

STARK REALITY

Irina Stark, the new director of the David Kordansky Gallery, ecstatically adopts Los Angeles as her new home.

By Abigail Stone // Portrait by Dylan + Jeni

Though she's still getting her bearings, recent L.A. transplant Irina Stark is already in love with the city. So it's not surprising to her that the art market is following suit and shifting its center westward. "Even on my first trip to L.A., I remember [thinking] that while the city did not tick [all of] the boxes of what I'm used to, it felt like home." Another appealing quality? Los Angeles' proximity to Asia. "It's definitely helping the art scene here to grow," she says, explaining that, with L.A. being an easier stop than New York, many of her Asian clients have second homes here. "[The NYC galleries] have been overexposed. L.A. is about discovering what's new."

The peripatetic Stark, who spends as much time on a plane as she does exploring her new environs, traveling worldwide for art fairs, meeting with collectors and visiting artists' studios, is well-prepared for the global aspects of her work. "This is the reality of the dealer; you have to be everywhere at the same time," she says. Born in Russia, Stark grew up in Asia attending French schools, then spent time in Paris before moving to London to work with the Pilar Corrias gallery. But, "London never felt like it should have," she says. During a business trip to L.A. in 2011, she found herself enchanted. "Everything was exciting. It's the sense of being inspired, which I never experienced in London." So when Kordansky offered Stark the chance to join the team at his esteemed gallery in Mid-Wilshire (davidkordanskygallery.com), she jumped at the opportunity.

Given her passion for contemporary art—on Kordansky's roster, she's currently excited by Tala Madani, who'll be at Frieze New York in May; Betty Woodman, whose work appeared at Art Basel Hong Kong in March; and Anthony Pearson and Jennifer Guidi, who both have shows at the gallery in July and September—it's perhaps inevitable that she ended up on this side of the ocean. "Contemporary art starts from 1940s, the 1950s, so that's really America," she explains. "There's no baggage of history [here]; you can live your experience, do what you want to do and build [your own] experiences and history," she says. "You can be part of now—it's a blank canvas."

That sense of freedom alongside a phenomenal use of color are what she feels distinguishes L.A. artists. "Color, light and space," she says. "[The incredible natural light] really sets artists who have been working here apart."



STARK'S HOTS

Marfa, Texas; Cartier Love bracelets; the palm trees in L.A.

STARK'S NOTS

Regrets for not following your heart; animal cruelty; copycats

David Kordansky Gallery's new director, Irina Stark, stands beside "Regrouping" (2016) by Jon Pestoni.