

An American in Paris: an interview with Gallery Joe at Drawing Now

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Gallery Joe is a gallery from Philadelphia, in the United States, which specializes in contemporary drawing on paper by emerging and mid-career artists. Located in booth B6 at the 2015 edition of Drawing Now at Paris' Carreau du Temple, AMA had the chance to speak to Director Rebecca Kerlin about the event, their chosen artist focus, and what made them travel so far to attend.

How has the fair been so far for your gallery?

It's been wonderful, there's been such a great attendance. We're still working on some things, and we have some good prospects, so we'll be able to know at the end of the fair how financially successful it has been. I'm very happy with the event so far.

Is this your first time at Drawing Now?

This is my second time. Last time I was downstairs, in the emerging section; upstairs there are a lot more people coming through and looking at the booth. It's a different atmosphere up here.

What about the fair brought you all the way from the United States?

Well it's a drawing fair! My gallery only shows drawings and original works on paper, and I'm one of the very few galleries in America to do so. I was very excited when I heard that there was a fair dedicated to drawing.

Why did you decide to specialise in drawing?

I think it stems from my childhood; my father was an architect, and I spent a lot of time looking at his drawings. As I grew older I always liked diagrammatic drawings, and this became my focus. I decided to open a gallery when I was in my 40s; I opened the gallery, and now it's 23 years

old! It took a while to understand the business side of things, but we're well established now.

Do you think participating in the fair is going to make your clientele more international?

Yes, it's exposure I'm looking for. I'm looking to exhibit my artists to a broader audience, and I know that there are a lot of dedicated drawing collectors in Europe, and that they don't often go to the US, so this is a great chance for me to bring the works to them.

How do you go about selecting your artists?

It's often a long process. I will interview them, or they will be someone that I already know of, or someone that someone I respect has suggested to me. The relationship develops over time, it's not something that happens suddenly.

Can you tell us more about the artist you are focussing on in your booth, Nicole Phungrasamee Fein?

Nicole Phungrasamee Fein lives and works in San Francisco. She was born in California, and I've worked with her since she graduated from college. She's 40 years old now, so we've known each other a long time. I've seen her work develop over the years, but she's always worked in a very simple way, with very simple watercolour brushstrokes. The work has really matured, and she is technically extremely proficient. She has always done this kind of work, but it has become richer and more nuanced. I chose her because I felt that she was ready for the exposure that this fair will bring. She is actually present, and is going to be speaking in the booth during the event. She's developing a new body of work using circles; these are relatively new, she's only been creating them for the last year or so. We've had a really good response to her work, and I've handed out over 100 flyers to people who are interested in her pieces. When people realise her work is watercolour, they are so impressed about what she's achieved. It's more than just the technical skill, but the depth of the pieces, which just blows you away.