

CHRISTIE'S

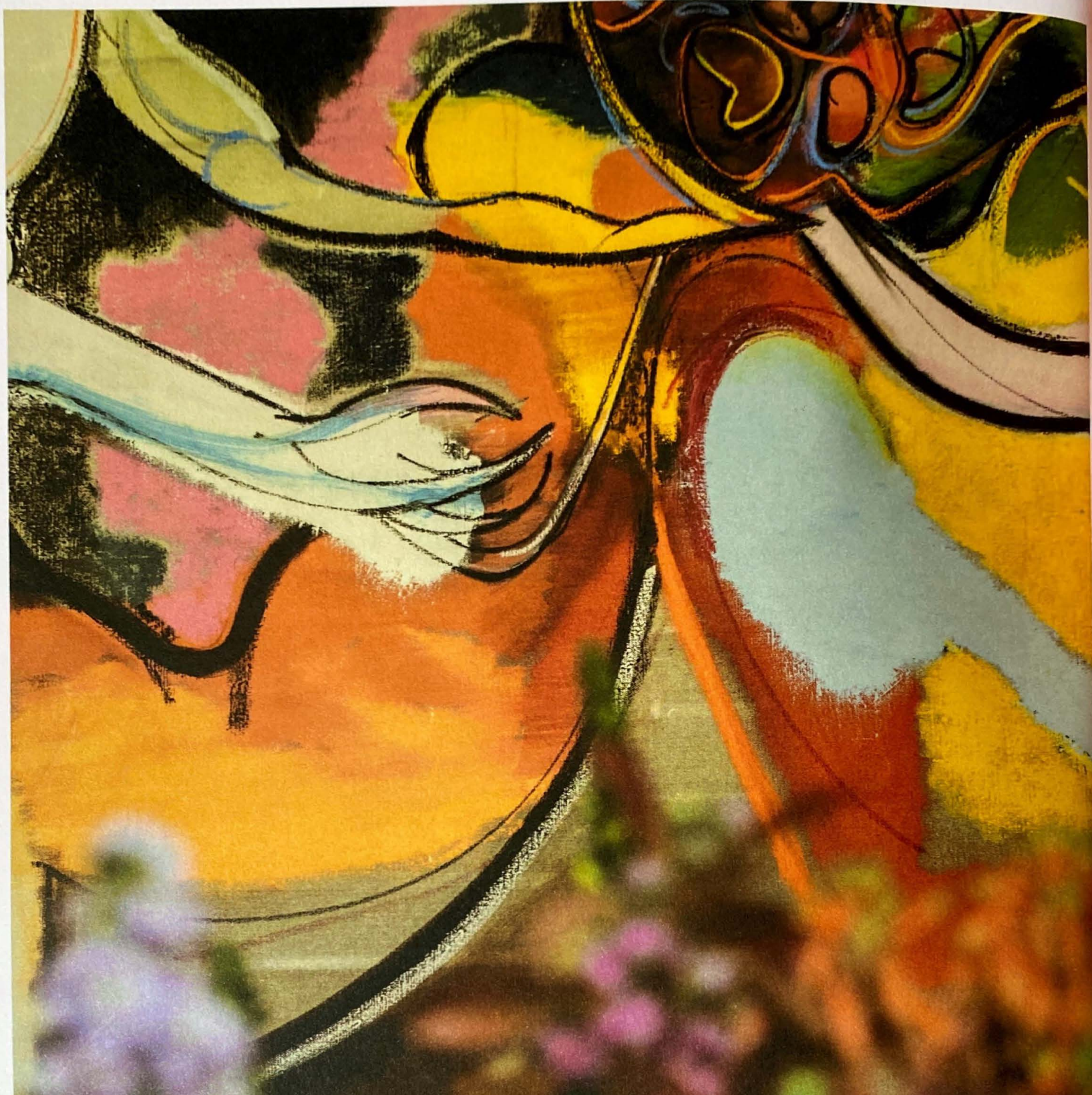
MAGAZINE

June–July 2019



Maharajas & Mughal Magnificence at Christie's New York

Publisher Eva Dichand's superb contemporary art collection
What Christen Sveaas did next – Norway's spectacular new gallery
Auction highlights: 20th Century and Classic Week, London



MAKING HEADLINES

In her passion for both newspapers and art, Eva Dichand has assumed the mantle of her late father-in-law, *Krone* editor Hans Dichand, although her tastes are markedly more contemporary. Michael Watts meets her

