17].

Kenny Schachter ([01:16:17](#)):

It is worth doing. It helps people on so many levels.

Robert Diament ([01:16:20](#)):

Exactly. Amazing.

Russel Tovey ([01:16:21](#)):

Well, talking about that, talking about artworks that you covered. If there was an artwork, this is one of our talk out questions, you're now getting Kenny Schachter. If there was any artwork in the world, you could do an imaginary art heist, a really nice theft of a work of art, what would it be? And why?

Kenny Schachter ([01:16:39](#)):

I mean, again, you're asking the wrong person because I would just throw a net out and take everything. I just I'm such...

Russel Tovey ([01:16:45](#)):

It be way too noisy I think, Kenny. I can't imagine you doing a silent art heist, you rocking up to a museum. I think you'd set every alarm off and also talk to the security guards. Although maybe you'd win them round actually.

Kenny Schachter ([01:16:57](#)):

I beg your pardon. Excuse me, are you starting with me? Don't you start with me now, because I'm happy to fight with you too. I see you on [inaudible 01:17:06].

Russel Tovey ([01:17:05](#)):

[inaudible 01:17:05].

Robert Diament ([01:17:06](#)):

It sounds like you're flirting right now, actually.

Kenny Schachter ([01:17:08](#)):

Yeah. Well, why not?

Robert Diament ([01:17:10](#)):

[inaudible 01:17:10] I've wait.

Kenny Schachter ([01:17:10](#)):

I'm an equal opportunity employer. I always told my kids like a hand is a hand, and if it's between your legs, it's going to feel good. And anything that turns you on is worth pursuing.

Robert Diament ([01:17:20](#)):

Oh my God.

Russel Tovey ([01:17:21](#)):

Oh my God.

Kenny Schachter ([01:17:22](#)):

But anyway, I guess like, I mean, Paul Thek, a meat sculpture, because it's just... I wanted to have my ashes secretly embedded in the middle of one of his sculptures unsuspecting to only an x-ray. But I just think, for me, it just defines everything that I covered in life. It's about the vulnerability of life and how we have to... We are all the same motherfucking people and it's disgusting to think that the leader of China, Russia, and America, I'm not so sure how Boris is doing in his job since I left a few years ago, but it's so sad and I'm really hurting within to know that...

I'm really hurting within to know that the leader of a country should be uniting people. If you cut someone open, which is what Paul Thek's sculpture depicted, what we look like on the inside is you couldn't distinguish anyone from any culture, from any walk of life, from any sexuality, from any race or creed or any background. An organ is an organ, and we're all the same people with the same desires, the same passions, or under an umbrella of human pursuits, and why do we live in the most divisive time in my entire life? I just don't know what to make of it, it's so irrational.

I mean, you have Donald Trump saying that the people in Baltimore where John Waters is from and a lot of great people throughout history, he's saying that it's a rat hole, a state within his own country! I mean, it's just so fucked up. Why are we at this point that the lowest common denominator has the highest exposure and say in the world?

Russel Tovey ([01:19:04](#)):

It can't last, can it? There's a-

Kenny Schachter ([01:19:04](#)):

It better not last.

Russel Tovey ([01:19:04](#)):

... tipping point now.

Robert Diament ([01:19:09](#)):

And also like pardoning his-

Russel Tovey ([01:19:09](#)):

So I just think that-

Robert Diament ([01:19:09](#)):

... friends as well, I mean, what the fuck is that all about? The commutation [inaudible 01:19:13]?

Kenny Schachter ([01:19:12](#)):

So I just think for me, Paul Thek exposes the humanity, the fragility. The fragility of life and death is something that we all take for granted. Young people run around, like I said, and go to raves and stay out till six in the morning, like my kids. And also, I mean, there's a lot of issues that just this type of art addresses, which is just like, he made the most continuous thread throughout his career was painting on newspaper.

Russel Tovey ([01:19:40](#)):

Yes.

