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INTERVIEW WITH TABISH KHAN (THE LONDON ART CRITIC)

Tabish Khan



Art Editor

Tabish is a born and bred Londoner having lived, studied and worked in London all of his life. The love of London comes from the fact that you can never be bored as there's always something to do. He can mainly be found in art galleries and museums but he is also a big fan of cinema, TV and most sports – though wishes there was enough time to read more.

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Articles by: Tabish Khan



Simon Schama's Exhibition Blends
History And Portraiture

By Tabish Khan ★★★★★



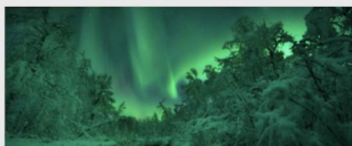
Who Were The Celts? The British
Museum Explains All

By Tabish Khan ★★★★★



Delightful Drawings In This
Diverse Exhibition

By Tabish Khan ★★★★★



***Tabish Khan, what is your
background?***

Extremely varied. I graduated in Biomedical Science, specialising in Anatomy. So I spent a lot of time cutting

up dead bodies. I then embarked on a career in the energy sector, which is still my day job and my main source of income.

For how long have you been writing about art?

Coming up to 4 years, I started in December 2011.

How and why did you start?

I only discovered the London art scene in my mid 20s and then fell in love with it. I started off visiting the major exhibitions at the likes of Tate and Royal Academy before progressing to the smaller commercial shows.

A cousin suggested I should write about them so I set up a blog and when I realised how little traffic it generates I looked for other outlets. At the time Londonist didn't have a visual arts writer and was still growing so I joined them and have stayed with the team since.

I ran into Mark (founder of FAD) at a private view and from there we came up with my weekly top 5 and my other contributions to FAD.

Did you have any connections within the London art scene before you started?

None at all. I'm hoping that's what gives me a perspective that separates me from other art critics.

What do you think about the London art scene and how has your opinion changed since you started?

It's extremely vibrant and diverse and that's why I still love writing about it. There's so much going on that it's hard to keep up – even for someone like me who visits a lot of shows a week.

The one thing I would change is the snobbish and unwelcoming attitude in some galleries that must put a lot of people off from visiting. I'm very keen that

everyone should have the opportunity to experience art even if they don't know much about it, and this closed off attitude can prevent this.

Tabish's Top 5 Art Exhibitions to see in London this week

Every Monday Tabish Khan brings you five exhibitions that you should visit during the week each one comes with a concise review to help you decide whether its for you ...



How many events do you hit each week, and how many galleries?

I tend to be at openings 2-3 nights a week and I may catch 2-3 openings per night. I also spend all Saturday visiting exhibitions so in total I probably see around 20 exhibitions a week. This tends to increase during busy times like October and February when lots of shows are opening and there's a lull in August and December.

What are the common mistakes galleries and pr people make when approaching press?

It's quite common to have everything thrown at you once you're on a mailing list, for example I'm a London based critic so news of exhibitions in the rest of the UK or abroad clearly won't fall into my remit. Yet I still get these clogging up my inbox, so the list of emails I get from most PR agencies never feel curated and therefore lack impact.

As for galleries they often seem to assume that if I like one of their shows, I'll like all of their shows. This is hardly ever the case and should be quite obvious given how subjective art is.

How would you advice an artist to approach a gallery?

approach a gallery?

This is not my specialist area, but here are some thoughts. Research the galleries who are likely to show work like yours and where you'd like to show, and then go along to private views and get to know the staff and owner and learn more about them.

Once you have a rapport then when you show them your work they are likely to have more time for you rather than simply adding you to the list of artists who are contacting them.

You are writing a series of articles about everything wrong with art, what are the top three things?

I don't think I could ever get it down to a top three as there are so many things. Don't get me wrong, I love art **but there is significant room for improvement.**

One overarching theme is that there is a lot the art world can learn from the corporate world about best practice. For example complicated language for the sake of appearing intelligent was ditched in businesses a long time ago, and the organisation of finances and events is on the whole much slicker in small businesses that aren't galleries.

Which 5 galleries would you recommend young artists and curators visit?

Three mid tier galleries who are growing and showing some great artists are Beers London, Kristin Hjellgerde and Rosenfeld Porcini – the latter has a fantastic space in Fitzrovia. They are all galleries in the ascendancy and have great portfolios of artists. The Griffin Gallery also shows a lot of emerging artists and is tucked away in West London.

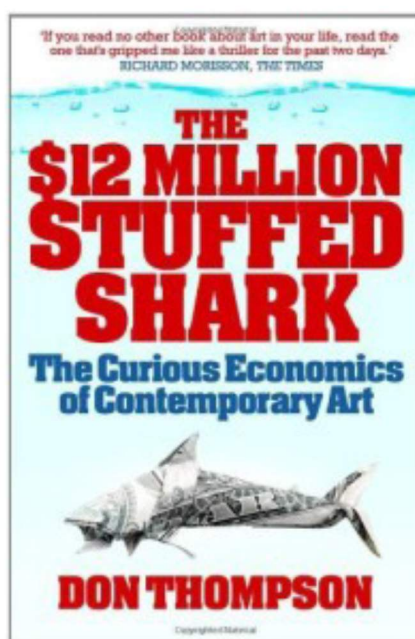
On the affordable end, I would recommend a visit to Curious Duke. It's a gallery with little financing that's showing everyone how you run a small business, make money selling art and still support a roster of talented young artists.

Do you collect anything?

I'm almost out of wall space with the amount of art I own, but it's all at the affordable end – in fact I've never paid more than £600 for a work. Even though I love a lot of conceptual art, the works I've bought all have an obvious aesthetic appeal.

What is your favourite book about art?

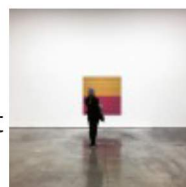
I don't think I've read enough books about art to choose a favourite. However, one book I enjoyed recently was the \$12m stuffed shark by Don Thompson. It's an entertaining look at the art market from an outsider to the art world. A very easy read and a fascinating insight.



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About Jenny Judova

Jenny Judova specialises in the primary art market. After studying art history (MA & MPhil) in Glasgow she moved to London where she set up Art Map London. Her job now is to help artists pursue and develop their careers in art. She is available for writing and speaking gigs.



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