Photographs by Mattia Balsamini



Opposite, works by
Serge Poliakoff, Thomas
Houseago and others.
Previous pages: Daniel

Richter, *Casting*, 2018
(detail); Dichand with
detail of Miriam Cahn,
HÄNDE HOCH!, 2014

M

y recent visit to Vienna to meet members of the Dichand newspaper dynasty prompted thoughts about a media titan who ought to be better known. Hans Dichand, the family patriarch, was an Austrian populist who died in 2010 at the age of 89. He owned and edited Austria's biggest-selling tabloid, *Kronen Zeitung*, and was a political kingmaker over several decades; he even called his autobiography *In the Anteroom of Power*. Much of his influence came from a Eurosceptic column he wrote in his paper under the Roman pseudonym Cato; he was possibly emulating the 18th-century essays published in England as *Cato's Letters*, which advocated patriotism, free markets and limited government. Dichand's nativism lingers on in Austria, a republic risen from the ashes of the First World War, but still struggling with its identity. It's probable, however, that his more enduring legacy will be his art collection.

In 1989, he published, in English and German, a handsome coffee-table book entitled *Austria Pioneering Modern Art (Die Künstler der klassischen Moderne in Österreich)*. Dichand owned most of the works it contained, all by artists of the Austrian Secession at the turn of the 19th century, led by Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka, along with lesser lights such as Koloman Moser, Alfred Kubin and Carl Moll. They represented only a fraction of his artworks – several, notably Klimt's *Danaë*, 1907, and Schiele's *Mother and Child (Madonna)*, 1908, now of eye-watering value. Klimt's sensual depiction of Zeus seducing the mortal Danaë in a symbolic shower of golden rain always hung above the fireplace of one of his houses in Vienna.

Other newspaper tycoons, more familiar in the English-speaking world, have matched his expertise in what was once called yellow journalism, but not in art. Lord Beaverbrook, Britain's arch-imperialist and in some respects a political counterpart, collected established British artists, from Constable through to Graham Sutherland. He bought an early Lucian Freud only after Freud had won second prize in a young artists' competition in Beaverbrook's *Daily*

Express. In the USA, the eccentric William Randolph Hearst mixed his collection of ancient Greek vases with household stoves, warming pans and door knockers. Nearer to our times, the little that we know for sure about Rupert Murdoch the collector is that he likes the kinetic sculptures of George Rickey. Rickey's *Annular Eclipse*, a giant pair of wind-powered steel circles, whirrs outside Fox News in Manhattan. 'It's going to stop traffic,' Murdoch rejoiced before its installation.

What kind of man was Hans Dichand, this son of a leather craftsman who went on to speak to, and often for, his eight million fellow Austrians? I asked Dr Eva Dichand, who is married to his youngest son, Christoph. 'He was very quiet, actually – not shy, just low-key,' she says. 'But I can remember once, I went with him for lunch and there was a politician in the restaurant who wanted to convince him of something. My father-in-law listened carefully and at the very end he just looked at him and said, "I will run against that." That was all. The man went away, and I could see his head was bowed.'

Dichand's passion for art and newspapers has passed on, in varying degrees, to his three children, as has his collection. Christoph, 54, is now editor-in-chief of the *Krone*, and in 2001 he was active in a consortium that acquired the Dorotheum, a prized auction house that has served Central Europe for 300 years. His sister Johanna sits on its board. When she was 17, she posed for a portrait by Andy Warhol, and was later painted by the Swiss hyperrealist Franz Gertsch, apparently at her father's insistence. But it is the daughter-in-law who has done most to reinvigorate the Dichand name.

Eva Dichand is the daughter of an entrepreneur and a pharmacist from Graz, with a PhD in business administration from Vienna University, and a background in banking and financial consultancy. Clever and ambitious, she's at home in both the society and business pages. Those attributes, together with her air of restless high spirits, were enough to disturb the equanimity of Christoph Dichand, whose public manner is normally as »



Image © Serge Pissacoff (1/4/25, 2019). Thomas H. Johnson, 'Walking Figure I', 2015. Bronze, 78 x 26.5 x 12 in. 2005. #1972. #1978. #1979. #1980. #1981. #1982. #1983. #1984. #1985. #1986. #1987. #1988. #1989. #1990. #1991. #1992. #1993. #1994. #1995. #1996. #1997. #1998. #1999. #2000. #2001. #2002. #2003. #2004. #2005. #2006. #2007. #2008. #2009. #2010. #2011. #2012. #2013. #2014. #2015. #2016. #2017. #2018. #2019. #2020. #2021. #2022. #2023. #2024. #2025.



