

From commodity trader to museum founder.

Gudrun and Robert Ketterer in conversation with the Anglo-American collector Andy Hall.

Andy Hall and his wife Christine are internationally renowned art collectors. In 2007, they founded The Hall Art Foundation to present the 5,000 plus works of postwar and contemporary art in their collection to the public at their museum spaces in Derneburg, near Hildesheim, Germany – the former home and atelier of Georg Baselitz – and at a converted dairy farm in Reading, Vermont, USA. The Foundation also exhibits works by Anselm Kiefer at the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Massachusetts.

Robert Ketterer (RK): In 2019, the Financial Times called you the “most successful oil trader of your generation”. Five years later, it seems that you have also become the most successful founder of contemporary art museums in your generation...

Andy Hall: I never knew there was a competition for such a title (laughs). Christine and I have seen and enjoyed many great museums created by private art collectors. What makes ours unique is that we follow less explored avenues. We present world-famous artists such as Warhol and Kiefer but we also showcase artists you may not have seen before or at least not in the depth that we show them. Also, we consider the combination of our art, with interesting architecture and a pleasing environment as an integrated art experience for which there is a great German word: “Gesamtkunstwerk”. One of these is Schloss Derneburg with its historic buildings, a beautiful park and its attractive surroundings in Lower Saxony. It has become the centrepiece of our Foundation.

RK: How did your passion for collecting art begin?

Hall: Christine and I have known each other since high school. We have always been interested in art. One of our first dates was at the Tate Gallery. But it wasn't until my late twenties that a French language teacher in Paris first introduced me to the idea of buying art. I found this a novel idea but started to acquire a few things, yet my main focus back then was my career.

Gudrun Ketterer (GK): What was your first acquisition?

Hall: Our first serious art purchase was some 40 years ago. We had moved to America. I'd made some money and our daughter had just been born. We felt this was an occasion to buy something special. We went to the auction houses...

RK: ...I like your story already (laughs)...

Hall: We felt more comfortable dealing with an auction house. It was anonymous, and you didn't have to interact with gallery people who aren't always helpful. Anyway, we ended up buying a major work by Joan Mitchell.



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GK: Buying early is the thing to do... was this the start of the collection?

Hall: Not really. We continued to buy the odd thing at auction but it wasn't yet a passion. My focus was my job and making money. It's what Americans do. However, when I turned 50, and with the horrors of 9/11 in mind, Christine told me I should do something with all this money I had earned. She also introduced me to Paul Kasmin, the New York gallerist. Talking to Paul, I realized that buying art was not a frivolous consumption of money and I went from being a very casual collector to being quite obsessive about it.

RK: What was driving you when you were buying art? Was there an idea? A vision?

Hall: From that point on we were collecting with the idea of presenting the art to other people, not simply decorating our homes. The inspiration for this came from having seen Charles Saatchi's Boundary Road museum in North London back in the '80s. He put on the most exquisite exhibitions – all from his collection. It was world-class and a model for us to follow.

GK: Your collection is a team-effort with your wife?

Hall: Yes, we are very complementary. Christine tends to be more cautious, whereas I am impulsive. Yet sometimes when I hesitate, she will encourage me to take the plunge. Recently I've been trying not to buy anything but then some fantastic 15th century altar panels by the Master of Hildesheim came up in auction and Christine said, "I think you've got to buy those."

RK: How did your collecting develop over time?

Hall: In the '80s, Charles Saatchi introduced England (and us) to a number of new American artists: Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Eric Fischl, Malcolm Morley. Also German artists like Baselitz, Penck, Kiefer – to name just a few. And it's many of these same artists that we have been collecting

aggressively over the past 20 years. In a way we were lucky since many of them had fallen out of favor and we could acquire great works at reasonable prices.

GK: Isn't it unusual to collect American and German art together?

Hall: Many American collectors appreciate and collect German art. By the way, I think Saatchi had been influenced by the seminal exhibition "A New Spirit of Painting" at the Royal Academy in London and "Zeitgeist" in the Gropius Bau in Berlin - both curated by Norman Rosenthal who has since become a good friend. Norman's catalogue became my bible after David Nolan, the New York gallerist, drew my attention to it.

RK: Are you still mostly buying from auction houses?

Hall: We still buy regularly at auction but also from galleries although I still find the arrogance of some dealers rather off-putting.

RK: Art acquisition must be a pleasure for the customer. Nobody needs to buy or sell at a certain place. We must earn the business by making each and every deal a positive experience. What is your advice to young or new collectors?

Hall: I actually do believe a novice collector is better served at an auction house than anywhere else. Simply browsing an auction catalogue can be fun. They are full of surprises and can provide a great overview of the market. You can often find great bargains at auction. Also, when you buy in an auction it means there is a real market for the artist and you can resell if you want to at some point in the future. That's often not the case when you buy a primary market work. Incidentally, we were very pleased with the iconic Richard Serra sculpture we bought recently at Ketterer Kunst.

RK: Let's talk about Derneburg. Why and how did this come about? It's not an obvious choice for an American or English collector.



Gudrun and Robert Ketterer in a conversation with Andy Hall

“Many American collectors appreciate and collect German art.”

Hall: Let me be clear: we didn't come to Germany with the intention of buying a castle (laughs) or building a museum. But we love expressionist paintings and were collecting Immendorff, Penck, Kiefer, Baselitz and other German artists. So we went to see Georg Baselitz because not only was he a great artist but also, he had a large collection of these same artists. Georg and his wife Elke invited us back several times and we really grew to like Derneburg. Then, at some point, Georg offered to sell us his collection of German art. We bought it. Then he offered to sell us Derneburg so we would have a place to show these works. And we said: Why not?

RK: A spontaneous but somewhat logical decision on your side...