Kenny Schachter ([01:19:40](#)):

He painted on newspaper because it's looked-

Russel Tovey ([01:19:42](#)):

Seascape stuff.

Kenny Schachter ([01:19:42](#)):

... down upon as the... Yeah. But he painted on newspaper because it was like a throwaway, cheap. On the art hierarchy, everyone values canvas and bronze among all other forms of art. But like we talked about, paper for us, paper for me is platinum. I love drawings and you do too, and that also ties us together. So I think that these humble forms of art-making and Paul Thek's humble use of materials, his work ethic was, above all else, what drove him.

Just art is a way of life. It's not a thing, it's not a 50 million painting. Art is a way of life and conducting yourself and being open to people and ideas from people from all walks of life, and it's something that brings us all together, disparate people. Even Russell and I are now friends.

Russel Tovey ([01:20:33](#)):

We're lovers-

Kenny Schachter ([01:20:33](#)):

It brings together-

Russel Tovey ([01:20:34](#)):

... going forwards, yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([01:20:34](#)):

... people with opposing... It brings together people that have... Once you get to know someone, then you fall in love, and people don't give people the chance to even appreciate and understand each other from the most basic level.

Robert Diament ([01:20:48](#)):

Epecially you and me, Kenny. We fell in love very quickly.

Kenny Schachter ([01:20:51](#)):

Yeah, I was probably too drunk to remember.

Russel Tovey ([01:20:54](#)):

Have you never got close to owning Paul Thek then? Or have you ever collected his work? I mean, how much are-

Kenny Schachter ([01:20:59](#)):

I must have like-

Russel Tovey ([01:21:00](#)):

... these [inaudible 01:21:00] if you were to... Oh, you do.

Kenny Schachter ([01:21:01](#)):

Well, I mean, right now... I had a load of them. I had to sell them for economic necessity when I was broke. I helped to curate a show at the Reign of Sophia, the Whitney, I advised and I wrote a chapter in a MIT book, but again, I don't...

Most recently, oh yeah, one of the most recent pieces I bought was a bronze... what is it? Leisure, French Legion hat, which talked about Paul Thek embraced failure and weakness. He said there's strength in weakness, and I just love that. It just means instead of picking a fight with someone, by being weak, it's ostensibly like a non-machismo, competitive...

I hate competitive sports, and that's why I get into art and then art becomes more of a contact sport than rugby. But I love this kind of sentiment about weakness and strength through what is from [inaudible 01:22:00] appearances, what would be viewed societally as a weakness, but turning the other cheek and just embracing people for what they are and not being so judge-y, even though I'm a very critical human being and I do it for a living, but I just like to point out the kind of hypocrisy that passes for the norm in the art world, which seems to be a little bit more extensive than in other sectors.

Robert Diament ([01:22:22](#)):

So, we ask every guest another question, what is your favorite color?

Kenny Schachter ([01:22:28](#)):

Am I exhausting you by the way?

Russel Tovey ([01:22:29](#)):

We could just keep-

Robert Diament ([01:22:29](#)):

I'm loving it.

Russel Tovey ([01:22:29](#)):

... going and going and going.

Kenny Schachter ([01:22:33](#)):

You guys are so sweet.

Robert Diament ([01:22:34](#)):

Sometimes we edit the episodes, but I feel like with yours we just need to let it be free.

Kenny Schachter ([01:22:39](#)):

Let it flow like diarrhea. I love blue.

Robert Diament ([01:22:42](#)):

Blue?

Kenny Schachter ([01:22:44](#)):

I love all shades of... Yeah, but I love brown. I love the... I mean, it's funny, for 15 years I lived in the UK in London, and there's one thing I miss, just one thing, besides people, and that's the Thames and the color of the Thames.

I made an art piece, like creating a fictitious tube of paint called Thames Brown, and I remember when I first... I mean, on a sad note, at times it could be very polluted and there's a lot of refuse that I would document through my day. I literally went to the Thames every single day of my time in London, and I love brown for that very reason alone, and also because it's so frowned upon.

