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COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY, published this month by Taschen books, author Adam Lindemann recorded hundreds of hours of conversations with 40 leading collectors, dealers, consultants, and museum directors. Two participants in the book, Jean-Pierre Lehmann, a veteran Swiss collector, and his wife, Rachel Lehmann, a partner in Chelsea's Lehmann Maupin Gallery, have been dedicated collectors for over 20 years. The Lehmanns have shown consistent support for young artists and, as such, were early collectors of Jeff Koons, Matthew Barney, Carol Walker, Jeff Wall, and Gabriel Orozco, among many others. Here, Lindemann speaks with Jean-Pierre Lehmann about the couple's collection.

WHY COLLECT CONTEMPORARY?

What I find most interesting in contemporary collecting is the adventure—nothing is definite, everything can be questioned and will be questioned: Why this artist versus another? Why this painting versus another?

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

In life, making money in business is one dimension; having a family, emotions, and friends is another dimension; and collecting is yet another dimension. It's a dimension which includes adventure, choices, investments—not only some of those, but all of them, so it's a life adventure. Some people create a large company, some people do good things in Africa, some people are great doctors, and some can also collect. Probably in my case, our two children will decide what they want to do with the collection, which will be a witness to a period of art with a lot of misses, with a lot of limitations—because there is never enough money to do everything you would like, because maybe sometimes you don't have access to an artist or their gallery (you know how they play games), or maybe you have missed a whole area of an artist's work, and so on. But at least it is building a body of work that bears witness to the time, to a life, or to the life of my wife, Rachel, and myself, and to our adventure together. I don't have any other ambition. I am trying to see as much as I can because, in the end, art is about looking, and sometimes touching, but mostly looking.

ON MAINTAINING A COLLECTION

Restricting yourself to the size of the walls or the size of the spaces in the home is limiting. Now, whether you should put a thousand pieces in storage is another question. I think you should have the liberty to have things that don't fit in your house, don't suit the style of your furniture, and so on, and the ability to change, because your taste will change in time, too. Maybe instead of putting some pieces in storage, it's the furniture that you will throw away, or the house that you will change. I would like to have the means to have the space and the personnel to see everything, at least sometime, but I know it's not going to be possible.

ON CHANGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY MARKET OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS

It is a much broader market than it used to be, whether it is collectors, gallerists, or artists. I think the quality is high, but the variety is so enormous that people have problems defining what is good from what is not so good. One of the problems artists

today are going to face is that life, in general, is much longer than it used to be. You don't have artists dying of tuberculosis or alcoholism when they are thirty-five or forty and leaving behind very interesting works—but very limited quantities, because their lives were limited. Now, most artists will probably live until eighty, ninety, or one hundred years old like everybody else, and if they want to produce until the end, they'll have problems, because their productive years will be much longer. Probably then you will see the difference between the good and the less good, because most of them will repeat themselves, and only some of them will still create late in their lives—like Matisse did at the end, by cutting papers.

SELLING FROM YOUR COLLECTION

Experience has shown me that some things out of fashion may come back. Whether we like it or not, there is always an element of fashion, of hype, an element of the "art of the time." The other thing that happens has to do with the really bad things that you bought to be nice to somebody, or that you bought on impulse. If they really are bad, they are not worth anything, so why sell them? Except for cleaning your warehouse, there is no reason to. The good things that may not meet your taste of the day may be the taste of the day in five, ten, or twenty years. I can open an *Artforum* of the seventies for you, and you would recognize only a few names. It will be the same in twenty years regarding the current issue. We've chosen never to sell a work, which is related to a mistake I made, probably about thirty years ago. I had bought small works—because I had little money—by very good artists. I had works by Yves Klein, Robert Ryman, Piero Manzoni, and people like that, and I thought, after a while, that I should sell all these small pieces to "upgrade" by buying two large pieces. I bought a large Robert Rauschenberg and a Roy Lichtenstein. It's not the regret of my life, but it is a *deep* regret, because the Ryman, the Klein, and the Manzoni represented my taste, my collecting interests at the time. The others were bought for the wrong reasons. I think I would have been as well off keeping what I had rather than "upgrading." A lot of people make that mistake. It was a rational decision but it was missing the emotion of discovering, appreciating, hesitating, buying, etc.

BUYING PRIMARY VS SECONDARY

Basically, the adventure is about discovering new artists, discovering new exhibitions, a new vocabulary, a new image, a new impression. Once in a while, Rachel and I have bought in the secondary market, but then usually it was for artists we were collecting, where we had missed part of their work. It was to complete the collected work of that artist rather than to buy secondary. ■