

ART WORLD

17 Disruptors Who Have Completely Changed the Art World

Brian Boucher, Monday, August 3, 2015



Maxime Germain, Artlist head of product; Astrid de Maismont, head of sales; Kenneth Schlenker, CEO.

Photo courtesy Artlist.

Who has created the art world as we know it in recent years? And who may be doing so now?

The concept of "disruption" got its start in Clayton Christensen's 2011 book *The Innovator's Dilemma: The Revolutionary Book that will Change the Way You Do Business*.

It's also been reduced to a buzzword. In the past few years, it seems like every startup hopes to disrupt something or other. The word has even been used to

promote a good old-fashioned wooden cuckoo clock, said a *New York* magazine writer in a desperate appeal to stop using the word altogether.

Still, we think it's a useful concept for thinking through who has helped to create the art world we live in today. We at artnet News put our heads together, polled some art-world veterans for suggestions, and assembled this admittedly subjective, non-comprehensive list of colleagues who have changed the shape of the American art world.



Andrew Edlin and Valérie Rousseau.

Photo: Patrick McMullan.

11. and 12. Andrew Edlin and Valérie Rousseau, Outsider Art Power Couple

Philadelphia Outsider Art dealer John Ollmann recalls that “Back in 1970, when we first started showing this material seriously, we couldn't buy attention, good or bad. It was simply ignored. Now ‘suddenly’ people are discovering Bill Traylor, James Castle William Edmondson, Henry Darger, and Martin Ramirez.” New York dealer Andrew Edlin didn't create the wave of interest in Outsider Art, which has even seen many untrained practitioners showcased in “The

Encyclopedic Palace," the main exhibition at the 2013 Venice Biennale, but he's proven adept at riding it. It started with a family connection: Edlin's uncle Paul was an untrained artist, and he was his nephew's first client.

Now Edlin runs a storefront gallery in Chelsea (soon moving to the Lower East Side) and owns the Outsider Art Fair, which he bought in 2012 and then expanded to Paris in 2013. Dealers credit him with markedly professionalizing the fair.

His wife, meanwhile, is Valérie Rousseau, who is organizing attention-getting shows like a Bill Traylor exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum (AFAM), where she was hired as curator of 20th-century and contemporary art in 2013. If ever a museum needed new life, it's the AFAM, which lost its Tod Williams and Billie Tsien–designed home on West 53rd Street in 2011 and then saw it razed by the Museum of Modern Art, which bought it. It is evident that there is new energy at the museum, where the board has rallied.