There's actually an order of colors that attain the highest amounts of money in art sales, and red is number one, for some reason, and then I think white and then blue comes third or fourth. The bottom of the heap is green and brown, but I love brown. But blue is probably, for some stupid reason unbeknownst to me, I love blue, especially in a nice old car from the '60s or '70s.

Robert Diament ([01:23:51](#)):

Yeah, because we didn't talk about the cars, but I always remember that about you. People were like, he's a collector.

Kenny Schachter ([01:23:55](#)):

I just love industrial design.

Robert Diament ([01:23:56](#)):

He has loads of cars and then he has exhibitions next to the cars. And I remember going to [inaudible 01:24:01] projects on [inaudible 01:24:02].

Kenny Schachter ([01:24:01](#)):

I had a car under my desk in my office in London, but I love Zaha Hadid, the architect, was my best friend and I didn't know about art as an alienated, overweight... I actually stuttered. Part of the reason I never shut the fuck up when I talk is that for the first 12 years or 13 years of my life, even into law school, I couldn't publicly pronounce the letter D and I stuttered.

So I was overweight, alienated. My dad tried to get me to quit art altogether, and I came to cars. I don't like car racing, I don't like expensive cars, I like industrial design and as a result, I had a very incongruous relationship with Zaha where we traveled to 10 different countries all over the world and I revered her in the omnipotent power that she possessed because of her creative thinking and ideas.

So I love industrial... Cars were my gateway drug into art.

Russel Tovey ([01:25:03](#)):

So what's next for Kenny then? What is on your radar? Who are you looking at, who do you want to collect, and then when is this part two of your Hoarder sale?

Kenny Schachter ([01:25:14](#)):

I was meant to have a show of my own art at Blum & Poe in Tokyo, in March, and it's funny because I'm such the polarizing kind of human and it's hard to imagine why I'm so nice and charming. Why would you ever want to sue me or beat me up? But that show is, people actually called Blum & Poe and said how could you show such an asshole? How could you insert Kenny Schachter into your program when he's such a...

I mean, a dilatant used to be historically something that was admirable to be the Jack of all trades. I mean, I do six different things that I could remember and they're all under the rubric of art, so I wouldn't be able to write. I'm the only person probably that I know of that writes about the art world, but also curates, sells it, makes it, teaches it. That gives me the insight to be the writer I am because I am not just talking from the sidelines, I'm participating.

So the things that I'm most excited about are finally having this one person show with Blum & Poe, where I get to express myself on a whole other level and continuing to write and to find platforms.

I mean, Artnet is talking about going behind a paywall, and I said to them, if you even think for one instant that you're going to charge for my writing, I quit.

I mean, the whole point of writing for next to no money is to be as accessible to as many people as humanly possible. If anyone is going to charge for my writing, it's going to be me, not Artnet. I do enough for them already. And after this last lawsuit, I wrote an article about, I don't know how to say his name, but the painter that you've had on your show, Boafu, I've written a piece about-

Robert Diament ([01:26:58](#)):

Amoako.

Kenny Schachter ([01:26:59](#)):

Right, Amoako. I've written a piece about, you know that this guy is 36 years old, I believe, and he's had 16 of his artworks come to auction, and they've all been in the six months of 2020, not even six and a half months. The first 16 pieces that he has ever in his career, publicly at auction, have been under six and a half months, and 15 of those 16 pieces were painted in 2018 and '19 and one in 2017, and that's criminal.

Anyway, what I'm looking forward to do is [inaudible 01:27:37]-

Russel Tovey ([01:27:36](#)):

Who's buying them works? Who's buying them works?

Kenny Schachter ([01:27:40](#)):

The crazy thing is a bunch of fucking asshole speculators, one of which has just threatened to sue me. Should I say his name? Jeremy Lerner? Okay, I said it. You could see why I need to be muzzled more. Even my family was like, "Dad, enough lawsuit threats. Maybe you should just sit it out for six months and have a cooling." They wanted to give me a timeout. My own children want to put me in the closet and shut me up because it's just enough for them. All the threats I get, I mean, I'm not even exaggerating. I'll tell you next time we have a drink together, even though I don't drink, thankfully for the world.

