

The Pseudo-Solo Librarian:

An Art Gallery Librarian in a Global Gallery System

Arielle Cohen, Librarian and Researcher

Gagosian Gallery

Solo Problem Solvers: Finding a Voice and Building Resources as a
Solo Professional

ARLIS/NA 46th Annual Conference

February 27, 2018

Gagosian Gallery

- Est. 1980
 - Started in LA and expanded all over the globe
- 17 galleries worldwide, with the flagship on the upper east side of New York City
- In addition to selling art, the gallery:
 - represents or works closely with artists and artist estates
 - Curates exhibitions
 - Publishes exhibition catalogs



The Library – an origin story



- ▣ Collection originally grew organically
 - ▣ No oversight or planning
- ▣ Majority of the collection is located in New York City
- ▣ First librarian (and MLS holder) only hired in 2011
 - ▣ Subsequently followed by two more in 2013 and 2014

3 Librarians, 4 Libraries, 17 Locations

- All three librarians do double duty
 - Librarian and Press Archivist
 - Librarian and Image Archivist
 - Librarian and Provenance Researcher
- Each of us is responsible for:
 - acquiring and cataloging titles for our particular location
 - Weeding the collection as needed
 - Reference
 - Training

Reference

- Each librarian handles requests for all staff at their particular gallery location
 - Tasks consist of anything from finding a book to tracking down the correct dates or titles of artworks
 - I also conduct more in-depth research—Provenance Sheets and Research Documents
- Librarians also help staff from around the world
 - Utilize email and instant messaging, as well as phone
 - Have to contend with time zones, timelines, and Gallery culture

Trans-Atlantic Training



- ❑ Not all libraries within the gallery system have a librarian, ie: London
- ❑ Cataloging of the collection done by interns
 - ❑ Trained via screen sharing
 - ❑ Work reviewed in New York

Closing Thoughts

- Librarians in the for-profit gallery world are still a relatively rare phenomenon, so those of us who do hold such a position must:
 - Constantly advocate for ourselves and our counterparts or risk being overwhelmed with work
 - Manage expectations
- The gallery librarian must still provide quality service — Our job hasn't changed, just the needs of our patrons

THANK YOU!