



Interviews with the gallery owners & curators that make the artist dream possible

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Quang Bao of 1969 Gallery

Quang Bao is the director and founder of 1969 Gallery, a contemporary gallery with two locations in New York City.



Photo: Pau Atela

How did the launch of 1969 Gallery come about?

I returned from running an artist project space in Berlin in 2016, massively underemployed. People who loved me said that if I opened my own thing, they would support me. That thing could have been a magazine or might have been a store of another kind, possibly one that sells reading lamps. I had never

worked in an art gallery before. I think if I had, I might not have opened 1969. I think a lot of gallerists fall in by accident.

You have two gallery locations and participate in international art fairs, among other community offerings (I believe I noticed some dinner party events?). How do you find the time to oversee so much activity on a regular basis?

“Oversee” is the key word. I try to give autonomy to everyone working behind the desk. Team '69 is a very committed lot. My colleagues bolt up from bed in the middle of the night about things that are or are not being taken care of at the gallery. And

I have zero problem asking for help, especially off-site and at art fairs.

Next year, 1969 will also be doing a couple of book parties and artist talks. We are hosting a benefit for the National Book Foundation and a book party for a collection of writings by Vietnamese American authors.

Regarding the dinner parties - I believe every artist deserves a perfect drink. The gallery dinners are a way to acknowledge and celebrate the creative, personal and collective effort. In the beginning, my boyfriend, my assistant, and I were prepping all the food. Now, we have Benjamin. I also come from a family of drinkers and eaters - It is how I bond with people.

Your gallery seems to focus on works that are emotionally, mentally and visually challenging. What kinds of qualities do you personally feel make visual art most impactful in today's world?

I know it when I feel it. Emotionally, challenging artwork does not necessarily require brain chemistry and language. Images can still be immediately and visually arresting.

What do you love most about running your gallery?

The relationships, and directly experiencing how they deepen or altogether disappear over the course of time. I have this highfalutin sense that the work we do is contributing to culture and a broader contemporary conversation concerning meaning and truth.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

1969 has been in a protracted, intense period of expansion and growth. Publications, participation in more international art fairs, year-round exhibitions and programs for the main gallery and project space, residencies for our artists. The administrative pile-up is unbelievable, shipping absolutely sucks and nothing in the work load ever repeats - no two PDFs, installation designs, artworks and exhibitions are ever the same. Like other galleries our age, we need more staff.

Do you have plans for 1969 Gallery beyond what it is today?

One word: Barcelona

<http://www.1969gallery.com/>