Anyway, so Amoako befriended, unfortunately, some of the wrong people when he began to become more integrated into the contemporary art world, commercially speaking, and he sold work to what he thought were his friends for between \$1,000 and \$10,000. And I would say every single one of those 16 pieces that have come back on the market, not to mention all the private sales, which have probably constituted...

I mean, I hate to say it, but I would say 60% of the pieces that artist has sold have been resold within the span of a year to a year and a half. It's tragic. And you know what? I think he's a strong artist, but a lot of artists have suffered at the hands of rampant speculation to the point where careers have been irrevocably damaged because-

Russel Tovey ([01:29:16](#)):

Do you think his will? Do you think his will? Because his prices are pretty kind of cemented now. They seem to be really-

Kenny Schachter ([01:29:21](#)):

I mean, look-

Russel Tovey ([01:29:22](#)):

... solid.

Kenny Schachter ([01:29:22](#)):

... there's another story. I mean, again, I'm sorry to just go on and on, but I just had a call today from someone, asked me about the work of Matthew Wong. Matthew Wong was a very close personal friend of mine, and his mom, and he just took his life in October, and I lost my son the same way a year and a half ago, who was only 21 years old.

There's been an increase in suicides from the ages of 15 to 25 alone, up 60% in the last 10 years, and it's a tragic manifestation of social media and a kind of mental illness which is rampant and so unspoken about to this day, and society is really suffering because of all of these things and the hatred and the competition, and everything that we're talking about is really affecting people in a way that is unprecedented in history. In my life, I'm 58 years old, I've never known a single person who yet attempted suicide, yet went through with it.

Anyway, Matthew's, the first piece of art of his to ever go to auction was a tiny drawing about two months ago that went for \$60,000, and his first painting to ever sell at auction on a \$50,000 estimate sold for \$1.82 million, and there's something so morose and morbid about these people that dance on your grave. It's just so disgusting, to be honest you.

Robert Diament ([01:30:55](#)):

Russell and I had the same conversation a few days ago about that very-

Russel Tovey ([01:30:57](#)):

And like who's buying that?

Robert Diament ([01:30:58](#)):

... sale. It's so sad.

Kenny Schachter ([01:31:01](#)):

Well, the fact that there are people buying that art for 600,000 by Amoako, the worst thing is that it's going to shrink his market exponentially because all of the people that should collect his work, all of the people that rightfully should own his work, live with it and appreciate it and love it, they're now closed out of the market. And someone just called me this morning, literally this morning, before I started this conversation with you, somebody contacted me about Matthew's work and said, "What do you think? I'm thinking about buying a piece today." So I'm like, "What do you mean you're thinking about buying a piece today?"

The estate run by his mom, who's a beautiful, sensitive human being, who's suffering the same way that my family is grieving, it's unspeakable the loss that we're going through and experiencing, and she had such a hard time experiencing these auctions right now, and this person said to me, like, "What do you think?" And I said, "What do you mean? You can't even... The family has closed down any further..."

The last posthumous show of Matthew, which he finished just prior to taking his life, transpired after his death and nothing was for sale.

Russel Tovey ([01:32:11](#)):

The Blue paintings at Karma Gallery.

Kenny Schachter ([01:32:13](#)):

Correct. So there's no primary market for Matthew because nothing is being sold by the estate. And I said to this person, "How are you thinking of buying the work? Nothing's for sale." And he said to me, "On the secondary market," and I said, "I love Matthew so much, and his mom, why on earth would you ever buy a piece now? With the resources that these speculators are charging for the work, you can buy the work of a thousand artists."

Russel Tovey ([01:32:44](#)):

Emerging artist support, yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([01:32:46](#)):

Find someone else. Find someone even who's successful that doesn't need the support. You could buy a piece of art for 1, 2, 3, \$400,000 by a very successful mid-career artist, whether it's a work on paper or whatever, but-

Russel Tovey ([01:33:01](#)):

Yeah, there's a darkness, isn't there?

