

On View

Lévy Gorvy Demonstrates Art World Clout at Inaugural New York Exhibition

The first show at the gallery features Willem de Kooning and Zao Wou-Ki.

Henri Neuendorf, January 20, 2017

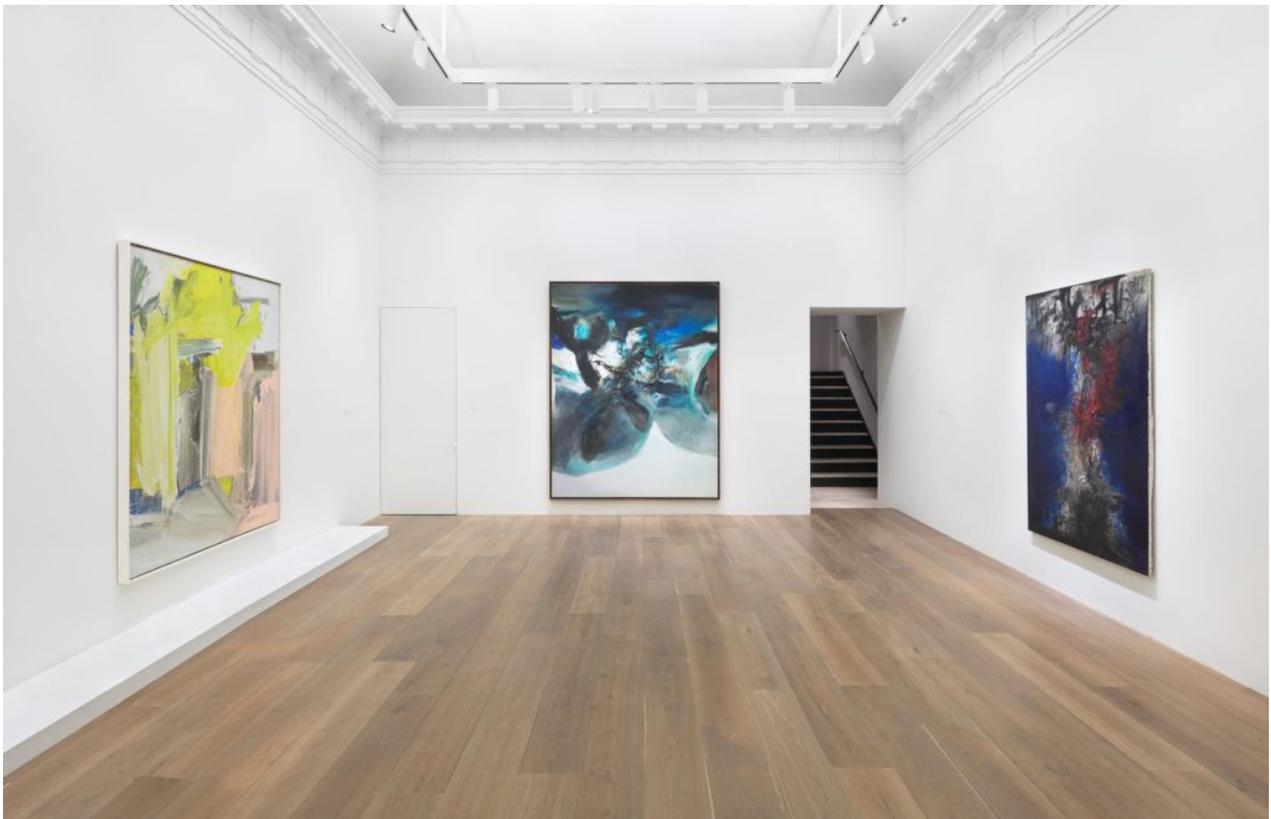


Brett Gorvy and Dominique Lévy of Lévy Gorvy. Photo Chad Batka, courtesy of Lévy Gorvy.

A little over a month after the formation of what is predicted to be one of the most formidable art dealer duos, longtime dealer Dominique Lévy and 23-year Christie's veteran Brett Gorvy inaugurated their fledgling partnership with a two-person exhibition featuring works by Willem de Kooning and Zao Wou-Ki.

Lévy and Gorvy flexed their muscles in a demonstration of their combined art world clout with a high-profile show that featured a number of key museum loans installed in the impressive uptown bank building that underwent slight modification since the pair took over the entire 9,000-square-foot space in early January.

Speaking to artnet News at the press preview on Tuesday, the delighted Gorvy revealed that Lévy first floated the idea of a partnership five years ago, a suggestion he declined because of the lively auction market. But Lévy persisted.



Installation view "Willem De Kooning | Zao Wou-Ki" at Levy Gorvy, New York. Photo: courtesy of Levy Gorvy, New York.

Describing his new business partner as "very persuasive," Gorvy went on to explain that Lévy approached him in a renewed attempt to join forces last summer—this time with the opportunity to take over the entire building at 909 Madison Avenue as a bargaining chip. Lévy won him over, and the pair finalized their plans during their summer holiday in Italy.

“I felt the time was right to enter the gallery because I grew tired of the constant competitiveness of the auction market,” Gorvy said. “The real positive aspect of the art market is the creativity of creating exhibitions.”



Installation view “Willem De Kooning | Zao Wou-Ki” at Levy Gorvy, New York. Photo: courtesy of Levy Gorvy, New York.

Describing the two modern abstract artists, who shared a similar vision despite their starkly different upbringings, Lévy said, “It doesn’t pretend to be art historical and create bridges and links—these two men never met—but it’s very much the desire of creating a conversation and a dialogue.” She continued, “One lived the tradition of Dutch art, very heavy, traditional upbringing and comes to America, the other lived centuries and centuries of Chinese art and comes to Europe and both of them break free of any tradition and dwell into the power of abstraction.”

Counterintuitively, perhaps, the two artists work rather well shown side by side, thanks largely to the strong curatorial vision of senior director Emilio Steinberger, whom Lévy credited as the driving force behind the ambitious project in her opening remarks. Steinberger emphasized the role of both artists in developing “their own languages and vocabulary that still resonate today.”

In an additional coup—albeit a somewhat puzzling one—the former French prime minister Dominique de Villepin was in attendance at the press preview. De Villepin delivered a rousing speech for the assembled members of the press. “We need to believe that art is alive,” he said, “and that art can change the world, and to hope. We need the believers.”

Speaking privately to artnet News after his passionate address, the former prime minister spoke of his love of art, and his close friendship with Zao, revealing that he wrote an essay on the artist for the exhibition catalogue.



Installation view “Willem De Kooning | Zao Wou-Ki” at Levy Gorvy, New York. Photo: courtesy of Levy Gorvy, New York.

Starting a new era with a museum-quality exhibition shows a powerful statement of intent from Lévy and Gorvy. The exhibition emphasizes how these two influential painters continue to shape the artistic dialogue today, each in their own way. This was reinforced by the inclusion of de Villepin, who so eloquently illustrated the importance of art in society, a message that resonates now more than ever.

“WILLEM DE KOONING | ZAO WOU-KI” runs through March 11 at Lévy Gorvy, New York.