

# Star-Telegram

## LIFE & ARTS

### Goss-Michael Foundation has brought serious names in British art across the pond

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Plunking down more than \$5 million for a single work of art is not a casual move. In 2007, British pop star George Michael and his partner, Dallasite Kenny Goss, paid a reported \$5.6 million for Damien Hirst's young bull pierced by arrows and suspended in a tank of formaldehyde. With half-closed eyes and the heaviness of its carcass stretching the wire around its neck, *Saint Sebastian, Exquisite Pain* emits an extraordinary pathos.

Not only was there the multimillion-dollar initial outlay, but the work has to be professionally installed by a trained crew dressed in hazmat suits, and the gallery must be completely sealed off to contain the dangerous fumes. Each time *Saint Sebastian* is taken down or installed, Michael and Goss get billed \$50,000. This little bookkeeping detail was not mentioned when the piece was purchased.

"It's like a wedding where the bills just keep coming in," Goss says.

But he has no regrets. The purchase of *Saint Sebastian* changed his life, he says. Goss, who used to be in cheerleading-supply sales, and Michael, the sex-drugs-and-rock-'n'-roller with an arrest record to substantiate the first two and sales to attest to the third, had been collecting art for some time when they opened a commercial gallery in Oak Lawn in 2005. Initially it seemed more a vanity project, but the subsequent shows proved otherwise -- Tracey Emin's confessional diary entries written in neon, Damien Hirst's dead animals, Michael Craig-Martin's wordplay and computerized moving portraits, and Marc Quinn's self-portrait made from his own frozen blood. These are the artists who carry the reputation of contemporary British art, and the exhibits in the small Oak Lawn gallery were some of the best gallery shows in Dallas. On the strength of their reception, Goss made his move into the international big leagues in 2007.

The gallery was moved to a much larger space, and the commercial aspects were jettisoned in favor of setting up as a nonprofit. Goss and Michael began rotating displays of their personal collection of close to 500 works by British artists, as well as mounting temporary shows of the artists they collect.

They established a foundation to encourage young artists, awarding thousands each year in scholarship money, and on the weight of their influence have encouraged representatives of a number of British galleries to come to Dallas to participate in the [Dallas Art Fair](#), which this year opens Friday.

The foundation is a founding sponsor of the art fair and, as it has for the past two years, will play a major role at this year's event, hosting out-of-town exhibitors, artists and VIP pass-holders at a private party Saturday night at the gallery.

The Goss-Michael Foundation has become a significant player in international art circles and an invaluable addition to the local art scene.

"It's a truly extraordinary addition to the community," says Jeremy Strick, director at the Nasher Sculpture Center. "To have a comprehensive collection of contemporary British artists who are extremely well-known would be a feather in the cap of any major city. One of the great pleasures in coming to Dallas was to see the ambition they have."

## The gallery

The new location of the Goss-Michael Foundation on Turtle Creek Boulevard, in the heart of the Dallas Design District, is surrounded by galleries, high-end furniture showrooms and new condo developments.

The converted warehouse is four times larger than that first precious space on Cedar Springs, with two large galleries -- one to display pieces from the permanent collection, another for temporary shows. There is a library, a project room, a kitchen, and a gift and bookstore. With its tall ceilings, white walls and cement floor, it resembles the galleries found in SoHo or London.

The art on display is ferociously aggressive, often salacious and always thought-provoking. *Saint Sebastian* is in here. So is the marble sculpture by Marc Quinn of his friend, an artist named Alison Lapper, who was one of the thalidomide babies of the 1960s. She was born without arms and with stunted legs, a result of her mother taking the tranquilizer/sleeping pill while pregnant. Alison sits with her infant son Parys between her legs. Quinn says he created the piece, titled *Mother and Child*, after hearing visitors to the Louvre exclaiming over the beauty of the Venus de Milo. "Would they be as enamored of a person born without arms?" he wondered.

A large sculptural construction by Richard Patterson, a British artist who now lives in Dallas, is a peep show of desires, with a motorcycle and sex scenes with more than a couple of bodies. There are also pieces by Tracey Emin, *Drunk to the bottom of my soul*, and a one-armed gorilla sculpture by Angus Fairhurst is nearby.

In the library is *Untitled (Text Msg)*, a wall filled with phone text messages by Adam McEwen. The message strings play like a reality show, funny and startlingly frank.

The most current work is a floor installation by British artist Jim Lambie, the subject of the gallery's newest show, which opens Thursday. Brilliant strips of vinyl tape have been applied to the floor, and, like an op-art painting, it transforms the space and plays with the optical realities.

