

LIFESTYLE

Down to a fine art

Art runs in the blood of dealer ROBIN KATZ who, with a new gallery in Mayfair's up-and-coming art district and a stand at this month's PAD fair, is fully embracing his fascination with beautiful things

TEXT EMILY TOBIN | PHOTOGRAPHS PAUL MASSEY



Robin Katz in his gallery, next to *The Ruins of Detroit* by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre and Sir Anthony Caro's painted steel *Air* piece from 1971

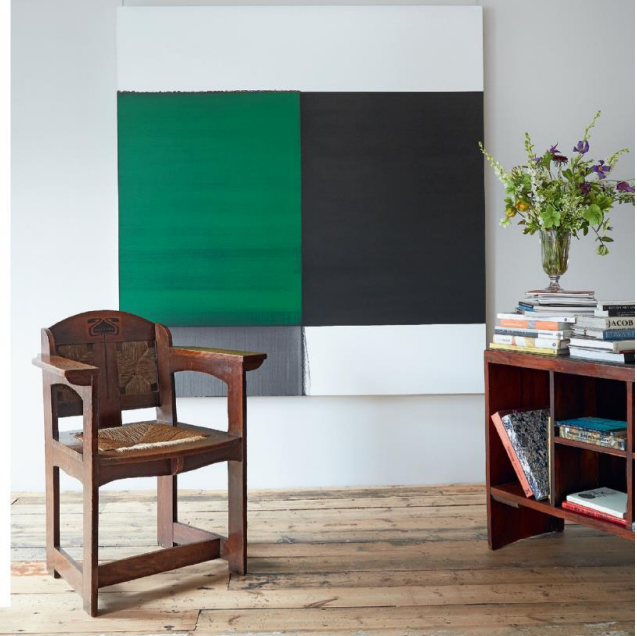


Every October, the art world descends on London and the capital swells with a noisy cavalcade of curators, collectors and creatives, many of whom gravitate towards the big white marquee in Regent's Park for Frieze. But in a quiet corner of Mayfair, an elegant black tent provides a more intimate experience – a place where twentieth-century art, design and decorative arts comfortably rubs shoulders with photography, jewellery, ceramics and tribal works. This month, for the ninth time, the Pavilion of Art and Design (PAD) will open in Berkeley Square, bringing with it 61 of the world's best dealers and galleries.

Among this number is Robin Katz, who not only exhibits at the fair but also sits on the selection committee. 'It is a tremendously sophisticated event,' he says. 'It's small, it's calm and I love being part of it.' Robin is a third-generation dealer; his grandfather owned an antiques shop in The Lanes in Brighton and his father is Daniel Katz, a dealer of antiquities whose career has spanned 48 years.

Although he is now the head of his own booming business, Robin Katz Fine Art, Robin was initially resistant to the lure of the art world. 'I spent years trying my best not to follow in my father's >

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Robin in his office; an iron and Stolit cement sculpture, *The Stranger*, by Lynn Chadwick sits in the far corner. Facing this is a small seating area with a Bridget Riley work on paper above the Danish sofa. Robin at the gallery's Hill Street entrance. Robin with his colleague, Emma Cousin (centre). In the gallery, an Arts and Crafts chair bought from dealer and fellow PAD exhibitor Martin Levy sits next to a colour-block painting by Callum Innes





footsteps,' he says. After a brief spell at Sotheby's, he quit the industry altogether. 'I didn't go to a single exhibition or look at a piece of art for three years.' Instead, he took a job as a music consultant: 'I was making soundtracks for various flashy hotels in the States. It was pure rebellion.' However, the purchase of 'a seriously good' Grayson Perry, *Print for a Politician*, marked his return to the industry some 10 years ago. 'I've been buying and selling ever since.' He is quick to point out, however, that he hasn't permanently turned his back on music and is rarely seen without a guitar in hand.

Today, Robin's remit is simple: 'Whether it's a French Symbolist portrait or a piece of Venini Scarpa glass, I only deal in good things.' On his stand at PAD you might see an early Walter Sickert hanging above an Anthony Caro sculpture or next to a Bridget Riley work on paper. 'I mix and match according to my taste.' But when Robin started dealing, his criteria was arguably more rigid: he focused solely on twentieth-century British art: 'At the time, it was a misunderstood and somewhat unknown area.' While Freud and Bacon were the poster boys for the period, 'there were a lot of artists who had been forgotten and were ripe for a reevaluation'. In the Forties, with the rise of abstract Expressionism, artists like Peter Lanyon and Lynn Chadwick, who had once been bought internationally, were being overlooked. 'I suddenly felt quite patriotic about it all. I realised that in my own small way I was part of this resurgence of modern British art,' he explains. Things have now changed and it is increasingly difficult to buy the greatest pieces ▷

ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Robin with Rose Uniacke, another PAD exhibitor, in her Pimlico showroom. A 'Plaster Cone' pendant light and cast Jesmonite stool (centre right) are among the offerings in Rose's showroom. Josh Lilley in his gallery with Robin and artist Nick Goss, looking at a painting by Nick that Robin has bought. Robin with Martin Levy, of H Blairman & Sons, in his Mount Street showroom, which sells antiques and fine works of art



