

Gaïa Donzet / Portrait

As director of the Carmignac Foundation, Gaïa Donzet is custodian and curator to a collection of more than 200 pieces of contemporary art, including works by Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Roy Lichtenstein, Gerhard Richter, Andreas Gursky and Keith Haring.



More importantly, she is also advisor to the foundation's founder, asset manager Édouard Carmignac – though her counsel is guidance only. "I consider it a privilege to work for someone who has strong taste and vision, who knows himself well enough not to follow market trends and who has an independent viewpoint," says Donzet of Carmignac. "What really matters in any collection is its core personality." And that personality will soon be on show for all to see. Once hung in the privacy of Carmignac Gestion's offices around the world, the collection is preparing to move to a permanent home on the island of Porquerolles in the south of France. Designed by Marc Barani with landscape by Louis Bench, the gallery and sculpture garden will open in time for summer 2016. Until then, Donzet is busy deciding which of Monsieur Carmignac's artworks will make it to Porquerolles – will his two large portraits of Lenin and Mao by Andy Warhol remain in his office? – as well as working on the foundation's Photojournalism Award. "Freedom is the keyword of the collection," says Donzet of the latter. "We want to break down barriers by showing situations no one else wants to show anymore, or that people have accepted because they don't have any other choice except losing their lives."

Jean-Michel Basquiat, Fallen Angel, 1981



Which works would you say are cornerstones of the Carmignac collection?

The first name that comes to my mind is Jean-Michel Basquiat because Mr. Carmignac met him in New York in the 1980s and also because the Carmignac Foundation was the exclusive sponsor of the major retrospective exhibition in Paris three years ago. Roy Lichtenstein is another important cornerstone for us as the collection holds several pieces by this artist. But the Carmignac collection is also largely composed of contemporary artists: Latin American artists, such as Guillermo Kuitca, are represented more and more in the collection, and the Middle East scene with Hannibal Srouji and Ayman Baalbaki. Amongst our latest acquisitions, I would mention Douglas Gordon who could be one of our future cornerstones.

Why choose the island of Porquerolles for the Foundation's forthcoming home?

The idea is to extract people from their everyday life and give them the opportunity to be more receptive to contemporary art. The boat journey is only 15 minutes and when you arrive on the island there are no cars, no noise, you perceive different smells, different sounds, different light and views; your entire body and mind open up to receive all these new sensations. Visitors will live a genuine experience, rather than a simple visit to a new contemporary art space.

Why was Marc Barani chosen as architect?

His work came up quickly because of the importance of light in the south of France. Barani has a real knowledge and talent about it. A few months after we chose him, the French Ministry of Culture gave him the National Award for Architecture.

Until now the collection has been hung in the Carmignac offices. How will the intimacy of this way of exhibiting the collection translate to the Fondation's new space?

Carmignac Gestion's employees have been very privileged, having Basquiat works in the staircases, a Warhol in the corridor... To keep this intimate relationship between artworks and viewers, we will limit the number of visitors in the future museum so that everyone can have the sensation to be in his own place.

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