His show will be on display through Sept. 3.

## The foundation

Joyce Goss, Kenny's sister-in-law, is the executive director of the Goss-Michael Foundation. She was lured into the family business to manage the construction of the new gallery and to run the foundation in Goss' absence. (He spends about half the year in London with Michael.)

As we wait for Goss to come in from the airport (having taken the red-eye from New York City), Joyce Goss talks about her change from the world of finance to art.

"I was in the mortgage business. I had a finance degree, and Kenny asked me to come work for him in 2006," she says. "I wish I could say I could see the [economic] meltdown coming, but in all honesty, I was just tired of it. Kenny wanted somebody in the family to be here when he couldn't be. It worked out well. Now that we are a nonprofit, there are a lot of guidelines, and my background helped a great deal."

"Although the private foundation is classified as a museum, we do a lot of philanthropic work with the scholarships and art contest, as well as bringing the world-class artists to Dallas. They weren't represented here, and it's a learning opportunity for students and adults. This is what is exciting for us."

The foundation has awarded more than \$70,000 in scholarships to high school seniors. Four are given each year, three in art and one in music. Two are given to students at Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts in Dallas, one is for a student from the Metroplex, and another is open to students statewide.

There is also a yearly art contest, with the winner's work exhibited in the gallery.

Contest and scholarship winners often work as interns during the summer.

As they formulated their outreach plans to entice high school art students to visit the gallery, Goss says she asked the teachers what would help them most. Their reply: buses. With cuts in education spending, they no longer had access to buses for field trips. So, recently, the foundation has added transportation to its educational allocations.

## **The collection**

Goss is expansive when talking about the artists he and Michael have befriended and collected. "I'm one of the rare collectors that become good friends with artists, but it's hard when you have to sell their work. They always think their most recent work is the best. All artists are like that. George believes that even if other people don't. So if I have to sell something, I tell the artist, and I tell their dealers to give the dealer the first option of selling. It's a scary thing to have something go to auction and not do well."

In 2007, Goss and Michael sold a number of works from their collection at auction in preparation for forming the foundation and showing their collection on a full-time basis. "We sold off all the works that weren't British before the market fell. It worked out well, and we were able to buy more of the British work. The thing about having a collection is you have to be focused, otherwise it's just a bunch of stuff you love."

Goss relies on the services of Aphrodite Gonou, a London-based art adviser, to edit his collection, curate his shows and find young talent. She has to work with the vagaries of Goss' budget. "We have a big budget and no budget," Goss said. "It all depends on if we sell something or how much income we have coming in. Sometimes we are asset-rich with no cash flow."

Michael bankrolls the operation but stays out of the procurement business. "George is not active at all," Goss says. "He raises the funds for paying for it; in that, he is extremely active."

Occasionally Michael will recommend an artist. "He wanted to buy Nigel Cooke a long time ago. I wish we had," Goss says. Cooke is on a short list of big-name artists -- including Anish Kapoor and Chris Ofili -- whom Goss hopes to add to the collection. "But the biggest thing we do now is collect young artists," Goss says. "There must be 30 places in London that nurture young artists, but none here, so we try and do a group show every year that shows the younger generation."

## The art fair

The Goss-Michael Foundation has been extremely supportive of the Dallas Art Fair since its 2009 inception, and each year, more and more of the British galleries make the trek.

Goss is not a buyer, though.

"I told the dealers what I thought would sell here. I was lucky -- they brought work that sold. And to be perfectly honest, what I buy is so focused, they're not likely to bring a million-pound piece here. It's a risk for them to ship pieces from London, so I'm more like a host now."

Dallas Art Fair   
Dallas Art Fair  
11 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday and  
Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday  
Fashion Industry Gallery  
(f.i.g.), 1807 Ross Ave.,  
Dallas  
\$15-\$20 per day; three-day  
pass \$40  
[www.dallasartfair.com](http://www.dallasartfair.com)

Jim Lambie  
Thursday-Sept. 3  
Goss-Michael Foundation,  
1405 Turtle Creek Blvd.,  
Dallas  
Free  
214-696-0555  
[www.gossmichaelfoundation.org](http://www.gossmichaelfoundation.org)

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 1212 839 5300 ralph  
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JANE  
 I'm at his apartment  
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PRIVATE CALLER  
 Wow. We offered to  
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 but babk insisted on  
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LILY  
 Haha ur sooo funny  
 Options Reply Back

