

Smooth operator

Swiss-born Andreas Siegfried started out as a model. Now based in London, he's one of the smartest fixers on the contemporary art scene. By John Walsh

Photographs by Nick Ballon

In the world of European art collectors, he is, they say, The Man You Need to Know. To the visiting journalist, by contrast, he's The Man Who's Very Hard to Pin Down. He's not a gallerist, though he mounts exhibitions at his home; not exactly a dealer, though he buys and sells works for private clients; not wedded to one style or period of art, though his passions run from 18th-century French furniture to Play-Doh abstracts by Dan Rees. From the impenetrable sheen of his perfect Swiss manners to the musical triptych of his name, Andreas Balthasar Siegfried is an inscrutable chap.

His website describes his company, Siegfried Contemporary, as 'a London-based Art Advisory service'. Whom does he advise? 'It's a mixture,' he says. 'There are people starting from scratch, who say, "We've got a budget. We don't want to spend more than £10,000 per work. Can you come up with ideas?" There are collectors who say, "You're an art adviser. I'm looking for a Warhol – can you get me a single Marilyn?" And often it's people who come here, see my taste and say, "Can you recreate in my house what you've done in yours?" That's it, basically.'

Does he advise collectors on which artists are worth investing in? Siegfried shudders with distaste. 'Some people say, "Can you get me some art that will triple its value in three years?" I say, "No, sorry, I can't help you." Of course I can, but I wouldn't want to, because I think talking about money is »





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vulgar. And I’d hate to be caught if something didn’t go the way I predicted. People who buy art, put it in storage until the fruit is ripe and then throw it into the marketplace, tend not to be my friends.’

Wild bucking mustangs will not draw from Siegfried the identity of the ‘six or seven’ personal advisees for whom he scours exhibitions, art fairs and degree shows across Europe, or the dozens who attend his home exhibitions. But he makes up for this fastidiousness by talking about his artist pals and aristocratic contacts.

The week before we met, he’d flown in from Gstaad, after launching an exhibition of works by his friend Princess Maria von Thurn und Taxis (‘the closest thing to royalty in Germany – she’s adorable, a very talented artist and a lovely person’). The occasion was the launch of *Be Inspired*, a Post-War and Contemporary Art sale at Christie’s sponsored by Children and the Arts, whose patron is Princess Eugenie of York. Siegfried sits on the charity’s Art Committee and masterminded the guest list; the auction featured several works donated by his artist friends, including Gavin Turk, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Martin Creed and the French conceptualist Bernar Venet.

When discussing the importance of a varied portfolio in buying art, Siegfried mentions his friend Lord Cholmondeley of Houghton Hall, Norfolk, the stately home once owned by Sir Robert Walpole. »

Above, from left, Nina Canell, *Heat Hang*, 2007 and Caroline Achaintre, *Ceramic Ball*, 2015.

Left, Siegfried’s living room with Felix Jung & Marc Einsiedel, *Potential Space (London) 6*, 2016 (above fireplace), Barnaby Hosking, *Thoughts on Duality*, 2016 (on wall), and Mathieu Matégot, *Bellevue Coffee Table*, 1950. Previous pages: Siegfried with Cornelia Baltes, *Aerobic*, 2011 (detail, on wall), and Dean Adams, *Salt and Pecker*, 2016 (on table)



Artworks: courtesy Richard Woods Studio; © Gabriel Kuri, courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London; © Anton Alvarez, Anne Roger-Lacan, courtesy the artist and Siegfried Contemporary. Previous pages, artworks: Felix Jung & Marc Einsiedel, courtesy the artist; Barnaby Hosking, courtesy the artist and Cheryl Hazan Gallery; © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2017; Conker stool by Herzog & de Meuron; Max Lamb, *Copper Cup*, 2013, courtesy the artist, available from Johnson Trading Gallery; courtesy of Nina Canelli; © Caroline Achaintre, courtesy of Arcade, London



Above, from left: Gabriel Kuri, *Waiting, Spent, 4*, 2012; Anton Alvarez, *The Thread Wrapping Machine Bench 2*, 2013; Anne Roger-Lacan, *Commission Deyrolle*, 2014. Opposite, the garden with Richard Woods, *Wooden Door (AM)*, 2017

‘David buys super-contemporary stuff as well as Old Masters,’ he says. ‘He’s just opened a show by Richard Long at the hall. He really understands how eclectic works.’

You can see why art lovers covet an introduction to the well-connected Siegfried. His home, redesigned by Camu & Morrison, is an impossibly stylish triplex apartment in a street off London’s Ladbroke Grove. Its furnishings are all artworks, apart from the bed and the bathroom basin. He holds exhibitions here, for friends or ‘emerging’ artists; but even when no exhibition is nigh, the place shouts ‘art gallery’. The living room features an installation of giant matches by the Mexican artist Gabriel Kuri. (‘It’s supposed to be a portrait of the artist,’ murmurs Siegfried.) Complementing it, across the room, is a large canvas whose phosphorus paint surface mimics the side of a matchbox. On the table, a fat, silver ceramic vase is surmounted by a squodge of excremental brown. ‘I got this for a client, but thought it would work perfectly in this house,’ Siegfried explains. ‘At night the flames from the log fire flicker off it.’ It’s all a harmony of incandescence: matches, striker, log fire, flickery dung-vase.

