

Offering the Finest Representational Art

An Interview with James Borynack,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, FINDLAY Galleries



A gallery at FINDLAY Galleries

EDITORS' NOTE Eighteen years before acquiring FINDLAY Galleries International, Inc., in 1998, James Borynack purchased FINDLAY Galleries in New York, having already been its Director and Senior Vice President. His relationship with the company began in 1972, when he was hired as a salesman after having served as a partner at De Noyer, a boutique specializing in European high-fashion imports. He has also been associated with various government-related positions, including Cultural Attaché and Ambassador for Republicans Abroad International. In addition, he served as North American President of the auction house Phillips Son & Neale. He is an alumnus of New York's Parsons New School for Design.



James Borynack

COMPANY BRIEF As art dealers serving individuals, institutions and corporate collectors, FINDLAY Galleries International, Inc. (findlaygalleries.com), was founded in 1870 in Kansas City, Missouri. With galleries in New York, Los Angeles and affiliates in London, Paris, Berlin and Monte Carlo, in addition to its flagship premises in Palm Beach, Florida, FINDLAY Galleries specializes in impressionism, European Modernism, l'École de Rouen, l'École de Paris, and 20th Century American Art. The gallery currently represents more than 50 contemporary artists worldwide creating more than 50 exhibitions annually within their gallery network.

Will you discuss the history and heritage of FINDLAY Galleries and how the company has evolved over the years?

Founded in Kansas City, Missouri in 1870, FINDLAY Galleries is now America's second oldest art gallery in continuous operation.

William Wordsworth Findlay opened the City Art Rooms dealing in many forms of art: paintings, silver, sculpture, frames and art supplies. The gallery became a leading cultural center for the successful pioneers in all fields of business and social status in the Midwest.

European art was all the rage on the East coast and Findlay's only son, Walstein, began the journeys of European buying trips and returning with crates full of European artworks to help satisfy their new wealthy clients' desires.

Collectors were being strategically cultivated over the following decades and by the 1920's, Walstein's eldest son, Walstein Chester Findlay, Jr., known as Wally, began to travel to Europe to

acquire more important European masterpieces. In 1932 Wally, then President of FINDLAY Galleries, bought a substantial five-story building and opened the FINDLAY Galleries on South Michigan Avenue in Chicago, catty-corner from the Chicago Art Institute. Wally's younger brother, David, moved his family to New York around 1936 and opened a branch of FINDLAY Galleries on 57th Street. During this period, both Wally and David collaborated on their impressive inventories.

In 1961, Wally bought a complete block on Worth Avenue in Palm Beach and built a three-story gallery and residence, which is our current headquarters. In 1964, Wally bought a classic six-story townhouse on East 57th Street off Fifth Avenue which, within a year, became the social art scene center of New York. By 1969, Wally had another first in the art world when Hornblower Weeks Investment company took Wally Findlay Galleries public on the stock market. In 1971, Wally opened his first Beverly Hills gallery. The following year, in collaboration with the Galleries Executive VP, Simone Karoff, Wally opened the opulent Gallerie Findlay in three highly-renovated buildings on prestigious Avenue Matignon in Paris. By 1974, Wally opened another gallery in Tokyo dealing in 19th and 20th century artists. In 1980, I was the Senior VP of the parent company and Findlay agreed to franchise the New York Gallery to me.

In 1985, I sold the company back to the international company. In 1996, Wally Findlay died. The company's new president contacted me about reacquiring the business. I purchased the entire parent company and all the subsidiary galleries in 1998.

What have been the keys to the success of the business and to making sure FINDLAY Galleries remains relevant?

FINDLAY Galleries is a leading dealer of established Master period artists and is dedicated to the development of young, talented, living artists worldwide. Over the years, each of our galleries has held over 20 exhibitions a year. Today, we manage 38 contemporary artists, 12 artist estates, specialize in 20th century European and American Masters, mid-century American Abstractionists and are recognized as leaders in representing the "schools" of Rouen, Paris, and international Naïf painters.

My colleague and partner, Adolfo Zaralegui, the company's COO, is instrumental in daily company activities and artist management which is key for the company's development and successful future.

How broad are your offerings and what are the key characteristics you look for in representing an artist?

FINDLAY Galleries has always been dedicated to offering the finest representational art. However, it is important to realize that a focus on representational art does not exclude abstract painting. For example, we recently had an exhibition of abstracted landscapes which included post-Impressionist works, mid-century American abstract works, right up to contemporary works. Each painting in the exhibition included the artist's interpretation of the subject landscape.

When considering new artists, we tend to focus on artists who have reached some level of success, often in a smaller market, and are ready to be guided onto a bigger stage. Stylistically, the artist's work needs to fill a niche that is currently lacking in our collection, but to not be so drastically different that our clients will not respond to it. Because of this, we pass on many quality painters even though the work is good since it just wouldn't fit with our clients' needs.

Your daughter and son-in-law are leaders in the business. How special has it been for you to see their growth and development?

My acquisition and subsequent turnaround of the Galleries took many years to reach fruition. With the turnaround period behind us, my focus shifted to stable and strategic growth. Both Stephanie and Fred have driven their own careers and operate their individual units very successfully. They both come from different business backgrounds, but their goals are informed. Their ongoing individual development in building and managing strategies with client collections and art world projects is impressive and accomplished.

Fred is the Director of the New York Gallery. Stephanie is the President of Findlay Institute, an organization which authenticates more than eight FINDLAY artists whose bodies of work were produced during their careers with FINDLAY Galleries. This includes cataloging and publishing the known works in a critical catalogue or catalogue raisonne.

A family business is built on knowing the sacrifices of ownership and trust. Our expansion and growth happens because of flexible and successful team players. Each of my exceptional gallery VP-Directors, including Juan M. Pretel in Palm Beach, collaborate with inter-gallery teams overcoming uncertainties and more often the lack of seasonal predictions that can no longer be projected.

My family is many faceted and I am deeply grateful for each person's part in our continued successes as one company. ●