

Style

Coming Back to Los Angeles

An Interview with Adolfo Zaralegui,
Vice President – International,
Wally Findlay Galleries International, Inc.



EDITORS' NOTE Since he joined the company in 2001, Adolfo Zaralegui has served as Vice President of Human Resources and has also held the title of Director of Operations. In 2007, Zaralegui was appointed President of Findlay Art Consignments. He has been an active supporter of Children of Bellevue; the Palm Beach Zoo, Conservation; Parsons The New School for Design; The Parson's Table; and the National Hospice Foundation. Prior



Adolfo Zaralegui

to joining Wally Findlay Galleries, Zaralegui held multiple managerial and operational positions for Nordstrom, Barneys New York, and Planet Hollywood. His first entrepreneurial venture was a chain of retail stores in Southern California that he founded and operated with a business partner.

COMPANY BRIEF Wally Findlay Galleries (www.wallyfindlay.com), an art dealer serving individuals, institutions, and corporate collectors, was founded in 1870 in Kansas City, Missouri. With galleries in New York, Barcelona, and Los Angeles, and affiliates in London, Paris, and Monte Carlo, in addition to its flagship location in Palm Beach, Florida, Wally Findlay Galleries specializes in Impressionist and Postimpressionist Masters and is considered one of the leading authorities on the paintings of the School of Rouen (France). The gallery currently represents more than 60 contemporary artists worldwide.

A key focus for Wally Findlay Galleries was opening the new gallery in Los Angeles. Why was this market a focus for you, and what can your clientele expect from the gallery?

The gallery is on the border of Beverly Hills and West Hollywood, on Robertson Boulevard, near Melrose. We're right near the epicenters of those two neighborhoods. A gallery should service a metropolitan area or part of the country. For instance, the New York gallery is focused on serving the tristate area and European travelers, and the Palm Beach gallery is focused on clients ranging from Georgia to South America and Europe. These markets encompass large areas, which is why they are so important to us. Coming back to Los Angeles after having been here through the '70s and '80s – at that time on Rodeo Drive – it is important not only to renew ourselves in the marketplace, but also to service

our clientele, such as the collectors who live in multiple locations, who travel through Los Angeles, or who live and do business in Los Angeles.

As you reenter the Los Angeles market, how will you build brand awareness for the gallery?

As we do in our other galleries, we will have multiple exhibitions per year and exhibit new works by our contemporary artists. We will host events that coordinate with local charities, and we hope to also host events with other luxury marketers in the

area. Our advertising will be consistent with what we're known for. We will reach out to the design community. In Los Angeles, there are many designers and architects who work with their clientele on their art collections. And we are contacting our current clients who live in California or have second homes here.

Is it important that the galleries have a consistent feel in different markets, or is the focus on producing a look more specific to the individual market?

We worked hard to combine iconography from Palm Beach, New York, and Barcelona so that there is a standard. The Los Angeles gallery has its own personality. Los Angeles is not as formal as New York is, and it has a casual style that's different from Palm Beach's style. People will recognize it immediately; they will see the iconography. The gallery has the striped awnings that we are known for; it has the black-and-white marble floor, and its layout is also in the same style as our other galleries, with the different salons and different artists or styles of work exhibited within them.

Wally Findlay Galleries is well known for important works of art, sometimes at a very high price point, for a niche collector. But your collection is much broader than that and has different price points. How do you define your clientele? Is it more of a niche market, or do you maintain a broader market focus?

The range of collectors that we work with is broad. We have new collectors, seasoned collectors, corporations, and institutions – it varies. But we try to hold true to the idea, as Wally Findlay did many years ago, that everyone should be able to collect original works of art. So although we can't be everything to everyone, in our specific marketplace – selling

Impressionist and Postimpressionist works – we hope that we are able to assist many individuals. We can do that because our history and the trust that our clients have in us have helped us to build the business, and the ability we have to focus and refocus what we do in the art marketplace has worked very well.

Is your Web site strictly an informational tool? At the end of the day, does the sale in this type of a business need to be a person-to-person sale?

Yes and no. It's an evolution. We have traditionally been a company that sells person to person. With the advancement of technology and the improvement of digital images and photography, we do on occasion sell from our media, be it through the Web site, catalogs, or invitations with an image of a painting that is sent to clients. But most people do like to visit the gallery because they want to see the painting in a setting similar to their homes. We also send paintings to people's homes on approval for their viewing in that environment.

Have you been able to find the talent you need for the development of the galleries?

The people at Wally Findlay Galleries have always been most important; they're the ones building the relationships and working with the clients. The gallery has its own personality, and there's an expectation of that when people walk in the door. The great history of this company and the staff are very important.

Did you know when you came to Wally Findlay Galleries that it would be a company you would stay with? What is it about the culture and the brand that have made it a place where you really want to be?

There are different aspects to what makes this a great company to work for. One is that it's a family business. Another is that we are given the opportunity to handle works of art that are important, and we work with artists who are incredibly talented people and who have a great deal of experience and interesting views of life. We're able to assist our clients in creating collections of beauty: of paintings and sculpture that they're going to live with for the rest of their lives. We are continuing the life that the artist puts into that work of art by moving it along to its next home. That is an incredible opportunity. ●

The Impressionist floor at Wally Findlay Galleries, New York