



Stand view Design Miami/ Basel, 2018

Timeless Antiquities

Art dealer and advisor, Elliot Davies, discusses taste, the art of standing out and how to begin collecting with *Ollivier* and *Gladys Chenel*.

Galerie Chenel are one of the world's leading dealers in Ancient sculpture. They are known as much for the ambition and elegance of their exhibition stands, as for the quality of their inventory.

Elliot Davis: First, can you give us a brief history of Galerie Chenel? Who is involved, where and when did you start?

Ollivier Chenel: The gallery is a family business, started by my father, Alain, 50 years ago in Nice, in the south of France. Twenty years ago my wife, Gladys, and I, settled in Paris and opened our first Parisian gallery with a predilection for antiquities. My brother Adrian joined us five years later to help with our new premises, which was situated on the rue de Beaune. We then decided to focus on dealing in antiquities, particularly ancient sculpture and in 2009, we had our first gallery show that was solely devoted to antiquities called "The Art of Drapery."

It was a success and since then we have organized an annual exhibition at our gallery with a special catalogue. In 2012 we moved to our present location, a larger space on the quai Voltaire, opposite the Louvre.

ED: What period of antiquities do you specialize in?

OC: We specialize in Roman and Greek sculpture, but also sometimes Egyptian works—when we find a good one. The antiquities world is very broad and we quickly realized that to become leading experts in our particular field, we had to specialize and focus on what we really had a strong passion and appreciation for, which in our case was sculpture.

ED: Beyond this, are there any works, objects or furniture from other periods that you think work particularly well with antiquities?



Stand view Masterpiece Art Fair London, 2017
All images courtesy Galerie Cheneil, Paris

OC: Antiquities are timeless, so they actually work with objects or furniture from any period, but we find that the purity of ancient sculpture compliments and interacts particularly well with contemporary works.

ED: Do you collect anything personally?

OC: Yes we have been dealers at heart since childhood so how could we not collect? Gladys and I tend to collect modern photography, along with some antiquities, while Adrian is more interested in design furniture.

ED: Where would you say is the best place to shop for decorative antiques in Paris? Any recommendations?

OC: The left bank, especially the Carré Rive Gauche as it consists of hundreds of different galleries, specializing in various fields. And also Marché aux Puces in Saint Ouen at the weekend.

ED: What art fairs do you currently exhibit at?

OC: We are now focusing on the four international fairs: TEFAF, Maastricht in March, Masterpiece and Frieze Masters in London, in June and October and finally TEFAF, New York at the end of October.

ED: How would you describe your approach to planning and designing your much-lauded booths or stands at these fairs?

Gladys Cheneil: First, it depends on the fair because they all have a different crowd. After the selection of pieces, we try to design something new every time, but we believe it is important for us to be recognizable and to retain our identity. We try to add a touch of design furniture, to reflect our belief that ancient sculptures are to be lived with. Some will go to museums of course, but most will be for the pleasure of the collector.

ED: Of all your past exhibition stands, which have been your favorite or most successful?

GC: I am quite proud of the stand we made at Masterpiece two years ago. It was a good mix between a Pompeian room and a modern gallery. I really like color but we usually find that presenting our objects against a subdued, monochrome palette creates calm and an elegant atmosphere.

ED: Tell us about your most recent collaboration?

GC: We have collaborated with many different people on a great number of projects over the years, including designers, decorators and magazines. Most recently we collaborated with Oscar Humphries, a brilliant curator who had a great idea that some Roman sculptures could be considered as design too. So, for Design Miami/ Basel last year, we created an ambitious show together, which was inspired by Rudolf Stingel's installations of walls covered in silver metallic Celotex insulation board. We then carved examples of roman graffiti we found at Pompeii into the Celotex. It surprised a lot of visitors and was a great success for us.

ED: Are there any historic or contemporary antiquities collections that you find particularly interesting or inspirational?

GC: Without naming them of course, some of our clients have truly inspirational taste. In general, those personal collections were built over an entire lifetime with a mix of objects from the ancient world and encompassing different fields. The English collections created during the 18th and 19th centuries in the period of the Grand Tour are real treasure too. Visits to those incredible castles and country houses filled with classical sculptures had a real influence on us.

ED: Do you have any advice for those who are new to this field and would like to start collecting?

OC: Buy first with your heart and be careful about provenance.

ED: Can you reveal a hidden gem that people should visit when they are next in Paris?

GC: Musée Rodin is for us a must see in Paris. The atmosphere of the whole place and the garden is absolutely stunning, combined with the fact that Rodin's sculptures are displayed alongside his own private collection of antiquities.