

ART HOUSE

Words by TIM TEEMAN

Photography by CHRISTOPHER STURMAN

Gallery owner Dominique Lévy loves ceramics so much she has taken up pottery. At her New York apartment she has 11 self-made objects; the bowl she is most proud of reproduces the area between the neck and the shoulder. These objects sit alongside a much-cherished collection by well-known ceramicists, such as the complex vessels of Beate Kuhn.

"They are sculptures to me," says Lévy. "Kuhn pushed what you can do with ceramics. It is a very noble art, and one that I feel is still under-appreciated. Kuhn (who died, aged 88, in 2015) pushed boundaries, and was one of few women doing so. The tradition is one of mostly men. She is one of our greatest artists." Alongside Kuhn's work in Lévy's dining room, such as *Löffelobjekt* (pictured, to left of image), are bowls by French artist Alain Vernis (pictured, right). "I love his work because it keeps every imperfection and hole." The apartment is full of visual art too, including works by John Baldessari, Cindy Sherman, and Christopher Wool. "My home is a journey into things I love: photography, paintings, ceramics, and furniture," says Lévy. "I've been a collector for almost 40 years, and it's not about financial value."

"Glazing fascinates me," she says of her ceramics. "It's the moment you surrender control. It's where the magic happens." Some of the ceramics in her home she uses for putting flowers in or eating from; others are for display. All of them face the constant peril of her 17-year-old son's Samuel's football, which has claimed the odd ceramic victim.

Lévy is 52, and was born in Lausanne, Switzerland. She began her career with an internship at Christie's, then moved to Sotheby's, working under Simon de Pury. Appointed by François Pinault, she then returned to Christie's, where she founded and headed up the private sales department, before leaving to set up her own company advising collectors. "There's a twinkle in his eye when he looks at art," Lévy says of Pinault. "Art tickles his imagination. I think he's one of the most interesting and courageous collectors I've ever met."

Lévy formed her own gallery in 2012. Her business partner Brett Gorvy – formerly chairman and international head of post-war and contemporary art at Christie's – joined her in 2017 to form Lévy Gorvy, which now has branches in London and New York. The gallery represents artists including Frank Stella, Enrico Castellani, Chung Sang-Hwa, and Seung-taek Lee, as well as the estate of Yves Klein. In terms of sales, Lévy Gorvy focuses on a roster of high-profile names, including Andy Warhol, Pablo Picasso, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Roy Lichtenstein.

Is there a tension between loving art and selling it for large sums? "It's a tough business that has beauty and ugliness because there are large amounts of money involved," says Lévy. "It's still romantic, and Brett and I are in this business because we love art, and because we feel an enormous sense of responsibility – not just to the artist but to the creative process, to art. Love is really the core value of our business."

To unwind, Lévy loves traveling to Greece ("I have a passion for Greek philosophy and archaeology"), and she has a clear plan for a life after art. "When the time is right," she laughs, "I'll be a potter in the Cyclades Islands."

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