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Story

Art on the Ark

By Paddle8

Jonathan Brown, collector, rare book connoisseur, and one of L.A.'s foremost art and design experts, talks about dealing in art.

Tucked away on a quiet street just off Melrose Avenue (a stone's throw from Balenciaga, Design Within Reach and other meccas for the city's aesthetes) behind a signless door lies a sanctuary-like gallery for artists, collectors and design connoisseurs. But, as the discrete name and location imply, an average white-walled exhibition space, it is not.

Jonathan Brown, owner and founder of [LEADAPRON](#), describes the name of his appointment-only gallery as one of "possibility." "If you break the name apart," he explains, "an apron is what kind of connotes a worker or a craftsperson; the people who drive the culture." Brown came up with the title while directing Jean Genet's *The Maids* about 15 years ago, christened his production company with the name and then took the moniker with him when, in the mid 2000s he decided to open a bookstore to share his growing personal collection of rare art, photography and design books.

INTERVIEW

October 7, 2014

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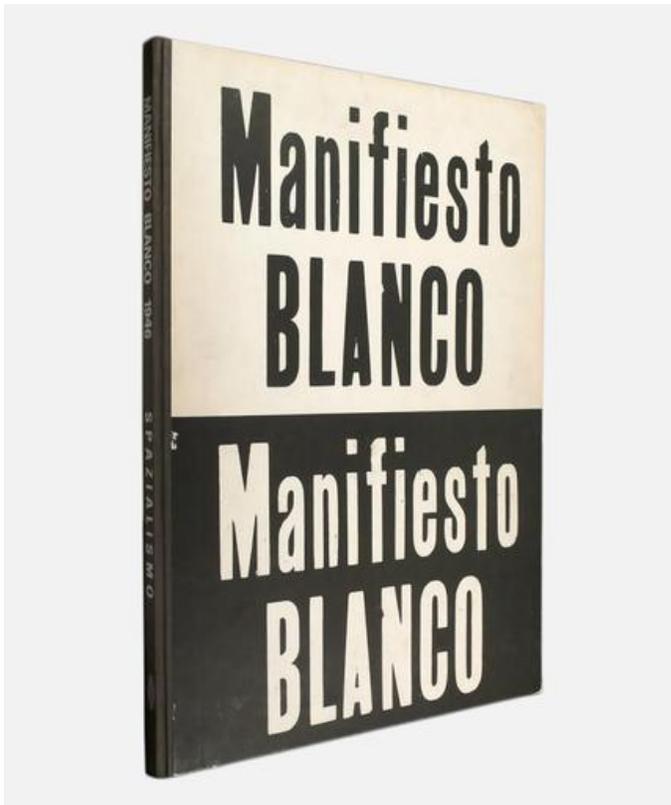
Indeed, the purpose of Brown's former bookshop and current gallery space mirrors that of a production company; of honing in on and circulating cultural artifacts. "It's not 'Jonathan Brown's Gallery' because it's not so much about me," he says of LEADAPRON's mission, "It's about the work, and an agent to carry it safely into the future."



Inside LEADAPRON.

The intriguing spectrum of subjects and objects that fall under Brown's protective stewardship reflect his own multifaceted past: He was a neuroscientist, an architect and theatre director, before evolving into book and art dealer. Brown infuses interests from all fields within his serene space where one encounters everything from Sottsass sculptures to a first edition catalogue raisonne of Jean-Michel Basquiat to sculptural ashtrays to objects once *owned* by Basquiat, all meticulously placed, and occasionally presented

alongside with some of the treasures unearthed during his rare book dealing days.



Lucio Fontana's "Manifiesto

Bianco," as featured in the LEADAPRON auction.

It's these rare, out-of-print art and photography books Brown artfully amassed that first lured artists and collectors to LEADAPRON. One of Brown's first goldmines was the purchase of Ralph Gibson's library, which included signed books by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Larry Clark, and Robert Frank.) Other rare tomes and artist editions by Andree Putman, Pierre Chaveau, Ed Ruscha, Donald Judd, and Lucio Fontana attracted the likes of other art world legends, including photographer Martin Parr. And often, the cultural gems Brown offered up did more than just inspire: one particularly rare series of prints was acquired by a collector only to promptly resurface in one of Richard Prince's painting.

This fluidity between medium and maker, discourse and distribution, created a natural transition for Brown to metamorphosis from book dealer to art dealer. In the last few years, Brown turned away from the original bookstore model to sell more works on paper, paintings and sculpture. He has begun to show exhibitions in the space, a mix of modern and contemporary art, ranging from the specific (Basquiat Polaroids, Robert Adler's burlesque photographs, letters and books from sculptor James Lee Byars) to the salon-style (group shows featuring Richard Artschwager and Lee Bontecou to more.) Viewing his role as to identify things that "are worthy of being protected" and ultimately "placing things safely with collectors," Brown sees the gallery "like a sanctuary or an ark preserving craft and traditions and history."

Constantly reassessing what is in need of preservation, Brown notes he is always in the process of "editing and refining my own personal aesthetic or predilections." Minimal surfaces, abstract art, and color field paintings top his list of interests in the art world of the moment - he's interested, quite simply, he says in beauty.



Ettore Sottsass's

"Footed Bowl," as featured in the LeadApron auction.

This focus is reflected in the auction he's curated exclusively for Paddle8, featuring outstanding art and design works from his personal collection, and will also come into view on October 25th, when he opens a show of work by Andrew Masullo, a midcareer artist whose playful abstractions toy with vivid color, pattern, and rhythm. While the gallery is only open by appointment, the opening will be open to the public: true to the venue, Brown will hold the opening during the daytime. He adds, "I like it to be about the art."

Our LEADAPRON auction, featuring rare works reflective of Brown's collection and curation--including those by Richard Prince, John Chamberlain, Ettore Sottsass, Cy Twombly and more--is open for bidding October 7 to October 15.



Design Line's "Three Cubes," as featured in the LeadApron auction.

Part of the auction



LEADAPRON by Jonathan Brown

Open for bidding through October 15th 2014, 2:00 pm ET

An auction offering an exclusive view into the riveting collection of Jonathan Brown, owner of LEADAPRON, the West Hollywood sanctuary-like gallery for art, design and rare books.

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