

Art World

Wet Paint in the Wild: Maria Bernheim Opens the First Show at Her New Space in Mayfair

The gallerist takes us through a week in her life opening her gallery in Mayfair.

Maria Bernheim, January 13, 2024



Maria Bernheim. Photo by Joe Skilton.

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Welcome to *Wet Paint in the Wild*, the freewheeling—and free!—spinoff of Artnet News Pro's beloved *Wet Paint* gossip column, where we give art-world insiders a disposable camera to chronicle their lives on the circuit. To read the latest *Wet Paint* column, click [here](#) (members only). This week, we welcome Zurich- and London-based gallerist **Maria Bernheim** to the mix...

On November 30, we opened "The Big Chill," the first show at the new gallery in Mayfair. The title is a nod to the camaraderie of 1983 film. This group show was a way to reunite old friends who have been integral to the gallery over the past decade. A gallery is, in so many ways, is a reflection of deep friendships and a thriving community. I tend to think if you can't throw a good party, it's a reflection of the paucity of the program. So many artists, collectors, and curators make up the ecosystem of the gallery. It was a nice excuse to celebrate with them—and we have a lot to celebrate. The addition of a London gallery is a seismic shift for us, even if you think about it just in terms of space (five more floors). We want to make a splash. Dinner, party, after-party.



Here I am with **Ding Shilun**, who has a piece in the group show, and his girlfriend, **Zhao Meng**. I'm grinning for good reason. Ding is one of my anchors in London: He's my first artist based here, and, at 25, the youngest artist in the program overall. He will have the first solo show at the gallery in February, a nice opening salvo for us. I believe in giving ambitious shows to young artists.



The journalist **Dan Thawley** and the artist **Eli Ping**: A new friend and a very dear old friend. I first saw Eli's work in New York years ago, and I knew right away that I was in love. I had no shame about it, I just took him to lunch and put my cards on the table: I had to do a show with him. We've worked together ever since. I met Dan in Puglia this summer. It was an instant connection. We have a shared love of aesthetics, and details, to be honest.



We'd moved on to Chiltern at this point in the night. Here's **Casper Williams**, who works for the London gallery Corvi-Mora, and **Marie Chenal**, the girlfriend of one of my best friends. I like being friends with other gallerists. I don't believe in mindless competition. This is a new endeavor in London, and we're excited to be part of the greater landscape. We got flowers from all our neighbor galleries when we opened, which was very cool.



The artists **Mitchell Anderson** and **Rachel Rossin** met for the first time at the opening. You can see they hit it off. They both had pieces in the show, and I was happy they came out for the opening. Mitchell was my first ever artist, so in a way, he's guided me through making a gallery.



On the left is **Matt Mottahedan**, the father of one of my closest friends from Oxford. Years ago, he asked me, "Why do you want to open a gallery? You're going to get your heart broken on a daily basis." He was right. I like direct questions. Next to him is the artist **Ilana Savdie**. She embodies that vision of "friends & family"—she shows with White Cube but we have built a friendship over the years, based on shared values of art, family, and fashion, I guess. I love her work and really am grateful to be able to count on her and feel that she part of our vision. I hope that this new gallery will also give me the space and flexibility to include more artists like her.



It was great to have so many friends come to London from Switzerland, and have some hometown support. This cross-cultural exchange is certainly part of the "point" of opening another space.

On the left is the artist **Isabelle Cornaro**. I haven't shown with Isabelle, but I like her very much. She's a great artist and a great teacher of artists. She's chatting with **Pierre Orłowski** and **Lionel Bovier**, the director of MAMCO, the museum in Geneva. Lionel is just as blunt as I am.



I like an old-fashioned party with a mix of people. Collectors, advisors, artists, mystery guests. I always like to strike that tone—you're going to meet someone you don't know, someone slightly to the left or right of your field.

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