'We put a photograph by Candida Höfer on the wall, and then, as with all good art, we fell in love with it'

reserved as his father's. 'The moment I saw her, I knew I was going to marry her,' he has been quoted as saying. 'I knew I would never get bored with her.' This coup de foudre was made more piquant by the fact that they were then on opposite sides of bids to buy the Dorotheum.

It's inevitable that she, too, would collect art, as well as the art deco jewellery that Hans Dichand also collected, but one suspects that he would have felt challenged by her more cutting-edge tastes. She began collecting at the age of 28, with no obvious formula as to what was acquired. She bought a Thomas Schütte figurative sculpture at Art Basel, and then 'forgot about it'; it was never installed. As a wedding present, she and Christoph received an art photograph by Candida Höfer of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, part of Höfer's series on illustrious libraries around the world. 'At first we didn't like it, because we were not into photography anyhow,' she says candidly, in her charming English. 'We left it on the floor by the TV, and a friend came so we put it up on the wall; and then, as with all good art, we fell in love with it. After that, we started to get more and more into contemporary art.'

The spacious apartment she occupies with her husband and three children near the Staatsoper and Albertina Museum is now crowded with works by Imi Knoebel, Tobias Pils, Sigmar Polke, Kerstin Brätsch, Sarah Crowner, Tomás Saraceno and numerous other, mainly living artists, which look as cool and on-trend as their surroundings. A new acquisition is a startling, yellowy painting by Daniel Richter, a German artist based partly in Vienna, who is known, and reviled by some, for the sexual violence implicit in some works: *Casting* (2018) suggests a carnal act between contorted figures whose construction clearly owes a debt to Francis Bacon, yet it stands up in its own right. Angry works like this are balanced by a rare Fernand Léger still life (*Profil orange*, 1928) and sculptures by Franz West and Lucio Fontana, whose bust of his wife Teresita, from 1949, sits on a small plinth. Above a blue sofa, Alexander Calder's *Red Mobile* (1961) is delicately poised, waiting for a gentle breath of animation.

In the first flush of collecting, Dichand bought everything that took her fancy; now she focuses on buying three new artists every year and following their careers. 'The way you support somebody young is by buying his or her art,' she explains. At present,

her focus is on the rising young American star Donna Huanca, who, in a complicated transaction between performance art and abstraction, photographs the painted skins of models she calls 'avatars', prints them on canvas, and then paints over the images with the same vivid oils, such as rich, Kleinian blue. Among her props are ripped stockings, latex and anal beads. 'Great, great, great,' Dichand enthuses.

Another, older feminist has pride of place at the far end of the long reception room. Here hangs a huge work by the 69-year-old Swiss painter Miriam Cahn, whose art has slipped in and out of fashion, though not with Eva, who has several of her paintings. This one, a 2014 work called *HÄNDE HOCH!* ('hands up!'), she purchased from the Jocelyn Wolff gallery in Paris, and is probably Cahn's best-known piece. It shows a naked man, woman and child, almost stick-like and childish in composition, with their genitalia exposed, their hands raised and their watery pink bodies ghostly glowing. Dichand remarks that Cahn's unearthly pictures make her feel a bit afraid, 'like Max Ernst a little', but *HÄNDE HOCH!* is full of life.

She is now on the international board of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. But it is not her art that has made Austria sit up and take notice; it's the fact that, when she was 29, she launched her own newspaper in competition with her husband and the *Kronen Zeitung*. She looks disgusted. 'They were writing, "Ah, this tall blonde of the Dichands is starting a newspaper. A stupid project."' *Heute (Today)* is a free daily publication, distributed throughout Austria, which now claims to be the country's second most-read newspaper, with one million readers and a distribution of 680,000. The sheer brio of its creation came from Eva, whose only previous journalistic experience had been in running a *Hello!*-style magazine. 'It was crazy,' she laughs. 'We had only four rooms, and it was like being in a garage. We started to get bigger, and then the first politicians came to see us, and it was so embarrassing to be there.'