Up his vertiginous spiral staircase, you find a Cibachrome photo by Jeff Wall of a Sicilian grave. Babylonian greenery dangles from elevated pot plants beside some bronze butterflies by Barnaby

Hosking, which become three-dimensional under spotlights. His bedroom features a Rothko-ish colour field photograph by Roe Ethridge (‘In a bedroom, it’s important not to surround yourself with very visual stuff’), while his lavabo displays a striking photograph of a tanned Siegfried lying stark naked under a Pontiac. Downstairs, he shows off a drawing by Richard Serra, a garden with a goldfish pond and a sculpture of a forlorn young spaceman.

This flat is where he held an exhibition of James Franco’s paintings in 2015. Why did the American film star, of *Spider-Man* and *127 Hours* fame, choose Andreas’s showroom? ‘James likes to try out new things all the time – he likes intimate showings of his work, not huge galleries.’ When a collector friend offered Siegfried a chalet near Gstaad to use as an exhibition room, he decided to show the Franco show there, too. (Siegfried and his partner have a home near Gstaad and another in Paris, as well as the London flat.) Franco flew in from LA just for the opening. ‘We had a huge dinner at Balthus’s house,’ says Siegfried. ‘Wim Wenders was among the guests. The evening was written up in magazines, and I practically sold the whole show.’ If you’re wondering, Balthus’s house is the 18th-century Grand Chalet of Rossinière, one of the oldest chalets in Switzerland. And yes, Siegfried knew the great man (real name Balthasar Klossowski de Rola), »



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who died in 2001. ‘He and his wife Setsuko had been friends of mine since I was 22. My partner and I visited him every weekend.’

Andreas Siegfried was born in Zofingen, an old Habsburgian town between Zürich and Basel, in 1967. His father was CEO of the 140-year-old Siegfried pharmaceutical company. Andreas, the youngest of three sons, excelled in school at ‘anything to do with art or creativity’, but was ‘crap at maths. I realised my father wouldn’t push me to be in the family business.’ He studied commerce, but was spotted in the street by a talent scout and urged to take up modelling.

His lustrous green-brown eyes gleam at the memory. ‘I told my father, “I’m not going to finish my studies, because I’ve been discovered as a model and they want me to go to Milan.” He said, “If you do that, a) I will never speak to you any more, b) you will not receive a penny from me, and c) I will have no respect for you for the rest of my life.”’

Andreas hovered over the decision, then dived in, and for three years lived between London, Paris and Milan. It wasn’t all glamour and million-quid photo shoots, however. ‘I discovered that if I wanted to succeed, I’d have to go to lengths I wasn’t prepared to go.’ Such as? ‘Owners of agencies saying, “If you sleep with me, you’ll get that campaign.” But I come from a proper household with a proper education. I was brought up to know what’s good and bad.’ So he finished his commercial studies and graduated. Was his dad mollified? He laughs. ‘We’ve never had a real falling-out, and once I was established at my job, he gave me a lot of respect and love, for which I’m very grateful.’

Siegfried worked briefly for the Swiss art gallery Bruno Bischofberger, and decided he wanted to be part of that world. He moved to London, took art courses for a year, then worked at Christie’s jewellery department, where he bought his first artwork at auction: ‘A little George Condo half-painting of »



Left, Siegfried’s installer Joby Williamson with Anne Roger-Lacan’s *Of things long forgotten*, 2017. Below, Roger-Lacan installing a work. Opposite, Siegfried and Radhika Khimji preparing for the current show, which includes works on paper by Khimji and Roger-Lacan’s crucifixes

Artworks: Radhika Khimji; Anne Roger-Lacan; both courtesy the artist and Siegfried Contemporary, Michael Dean, cope (working title), 2011, courtesy the artist and Herald St, London



Below, Jeff Wall,
*Headstone on an
 ossuary*, 2007, and
 Pierre Paulin, *Elysée*
 floor light, 1970.

Opposite: Jean-Marie
 Appriou, *Nude in the
 Rye*, 2015; Andreas
 Siegfried, photographed
 floor light, 1970.



Artworks: Mathieu Matégot, *Half Moon Coffee Tables*, 1950. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2017; Pierre Paulin, *Elysée lampadaire succette*, 1970. Les archives Paulin. © 2017 Pierre Paulin; © Jeff Wall, courtesy of the artist; Jean-Marie Appriou, courtesy of the artist; Jan Kaps, Cologne and CLEARING New York/Brussels; courtesy of Steven Klein



Don Quixote. It cost £550. Nothing major, but it kind of enchanted me.' He also formed a close friendship with Thomas Ammann, one of Europe's biggest art dealers. 'I did a lot of art trips with him; he brought me into the contemporary art world and opened my eyes.'

Back in London, he established the Christian Louboutin franchise ('It was my own business. I invested my own money in it, and owned the franchise'), but was saved from a lifetime in shoes by meeting Max Wigram and Jay Jopling, for both of whose galleries he worked in sales. Did he get on with Jopling? 'It's extraordinary what he's established,' says Siegfried guardedly, 'turning that little white cube on Duke Street into this massive thing. I enjoyed my time there, but it wasn't for me. I felt like I was in a big bank, and realised I need to be independent to succeed.'

His first consultancy was with 'a client in Zürich I'm close to, a cousin of mine actually, who'd built a huge house and wanted me to advise her about furniture and patterns as well as art. She gave me carte blanche and we started buying things, from very expensive to very inexpensive.' This lucrative first commission established him as the glamorous *consigliere di gusto* he is today. 'I can find a tiny little thing as interesting as a Richter,' he says. 'I sell works from £1,500 to several millions, but there's no real distinction between them for me. The nurturing of the artist, that's what nurtures me in the end. If it's financially rewarding, that's a bonus.' ♦ www.siegfriedcontemporary.com