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:03](#)):

Why would you want to dip into the market at 1 to \$2 million? I mean, even this small piece that wasn't even the best quality of Matthew went for \$1 million at Phillips a day after the Sotheby's sale. Why not buy something from someone who actually needs it? Not only that, but you could do so much better to find the support. I mean, you could discover an artist for nothing, for peanuts, not even thinking about money, but just thinking about quality. Why would you want to spend that resources? Give away the fucking money to charity and-

Robert Diament ([01:33:37](#)):

But then I guess, Kenny-

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:38](#)):

... go buy a piece of art from-

Robert Diament ([01:33:39](#)):

... these people aren't thinking like us, and that's the whole thing. It's like-

Russel Tovey ([01:33:43](#)):

It's speculative.

Robert Diament ([01:33:43](#)):

... different kind of human psychology, isn't it, as well, and power.

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:46](#)):

People buy art-

Robert Diament ([01:33:46](#)):

People want-

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:46](#)):

... with their ear.

Robert Diament ([01:33:47](#)):

... to have something they can't have as well and all this weird shit. They're not art lovers either.

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:52](#)):

Another crazy thing is-

Robert Diament ([01:33:52](#)):

I'm sorry, they're not art lovers.

Kenny Schachter ([01:33:53](#)):

One quick thing, sorry to cut you off, but you see how wound up I am now, but when it's \$1,000 nobody wants it, when it's \$50,000 people start whispering, and when it's 500,000 everybody wants it, and that's human nature. It's pathetic, but that's human nature. More people are attracted.

I mean, people always talk about me selling art or me collecting art. I mean, the artist that I love, like Vito Acconci was a great conceptual seminal artist who changed the course of art history, and yet there's still no market for his work. You could buy a piece for five grand or whatever it is, even though Pace is now representing his estate, and people buy art with their ear and they all succeed, unfortunately affirm success, and people that start to break out into that kind of exposure create a snowball effect of other people that want it simply for the reason that it attains such high numbers.

Really, you don't buy art with your ear. I mean, I love the art dealer in Germany called Johann König. I just gave a lecture there three weeks ago in Berlin and he introduced some prints that I made, which I was so proud of because I revere... I'm not art royalty, I'm art peasant scumbag, but his father started the Münster Sculpture Project, was a curator at the Ludwig Museum for decades and has been the curator of many Biennales across the world, and Johann, he suffered an accident where he lost 80% of his sight.

So I always say, I hate the saying that you have a good eye in the art world because one good eye won't do it, you need two good eyes. Unfortunately, most people buy with their ear, according to what their friends recently purchased, but I just love the determination.

He wrote a book, *The Blind Art Dealer*, because he's legally blind and that just did not get in the way or prevent him from becoming one of the greatest art galleries for emerging art in the world, based on his pure crazy love of all things art, and I admire him so much for that fact because it goes to show you don't even need a good eye. You can have no eyes, but if you could see 10% or put your hands on something, that's enough to have a passion and develop a love and an appreciation and an understanding about art.

Russel Tovey ([01:36:10](#)):

Wow! Well, Kenny, we have a love, massive appreciation and an understanding of art more so now from talking to you for the last four hours.

Robert Diament ([01:36:17](#)):

Thank you so much.

Russel Tovey ([01:36:17](#)):

This has been incredible.

Robert Diament ([01:36:20](#)):

Talk art special.

Russel Tovey ([01:36:22](#)):

Yes. This is extended.

Kenny Schachter ([01:36:25](#)):

I think we understand each other a little better now, too.

Russel Tovey ([01:36:28](#)):

Do you forgive me, Kenny?

Kenny Schachter ([01:36:30](#)):

I love you, I could say.

Robert Diament ([01:36:33](#)):

I've just realized, Russ, I also think-

Kenny Schachter ([01:36:35](#)):

I'm not kidding, either.