Heute is now found everywhere in Vienna: on public transport and at the airport, in hospitals, in a chain of bakery shops, and in office blocks with 500 workers or more. Dichand's original intention was to cut down news and articles from other papers and jazz them up. Soon, however, she was producing her own stories. She has targeted young readers, avoiding party politics because she maintains that 'young people are not interested in politics and prefer positive stories', and housewives, 'because they're the ones who go on public transport after »

Opposite, clockwise from top left: a view from Dichand's Vienna apartment; Tomás Saraceno, *Aerosolar Scorpis*, 2018, Heimo Zobernig, *Untitled*, 2016, and Miriam Cahn, *HÄNDE HOCH!*, 2014; Lucio Fontana's bust of his wife Teresita, 1949; Dichand with a work by Imi Knoebel





Franz West, *Lemura del Porto*, 2012. In front of works by Jose Dávila, Kerstin Brätsch and Miriam Cahn. Opposite, a room with works by Sigmar Polke, Maurizio Cattelan, Ryan Gander, Helmo Zoernig and Franz Hagenauer

In Manhattan, Si Newhouse escorted them at night around the empty offices of *Vogue*. 'As messy as my own,' says Dichand, clearly gratified

9am'. Health and childcare, shopping, education and work-life balance are her feelgood subjects, 'everything presented in a nice way. I fight with all my editors because I know that people do not like negative, depressing stories.'

In recognition of her achievements, the World Economic Forum selected her as one of its inspirational Young Global Leaders in 2010. She also chairs the council of MedUni Vienna, the city's medical university, and is investing in online healthcare and a venture that addresses dyslexia and autism, since discovering that one of her children is severely dyslexic. She says she's been asked 'a few times' to enter politics; she has always vehemently refused. 'A young politician from a liberal party once asked me why, and I said' - she adopts a comical stage whisper - "'I'm much more powerful now.'" It was meant as a joke.'

Her press rivals seem fascinated by this glamorous, outspoken figure, whom the austere and private Dichands have produced, like a rabbit from a hat. Addressing the charge of nepotism, she admits, 'I had a lot of powerful people helping me. Still, nobody gives you five million in advertising revenue because you are cute, blonde and the daughter-in-law of somebody, so you have to perform. This is a tough business. I've had ambitious enemies from the very beginning and hundreds of lawsuits. The more successful you get, the more enemies you create.'

Vienna is a city of grand buildings and even grander manners, where, between November and the end of February, when I visited, diaries are reserved for countless high-society balls with names like the Confectioners' Ball or the Ball of Sciences. Grandest of all is the Opera Ball, the 'official ball of the Federal Republic of Austria', where the Austrian president arrives to a fanfare of trumpets. Dichand

is both accepted and expected in this world of satin gowns and horse-drawn carriages, and yet the entrepreneur in her rages that Europe in general and Austria in particular are held back by tradition and an unwillingness to give youth its head. Her anger at business negativity there felt justified during a sabbatical in 2016, which she and Christoph spent fact-finding with young American startups. 'Ach, I should have been in the States when I was 20,' she growled on her return.

In Manhattan, the couple were also warmly welcomed by fellow art collectors. The late Si Newhouse, owner of Condé Nast and a fabled collector of post-war American masterpieces (Johns, Lichtenstein, Rothko), escorted them at night around the empty offices of *Vogue* and its celebrity editor, Anna Wintour - 'As messy as my own,' says Dichand, clearly gratified. Newhouse's grandmother was Austrian, and he would regularly visit Vienna and Salzburg. On one such visit, Hans Dichand was persuaded by Christoph to show him his own collection. European collectors have a reputation for being secretive. Americans, Eva came to realise, were different; they were proud to display their art. At a lunch in the New York home of the cosmetics billionaire Leonard Lauder, he took her by the hand and led her to his bedroom, pointed at a Klimt painting of Lake Attersee and said, 'Look, this is my favourite painting!'

Her American adventure restored her drive and her passion for collecting. 'For a while, I lost it a little bit. I now realise that I do this only for me, because it makes me happy. It's not a way of showing off. We collect a lot of things that I am sure will get very famous in the future, but this is not why we buy them.' And is there a painting already famous that she'd like to have? 'I'd really like to own a Matisse,' she says, beaming at the thought. 'I have the feeling I will not achieve that in this lifetime. But maybe just a drawing. A beautiful, big white-and-blue Matisse.' ♦

Opposite, from left:
Frank Stella, *Bermuda
Petrel (maquette)*,
1980; Daniel Richter,
 Casting, 2018

