

books



COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY (by Adam Lindemann; Taschen, rrp £19.99) OWNING ART: THE CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTOR'S HANDBOOK (by Louisa Buck and Judith Greer; Cultureshock, rrp £14.95) 'Someone bought a painting from Tim Eitel two years ago for \$2,000,' recounts New York art dealer Marc Glimcher, in Adam Lindemann's very conversational new book *Collecting Contemporary*. 'They sold it at auction... for \$120,000.' Bravo! you say. 'That's vile,' says Glimcher. As Lindemann's book reveals, the weird things the big players say (and don't say) about the ballooning art market are often just as interesting as their more plausible observations. There are many things about the art market that one cannot say. And that makes the appearance of these two new books an interesting proposition: just what can they say?

Tackling the subject head-on, journalist Louisa Buck and collector Judith Greer have crafted a book aimed at the buyer rather than the bystander. It starts with elementary topics ('What is contemporary art?' 'Why collectors collect') and leads you all the way through a sale. It sets out the role of various functionaries, from art consultants to auction houses, and it winds up by dealing with advice on transport and conservation – useful advice when today's artists use such fugitive materials. The book has a purposeful brevity, a user-friendly feel, and while Buck and Greer dispense wisdom one also hears the voices of various luminaries. One would only complain, however, that given the authors' proximity to those luminaries, they may not be the best placed to offer the 'clear and unbiased guidance' to the workings of the art world that they promise at the outset.

In this regard, collector Adam Lindemann's tactic of simply letting the dealers, consultants and collectors respond to questions is more successful in shedding light on murkier areas. He has opened some very guarded doors: Larry Gagosian, François Pinault and Iwan Wirth all talk. They don't talk specifics, but they do address thorny issues. Listen, for instance, to dealer Andrea Rosen talk about resale agreements (the sort that may bar access to Glimcher's *bête noire*, the auction), then listen to Sotheby's Tobias Meyer on the value of auctions. Some of the chat is unintentionally funny (curator Tom Eccles: 'My opinion is that one million dollars is a lot of money'); much will date quickly (will anyone want to listen to dealer Gerd Harry Lybke talk about his darling Leipzig painters this time next year?); and some just sounds like chest puffing. But the market for art dictates much about what we see in the galleries, and in unpredictable ways, so listening to the players can only be worthwhile ■ MORGAN FALCONER is a journalist and a critic ▷

To order *Collecting Contemporary* for £17.99 or *Owning Art* for £13.46 (plus £4.50 UK p&p), ring the *World of Interiors* Bookshop on 0871 911 1747