



Tümpel and Würtenberger

By Matthias Lütcke



Showroom
Stiftung Arp e.V. ©
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By Leo Pompinon

“That way, an artist can die a second death”

ART MARKET How do you deal with the legacy of your father or mother as children of a famous artist? An international group of heirs discussed this at a symposium in Berlin.

by Rianne van Dijck

What would be the best way to preserve his oeuvre, his films, photographs and letters for the future, Hella Wenders, niece of the German film director Wim Wenders (73) wonders. Vesta Kroese, daughter of the Hague painter Ad Kroese who died in 2001, sighs that she doesn't know how to manage her father's legacy. And Ben and Sacha Bowling, sons of Frank Bowling, point out that it's a real challenge working out with their father how best to deal with his heritage. British artist Frank Bowling, born in Guyana, will be given an important solo exhibition in Tate Modern next year and he is 84 – about time to be thinking about setting a course as family. But how do you talk to somebody who still spends every day working in his studio and doesn't see the point in thinking about the business side of things?

On the first morning of the three-day workshop about Artist's Legacy Planning, an international group sits in a big circle on folding chairs in a former warehouse in Berlin-Mitte. The participants come from all over the world, from Dubai and Pakistan to Germany, Brazil and the United States. They are mainly daughters, sons and grandchildren of elderly or deceased artists. There are also players from the art trade, such as Kara Vander Weg, director of the Gagosian Gallery on Madison Avenue in New York, who represents the

estates of a number of artists, including Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

This workshop was organised by The Institute for Artists' Estates, which was founded in 2016 by Loretta Würtenberger and her husband Daniel Tümpel. Würtenberger, a lawyer by profession and Germany's youngest judge ever and Tümpel, a former banker, are no newcomers to the art world. They came up with the idea for the institute after Tümpel's father died in 2009. “Daniel's father was an art historian and he had looked after the legacy of his father, Wolfgang Tümpel, a silversmith and industrial designer at the Bauhaus in Weimar”, Würtenberger explains. “When Daniel was tasked with managing the portfolios and boxes filled with his grandfather's artwork, he had no idea where to start. That was when we realised how difficult it is to approach something you're emotionally involved with, in a business-like manner.”

They searched for more information, for tips and case-studies, but these were difficult to find. What they did find was fragmented: one person could tell them something about the legal details, some knew a lot about a specific part of the art market, and others knew how to value works of art.



By Eamonn McCabe, Hollandse Hoogte, Camera Press

The painter Frank Bowling at home in his studio in Brixton.

A year later, in 2010, Würtenberger and Tümpel started advising Stichting Arp, which handled the estate of the sculptor Hans Arp. During his lifetime, Arp's work had been shown in major exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim, to name but a few, and he had won important prizes for his sculptures. Although after his death in 1966, Arp was recognised as being one of the major sculptors of the twentieth century, the market stagnated in the 1980s and '90s and interest from museums in his work decreased.

“That way, an artist can die a second death”, Würtenberger says. They were able to revitalise Arp's oeuvre by opening

a large showroom in Berlin where curators could personally view his work. By generously lending his work to museums, inviting scientific researchers to publish articles about his work and by exhibiting his work at top galleries such as Hauser & Wirth, they achieved renewed attention for the artist's work. Prices for his work rose and nowadays, museums all over the world showcase his work in major solo exhibitions – the Kröller-Müller Museum presented a great retrospective of Arp's work in 2016. In 2019 there will be a solo expedition at the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation in Venice.

Will and Copyright

These days, Würtenberger and Tümpel manage and advise on about ten estates and have bundled their experience and knowledge at the institute. In this three-day workshop in Berlin, lawyers give information about wills, copyright, the tax authority and legal forms. A conservator gives advice on how best to store artwork. Andrea Theil, head of the catalogue raisonné of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation was engaged to share her knowledge and experience. Chris Dercon, former director of the Boijmans Van Beuningen and Tate Modern museums, talks about his love-hate relationships with estates. “As a museum, you sometimes

have to deal with various parties, all wanting to interfere. Children, widows, assistants, lovers: they all pretend to know what the best way will be to present the artist's work in a museum. Don't do that. A curator has to be able to do his own thing.”

You have to distinguish between the artist, his oeuvre and his legacy, Würtenberger confirms. “That means three entities. The artist is not identical to his oeuvre. His work leads its own life as soon as the artist leaves the studio. There are forces in the art world on which you, the artist, have little influence. The same applies to an estate. Sometimes an oeuvre may have been important in the artist's lifetime, but its role appears to be different now. Not only the life of an artist is finite, sometimes his oeuvre is finite too. You have to look into that.”

She remarks that deciding to manage an estate means taking on a lot of responsibility. “You need to ask yourself whether the family is best equipped for such a task. Certainly, just being a member of the family is not enough of a qualification. If one of the functions fulfilled by art is to bring chaos into the order, the opposite is true of estates: you have to ensure that there's overview and structure. An estate can be a big player in the art market. You do not manage something

that big from your living room. You really have to be a manager. This is why you see a number of estates deciding to have a party other than family manage things.” In her book, *The Artist’s Estate*, which was published in 2016, she points out several examples: Richard Calvocoressi, a former museum director, ran the Henry Moore Foundation for ten years and Michael Ward Stout, as good friend of the artist, was made manager of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

Another important factor, according to Würtenberger, is that the children of such artists are often around forty or fifty years old when their father or mother dies. At this age, they have their own lives, their own families and jobs. The parent from whom they have generally taken some distance is suddenly very close again with all their work, history, personal belongings and documents. And artists haven’t always been the best parents. Their concentration on their work was often at the cost of their role as a parent. To put it euphemistically, family didn’t always come first. “This was sometimes difficult for children during their childhood. Now they are confronted anew with emotions from that time. If you decide to enter into this adventure, you have to be involved, otherwise you can’t do the job properly. But you also have to preserve some distance, disconnect from the

parent-child role. You often see that children who handle an estate no longer refer to their father or mother, but call their parents by their names. Rainer Judd, who handles her father’s estate, talks about Donald Judd, not about “my father.”

Complex Family Situation

British brothers Ben (55) and Sacha Bowling (53) refer to their father as Frank. They grew up apart from each other and from their father, each with their own mother, one in London, the other in the Midlands, and they only met as teenagers. This complex family situation didn’t stop them from collaborating with The Institute for Artists’ Estates. They did this because they wanted to handle the situation as well as possible for their father, his oeuvre and the rest of the family, which was not easy at all. “Frank is not the easiest person”, his sons remark laughing.

On the last day of the workshop, the participants share with each other how valuable they found this encounter. “It provides support when you see that other families are dealing with the same issues I am,” says one of them, who prefers not to have her name in an article, due to various legal proceedings she is involved in with regard to theft and forgeries of paintings by her Greek father. Vesta Kroese, daughter

of Ad Kroese: “The meetings and discussions here give you a better overview and insight. It’s all complex and layered. I am at a loss sometimes, but the growing demand for my father’s work over the years gives me courage.”

The Institute for Artists' Estates is based in Berlin and organizes meetings at various locations.,
www.artists-estates.com

Loretta Würtenberger, **The Artist Estate. A Handbook for Artists, Executors, and Heirs** (2016, Hatje Cantz)