Robert Diament ([01:36:36](#)):

I think you were thinking of Marc Jacobs sale where he said that he was going to sell it and then buy a whole new collection. Like start collecting [inaudible 01:36:43].

Russel Tovey ([01:36:43](#)):

No, it wasn't that. No, no, it wasn't.

Robert Diament ([01:36:45](#)):

[inaudible 01:36:45].

Kenny Schachter ([01:36:45](#)):

No, he was talking about me, but now that you just mentioned that, I mean, I love grunge and I love Marc Jacobs. He's a genius, obviously. But he [inaudible 01:36:56]-

Russel Tovey ([01:36:56](#)):

Oh, talk into your phone, Kenny. Talk into your phone-

Kenny Schachter ([01:37:00](#)):

Oh, sorry.

Russel Tovey ([01:37:02](#)):

... mouthpiece. That's it. Go on.

Kenny Schachter ([01:37:02](#)):

Can you hear me?

Russel Tovey ([01:37:02](#)):

Yeah.

Kenny Schachter ([01:37:02](#)):

Sorry. One second. Marc Jacobs had a sale and he made all of these promotional videos for Sotheby's. I love the crazy ass shoes he was wearing, but he said that how he fell in love with all of these artists, how much he loves art and how the artists were his friends, and he turned around and sold every goddam piece he ever bought from all of his, quote, unquote, "friends". I don't behave like that, and I think that's so wrong.

I know his company started floundering financially and he bought a major house designed by, what's his name? Who designed the Guggenheim Museum? Frank Lloyd Wright, and-

Russel Tovey ([01:37:37](#)):

Frank Lloyd Wright.

Kenny Schachter ([01:37:38](#)):

... had to pay for that. Right, so he looked at his art collection as a financial asset, which so many people have done.

Look, I have respect for him and everyone should do what the hell they want. We live in a relatively free world, although less free than it's ever been. But, I mean, to go on camera and say how much you love John Currin and his wife and Rachel Feinstein and all of these other artists like Karen Kilimnik, and then to dump every single piece at auction in the most high, visible way, that makes what I look like like Peter Pan. I mean, that's absurd. That's not right.

Russel Tovey ([01:38:14](#)):

Do you think the artists-

Kenny Schachter ([01:38:15](#)):

I'm sorry.

Russel Tovey ([01:38:15](#)):

... were upset? Do you think they took that personal?

Kenny Schachter ([01:38:18](#)):

I mean, watching that video would make me cringe if I was an artist who befriended a famous... I mean, again, because he's Marc Jacobs and a celebrity, people would sell him anything. The art world always acts to be on this high plane of greater human understanding, but whenever Leonard DiCaprio strolls into an art fair or Brad Pitt, they get treated like Medici. It's fucking absurd.

I mean, again, I'm selling the story that I wrote for New York Magazine about Inigo Philbrick and his capers that ended up in the UK Times about a month ago in the magazine section on a Saturday, and now there's a bunch of movie companies that are bidding for my story, one of which may be owned by our art collecting, acting friend. But that guy has sold more art than I have. And you just wonder why. You have more financial resources than most people could... Let's just keep this between us and our six million listeners.

Russel Tovey ([01:39:21](#)):

Off the record.

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:22](#)):

No. I don't care. Put it on the record, I don't care.

Russel Tovey ([01:39:24](#)):

Okay.

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:25](#)):

It is what it is [inaudible 01:39:25].

Russel Tovey ([01:39:24](#)):

So who are we talking about, Leonardo DiCaprio?

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:27](#)):

I didn't say that.

Robert Diament ([01:39:28](#)):

He didn't say that.

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:29](#)):

All I'm saying is-

Robert Diament ([01:39:31](#)):

He mentioned two actors and I think he was actually talking about the other one.

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:32](#)):

Yes. That one sold a Rudolf Stingel piece to Inigo Philbrick through a proxy. So he bought a piece from Sadie Coles and sold it six months later. Why? It's beyond me. Why do people do that? Because it's a game to these people. They buy it and sell it because they can, it's trendy, you hang out with all these... I don't know, let's change the subject before I get started on the-

Robert Diament ([01:39:53](#)):

I think it's also to do with validation as well and ego and insecurity, actually.