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by these acclaimed British artists. 'The market has eaten them up.' For Robin, who is mercurial by nature, this shift has worked in his favour: 'I can't stay focused and I don't want to stay focused. I'm fascinated by everything – design, contemporary, nineteenth century, the list goes on.' His gallery on Hill Street in Mayfair neatly encapsulates this approach. The Katz family moved into the space last summer when the landlord sold their previous premises on Bond Street. 'We were forced out, but it was a blessing in disguise.' Robin's space is 'a home away from home' and stretches across the fourth floor of an Edwardian town house; his father occupies the bottom two floors and Ariadne Galleries is on the floor in between them. The move reflects what Robin calls a 'shift in gravity'. As Bond Street – the traditional stomping ground of dealers – makes way for glossy flagship fashion stores, the art world is having to >

OPPOSITE The dining area of Robin's flat in Holland Park is furnished with a Rick Owens table and chairs by Pierre Jeanneret. THIS PAGE ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP A large photograph by Walead Beshty hangs above Studio Drift's *Fragile Future* sculptures from Carpenters Workshop Gallery in the sitting room. Robin plays the guitar in the sitting area, which has built-in shelving (bottom right)





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reconsider its heartland. PAD has undeniably been a part of this; its annual residence in Berkeley Square marks the area as a serious destination for collectors. With galleries such as Gagolian and the auction house Phillips having also moved to the area, PAD and Robin are in good company. 'This part of Mayfair is now a destination and I'm delighted to be here. It feels serious. There's no passing trade, people come with a purpose, which means that we can really focus.'

'You should have seen it before I moved in,' says Robin of his workspace. 'There were endless filing cabinets, piles of books, a broken fax machine and peeling yellow wallpaper. It was without a doubt the least important room in the building.' While the galleries below are majestically proportioned, with high ceilings and velvet-lined walls, Robin has created a more domestic feel. 'I wanted to make an interior that reflected the way I like to live.' The floors are laid with 'reclaimed but rather beautiful Victorian floorboards'; his office is light and airy with a 1980 marble desk by Angelo Mangiarotti and a comfortable Danish leather sofa. 'It's not a white box gallery: it's a venue for my art dealing.'

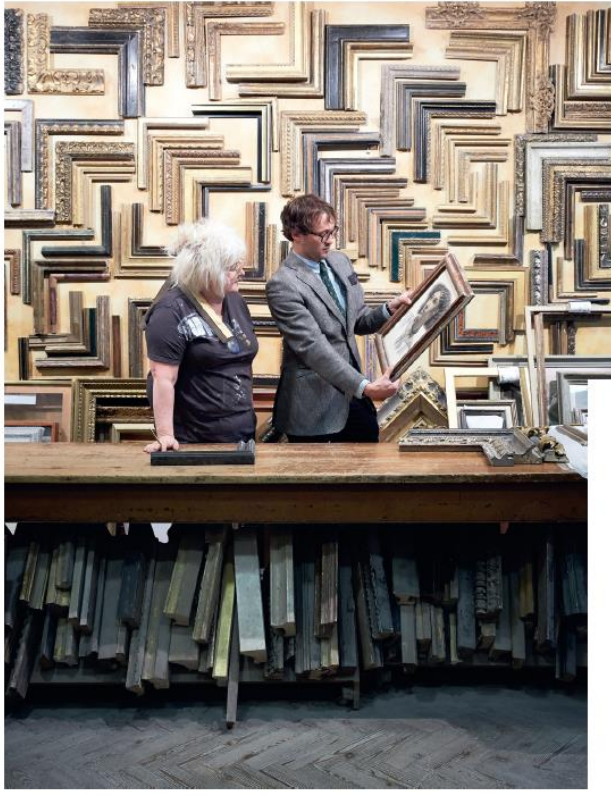
His flat in Holland Park has a similar look. Lofty white walls provide a backdrop to what Robin somewhat unfairly describes as his 'clutter' – an impressive collection of mid-century furniture and works of art by Eric Gill and Walead Beshty. 'I'm a struggling minimalist,' he says, 'though I'll never be successful. I love things that are pure and simple, but I'm always going to muck it up by adding too much stuff.' Thankfully, his friend, the interior designer Tara Craig, was on hand to help with the selection of a few finishing touches and keep the clutter in order. ▷

ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP Robin at The TukTuk flower shop in Mayfair.

Robin has lunch with Tim Jefferies of Hamilton Gallery, a fellow PAD exhibitor, and Patrick Perrin, its director, at Morton's in Berkeley Square. Robin and Oscar Humphries inspect a Thirties piece by Carlo Scarpa for Venini at an exhibition of ancient and modern glass curated by Oscar at Rupert Wace gallery in St James's



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This month, Robin will showcase some of his most important pieces at PAD, where they will be seen by not just the art world but also interior designers, decorators and architects. This is all part of the appeal. 'There are always interesting people to meet,' he says, concluding with his assessment of PAD's winning formula: 'A small, curated selection of knowledgeable dealers, plus intelligent collectors equals a wonderful fair' □

Robin Katz Fine Art: 020-7493 0688

PAD London is in Berkeley Square, W1, October 14-18: pad-fairs.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Robin with Louise Liddell at Riccardo Giaccherini framers in Soho. Discussing suits at Thom Sweeney on Bruton Place, Mayfair, with friend and style adviser Jude Afriyie. Playing the guitar at Lisa's Kitchen & Bar on Portobello Road. Robin drives a Seventies Alfa Romeo - on the back seat is a drawing of Fanny Eaton by Walter Fryer Stocks

