

R AND A

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Gagosian, Berggruen to open galleries across from SFMOMA

By Sam Whiting



Photo: Lea Suzuki Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Image 1 of 6 (slideshow)

John and Gretchen Berggruen look over a drawing on a mirror at the site of their new art gallery in SoMa.

In a major move, prominent modern art dealers Larry Gagosian and John Berggruen are opening galleries side by side in old brick buildings across the street from the new Howard Street entrance to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Gagosian, an international name in modern and contemporary art, confirmed by phone that he has leased the storefront of Crown Point Press. Berggruen will take over a vacant space at the corner of Howard and Hawthorne streets, and will close his flagship gallery on Grant Avenue, which has anchored the downtown art district for 45 years.

The news comes at a time when the longtime art map of San Francisco is undergoing significant changes, with this month's opening of the Minnesota Street Project gallery space in the

Dogpatch neighborhood and the May reopening of the expanded and renovated San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

“This makes sense with the new museum opening and with the emerging collector base in Silicon Valley,” said Gagosian, who will open Gagosian Gallery San Francisco on May 18, with a show of works on paper and sculpture by the likes of Cy Twombly, Richard Serra, Jasper Johns and Pablo Picasso.

Gagosian said he had been shopping the San Francisco real estate market casually, but when 4,000 square feet on the ground floor of a building across from SFMOMA became available, he jumped at it.

Built in 1922, the two-story building at 657 Howard Street was originally the home of the San Francisco News, a broadsheet that later merged with the Call-Bulletin. When Crown Point Press, a specialist in etchings, purchased the building in the late 1980s, the ground floor space was its own gallery. More recently, the space was the dining room and kitchen for the upscale restaurant Hawthorne Lane, which closed in 2010.

Old pals new neighbors

“If I didn’t find the right space, I wouldn’t have done it. I wasn’t going to force it,” Gagosian said. “But San Francisco has always been a great city for art collectors.”

Gagosian has a long relationship with Crown Point Press, and his lease is open-ended. When word leaked out that he’d taken the space, he got a congratulatory call from his old friend Berggruen, who told Gagosian he is moving into the space next door. The Crown Point building is L-shaped and wraps around a smaller building at 651 Howard, which will be Berggruen Gallery.

“I want a change of scenery and I want to be reinvigorated in terms of my surroundings,” said Berggruen. “The idea of being South of Market is intriguing, and you cannot underestimate the importance of what SFMOMA is embarking upon and what it is bringing to the Bay Area, nationally and internationally.”

October opening

Berggruen has taken a 10-year lease on the entire building, two stories and a basement, for a total of 10,000 square feet. The gallery will be on the two upper floors, as it has been at 228 Grant, in approximately 8,000 square feet. After a major build-out, Berggruen Gallery will open in October, with its entrance shifted from 651 Howard around the corner to 10 Hawthorne St.

“The two galleries establish a small but significant critical mass,” Berggruen said.

It is also confirmation that “everybody wants to be on the ground level in terms of educating and making art collectors of the growing tech community that is in San Francisco and Silicon Valley,” said Catharine Clark, whose namesake gallery has made three moves, from 49 Geary to SoMa to the new DoReMi arts district, which encompasses Dogpatch, the Mission and Potrero Hill.

It is all heading south, although, according to Gagosian, the destination is far beyond Silicon Valley.

“With L.A., it has almost become one corridor,” said Gagosian, a UCLA graduate who opened his first gallery in Los Angeles in 1980. Five years later, he opened his first New York gallery, in Chelsea. Gagosian is now a brand, with 15 exhibition spaces spread among New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Rome, Athens, Geneva and Hong Kong.

To be independently curated

Gagosian Gallery San Francisco, or GGSF, as it is called, will be under the direction of Anna Gavazzi Asseily, who is transferring from Gagosian London. Shows at GGSF will be curated independently of work at other Gagosian outposts and will not correspond to exhibitions at SFMOMA. The gallery space was designed by Kulapat Yantrasast, who also is designing the expansion of the Asian Art Museum.

Gagosian said he planned his opening to be a few days after the grand reopening of the remodeled and enlarged museum, scheduled for May 14.

“Our intention is to not steal anybody’s thunder,” he said.

SLIDESHOW IMAGES



Photo: Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

Image 2 of 6

A rendering of the new Gagosian Gallery San Francisco.



Photo: Gagosian GALLERY

Image 3 of 6

Storefront of the new Gagosian Gallery San Francisco at the historic Crown Point Press Building on Howard Street.



Photo: Lea Suzuki Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Image 4 of 6

John Berggruen (l to r) and Gretchen Berggruen talk at the site of where their new gallery will be moved after it is renovated on Thursday, March 10, 2016 in San Francisco, California.



Photo: Lea Suzuki Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Image 5 of 6

John Berggruen (l to r) and Gretchen Berggruen stand outside the site of where their new gallery will be moved after it is renovated on Thursday, March 10, 2016 in San Francisco, California.



Photo: Lea Suzuki Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Image 6 of 6

John Berggruen (right) and Gretchen Berggruen (left) stand for a portrait at the site of where their new gallery will be moved after it is renovated on Thursday, March 10, 2016 in San Francisco, California.