Hall: Yes, but we had also become quite fond of Derneburg by then. We already had a place in Berlin which we had bought a few years earlier. We like Germany, in particular the informality. And we are originally from Europe and like

being here. Had we bought a stately home in England, however, we would have been the "nouveau riche" and all the rest of it. It would have never been the same as here where we can be anonymous, and people accept us as we are. Remember, we left England because it was a class ridden country and it still is.

GK: Now you have learned to speak some German and you must face many challenges as the owners of a German Schloss that is operated as a museum. How do you manage that?

Hall: We were lucky to have friends who helped us – we don't live here full time. A major challenge was that Germany is a very bureaucratic...

RK: ...that's new to me (laughs)...

Hall: ...bureaucracy is a problem everywhere. Germany, however, offers some unique ones: Monument Protection and



Gudrun and Robert Ketterer with Andy and Christine Hall at Derneburg Castle

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Cultural Heritage Protection (Denkmalschutz und Kulturgutschutz) in particular, which have unrealistic demands and illogical restrictions. But here is a funny thing: we were recently awarded the German National Prize for Denkmalschutz. Who would have thought? Our approach is to try to respect the rules but not be stopped by them – and it seems to work.

RK: Over the last few years you expanded the property at Schloss Derneburg

Hall: Indeed, we acquired and are renovating some neighboring properties. Derneburg will be one of the largest museums in Europe as well as a home for us. And it continues. We hope to announce another significant acquisition soon. We now plan our exhibitions years in advance. I used to laugh when our museum friends told me about their

planning schedules. But even with all the exhibition space we have and plan to have and even with a constantly changing exhibition program, I now realize it may not be possible to show everything in the collection in my lifetime.

RK: What are some of your current plans here?

Hall: Over the next year we are adding another 20 sculptures to those already in the park. We are going to bring our Andy Warhol collection to Derneburg. It will be one of the biggest collection of Warhols in Europe. We plan to make a gallery devoted to the works of Anselm Kiefer which will complement the one we already have in Massachusetts. The Baselitz atelier will continue to show his works with changing shows curated from our collection of more than 400 works.

GK: Do you work with other museums?

Hall: Yes. A Kiefer show we did in Derneburg will now go to the Ashmolean museum in Oxford and the Susan Rothenberg show we had here last year is going to another museum in Europe. We will be lending more than a dozen works to different museums in Berlin in 2024 and we have some ongoing collaborations with museums here in Lower Saxony.

GK: How would you describe your museum in Vermont?

Hall: It has the same mission and concept as Derneburg but is smaller in scale. Lots of shows are presented both here and in Vermont.

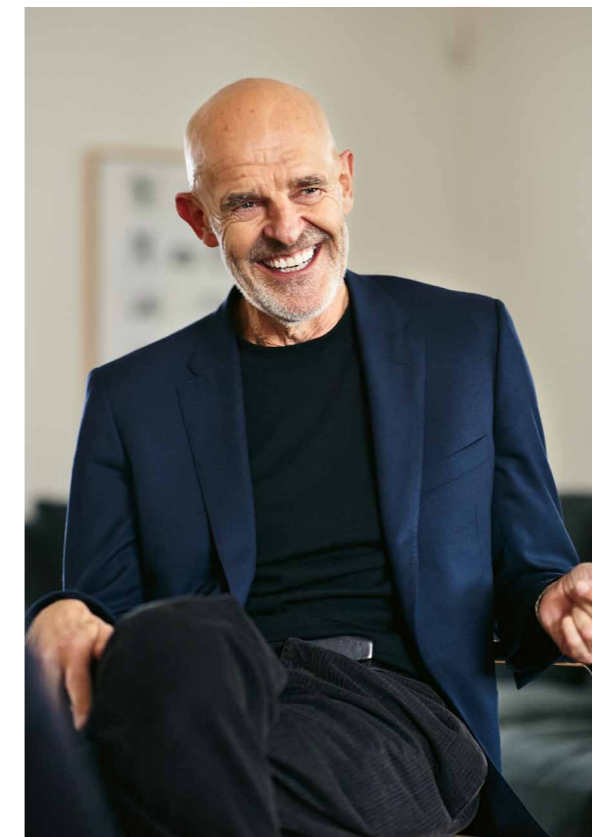
RK: How are museums reacting to you as a private collector?

Hall: I think we generally have good relations with them. I did come across one German director who was a bit frosty and told me that art belongs in public museums, not in the hands of private collectors. The director wasn't joking. I said she must be a communist and she said she was.

RK: What's going to happen when you are no longer around? What will be the future of your foundation?

Hall: We want the Hall Art Foundation to survive us! The Foundation will have the necessary means. Although we are still working on the long-term governance structure, we already have a plan in place that can immediately be implemented. Our daughter-in-law is already the director of the Hall Art Foundation and we have a very strong team running things here in Germany. We sometimes meet collectors, even older than ourselves, who haven't thought about the future of their collections. I don't understand that – no one is immortal. We owe it to the artists to plan for the future of their work.

RK: Thank you very much, Andy. We were very pleased to be your guests. And also the guided tour personally with you and your wife Christine through your impressive collection was a wonderful experience



Andy Hall

Andy Hall is one of the world's leading collectors of contemporary art. He made his career in the energy and commodities industry: first at British Petroleum (BP) in London and New York, then as CEO of Phibro Energy and head of his own hedge fund, Astenbeck Capital. Hall, born in England in 1951, graduated from Oxford University in 1973 with a degree in chemistry and from INSEAD with an MBA in 1980.

Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg is one of the largest privately owned public museums for contemporary art in Europe. It presents exhibitions for the enjoyment of the public in a unique and historic setting.

Tickets for Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg and Sculpture Park are available online: hallartfoundation.org