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By Isaac Lyles and Olivia Smith





WITH ISAAC LYLES AND OLIVIA SMITH
PORTRAIT BY OLIVIA DIVECCHIA

tête-à-tête

Dallas-born Isaac Lyles and Olivia Smith discuss starting up their Manhattan galleries and exhibiting at Dallas Art Fair.

ISaac Lyles: *We're both Dallas natives. How did you get into art and was there something in Dallas that led you to it?*

Olivia Smith: Visual art has always been the most important thing in my life, but SMU Meadows School of the Arts really shaped me as an artist and interdisciplinary thinker. I also learned quite a bit through internships at Big Thought and the Creative Arts Center of Dallas, and as a docent for The Rachofsky House. My very first introduction to contemporary art was visiting a Neil Jenney exhibition at Craighead Green Gallery, which left quite an impact on me as a high school student.

OS: *And what about Dallas shaped you and your interest in art?*

IL: My father David Lyles co-founded the short-lived but important Dallas Artisans Guild. Spending time in artists' studios and experiencing the alchemy and labor of creation had a formative effect on me. It was that profound sense of community as well as exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, particularly *Bill Viola: The Crossing* and the *Sigmar Polke: Recent Paintings and Drawings* exhibitions that opened up the world to me. I knew that I wanted to pursue art history and that art was an intellectual and social pursuit, one that affects and enriches life.

IL: *Now as a director of one of the Lower East Side's most interesting galleries, what excites you about returning to our birthplace and exhibiting at the Dallas Art Fair?*

OS: It's been exciting to watch the art scene develop in Dallas while I've been in New York. I attended the first edition of the Dallas Art Fair ten years ago as an SMU student. A few years later, I saw Chris Byrne give a lecture about the fair at the Dallas Contemporary. I have attended the fair many years since, always with the hope that I could participate in some way. It's important to me to connect with Dallas since I believe in the future growth of the arts in my hometown.

OS: *What attracted you to New York? Did you know you wanted to work in galleries and eventually open your own?*

IL: After stints living in Berlin, London, and Mexico City, I knew I wanted to go where the adventure was and rub elbows with the best of my generation. I worked with amazing people: the curator Antony Elms, Mike Egan (of Ramiken Crucible, whom I met at UT Austin), Derek Eller, and Jack Tilton before the chorus of "you should open your own gallery" was loud enough for me to hear. On May 31, 2015, I opened Lyles & King in the Lower East Side.

OS: *Do you think being from Dallas makes you stand out in the New York art world?*

This page, above: Bill Saylor, *Humboldt Hangout*, 2017, oil on hemp, 84 x 60 in. Courtesy of Magenta Plains. Below: Chris Hood, *The Past is the Future Repeating*, 2017, alkyd on canvas, 80 x 64 in. Courtesy of Lyles & King. Opposite: Olivia Smith, director of Magenta Plains and Isaac Lyles, owner of Lyles & King. Photograph by Olivia Divecchia.

IL: I think it does, because I try to approach each gallery visitor with grace and friendliness—traits that I specifically attach to the kinder world of Dallas—traits that are rare in New York. What about you?

OS: Before opening Magenta Plains, my co-founders and I discussed our values: integrity, hospitality, accessibility, and curiosity. Those are qualities I grew up with culturally in Dallas.

IL: *Can you talk about Magenta Plains? The name, the program, and the gallery's vision?*

OS: For me, the name Magenta Plains is visually expansive, full of possibilities. One of the core missions of the gallery is to bring greater attention to significant art and artists regardless of age or career, presenting context and meaning for the development of new ideas as well as to preserve older generations of artists' work. We are thrilled to announce our roster of artists this spring!

OS: *How did your gallery Lyles & King develop, and how do you select which artists to exhibit?*

IL: I began the gallery with the belief in the importance of experiencing art in the flesh. In a world all-too-digital, exhibition-making ("Ausstellungsmacher" is how Harald Szeemann described himself) has become much more important. I represent artists because I believe in the process of building an oeuvre in time, I believe that I can foster that for artists, and I want collectors to know that I stand fully behind my artists. I choose artists to exhibit first and foremost by being passionate about the work and confident in the artist's vision and therefore future. Secondly, I'm working to build an international program characterized by dynamism and difference. Issues of the body, experience, and technology are themes that course through many of our shows.

IL: *What about the Dallas art scene do you think is most exciting?*

OS: I love to meet with collectors in Dallas because they are receptive and open-minded. It's especially exciting to see the recent developments in private institutions like The Power Station, Karpidas Collection, and The Warehouse. I hope young artists who attend art school in Dallas will stay in the city, continue to thrive, and keep forging new territory.

IL: I agree with you and want to add the amazing curators Justine Ludwig and Alison Gingeras at the Dallas Contemporary, along with TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art, which I attended for the first time in the fall. I think Dallas' community of patrons, curators, and collectors, along with the Dallas Art Fair, have generated something special, and something that you and I are proud to be a part of and proud to return to.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWERS:

Olivia Smith is director of Magenta Plains, a contemporary art gallery founded in 2016 on the Lower East Side of New York City. Prior to co-founding Magenta Plains, Smith directed Exhibition A, where she worked in collaboration with over 250 artists to produce and distribute new limited-edition art. Smith graduated from Highland Park High School and received her B.F.A. from SMU Meadows School of the Arts in Studio Art, Art History, and English in 2011. magentaplains.com

Isaac Lyles is the owner of Lyles & King. Many of their gallery artists are in the collections of Centre Pompidou, Paris; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; and others. Lyles & King exhibitions have been featured in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *ArtNews*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Artnet*, and others. lylesandking.com **P**