Kenny Schachter ([01:39:58](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I think when you're a celebrity like that, it's more to do with just glamor, being in the game. It's-

Robert Diament ([01:40:05](#)):

Feeling like you are-

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:06](#)):

... being in the game.

Robert Diament ([01:40:07](#)):

... [inaudible 01:40:07] or clever or whatever the word is.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:08](#)):

Yeah, and it's not a game-

Robert Diament ([01:40:08](#)):

Well, thank you-

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:09](#)):

... it's people's lives we're talking about.

Robert Diament ([01:40:10](#)):

... so much. That should be the name of your film, The Game. [inaudible 01:40:15].

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:14](#)):

Or The Guarantee. The Guarantee.

Robert Diament ([01:40:17](#)):

The Guarantee. Oof, The Guarantee.

Russel Tovey ([01:40:20](#)):

The Guarantee.

Robert Diament ([01:40:20](#)):

That's a good one.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:20](#)):

There you go. Anyway-

Robert Diament ([01:40:21](#)):

Thank you so, so much.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:21](#)):

... we can have a whole part two and talk about all the auction bullshit, so we'll leave-

Robert Diament ([01:40:26](#)):

Yeah, when your movie comes out.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:27](#)):

... this to be... Okay, perfect.

Robert Diament ([01:40:28](#)):

I hope you get a starring role in the movie. They need you.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:31](#)):

No, no. They'd have Danny DeVito playing me. What are you laughing at? You're not supposed to laugh so-

Robert Diament ([01:40:39](#)):

I love him!

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:41](#)):

... [inaudible 01:40:41].

Russel Tovey ([01:40:42](#)):

Good casting. Good casting. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Robert Diament ([01:40:43](#)):

[inaudible 01:40:43].

Russel Tovey ([01:40:44](#)):

All images we've spoke about, it's going to be a busy Talk Art Instagram page, is @talkart. Kenny, you're on Instagram and your handle is @kennyschachter?

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:52](#)):

Kenny Schachter. S-C-H-

Russel Tovey ([01:40:54](#)):

Great.

Kenny Schachter ([01:40:55](#)):

... A-C-H-T-E-R.

Robert Diament ([01:40:57](#)):

We're going to link to you.

Russel Tovey ([01:40:57](#)):

Kenny said if you want to write anything to him, he will respond to everything. So bombard him.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:03](#)):

I promise.

Russel Tovey ([01:41:04](#)):

Keep him busy.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:04](#)):

Please.

Russel Tovey ([01:41:05](#)):

And that's good.

Robert Diament ([01:41:05](#)):

I don't know how you do that though, because we get so many messages and I try to write to as many people as possible, but it is actually, it's just exhausting after a while. Well done for that.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:11](#)):

It's time-consuming, but yeah, [inaudible 01:41:14].

Russel Tovey ([01:41:14](#)):

It's worth it.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:16](#)):

I [inaudible 01:41:16].

Russel Tovey ([01:41:16](#)):

So it's three of us as kids who couldn't wipe our bums properly and have become collectors, in the words of Freud, and here we are finishing up this episode of Talk Art-

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:24](#)):

That was perfect.

Russel Tovey ([01:41:24](#)):

... but we will all see you again soon. Thank you again, Kenny.

Robert Diament ([01:41:27](#)):

We'll be back very soon! Thanks for listening!

Russel Tovey ([01:41:27](#)):

Bye, everyone.

Robert Diament ([01:41:27](#)):

Bye, Kenny!

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:27](#)):

That was perfect.

Robert Diament ([01:41:27](#)):

Bye.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:27](#)):

Okay, bye.

Robert Diament ([01:41:27](#)):

Bye.

Kenny Schachter ([01:41:27](#)):

Thank you.

Robert Diament ([01:41:33](#)):

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