

Lorna York with Jane Booth's "Eight Seconds." Inset, from top: Lino Lago's "Fake Abstract" based on the portrait of Gabrielle Cot by William-Adolphe Bouguereau; Robert Montgomery's "Sentinels" (2012).



Queen of Arts

Lorna York's skilled integration of midcareer contemporary artists and established market darlings sets her program at Madison Gallery apart and draws the art-loving elite to San Diego.

By Keri Bridgewater // Photography by Tim Hardy

An art dealer and avid collector for more than 30 years, Lorna York has advised on and built private collections and corporate collections for commercial galleries, and curated countless cutting-edge exhibitions. "My life is art, and I get excited about my artists. I'm in it for the passion—you have to have passion to be in this game," she says. "I truly believe it's the key to success because if I wasn't passionate, I wouldn't still be here."

An adroit businesswoman, York embraced digital and social platforms early, opening up Madison Gallery to a new generation of global collectors who fly in from cities like London and Hong Kong. Deftly ahead of the neighborhood's upscale redevelopment projects, she recently moved the gallery to its edgy new home in the white-hot Cedros Avenue Design District in Solana Beach. It's here that York and her talented all-female team demystify the art world, advising, educating and guiding first-time buyers and influential lifelong collectors. "If done well, the relationship between an art dealer and collector is a special one," she explains. "It takes the eye of the artist to create, but the eye of the dealer and the eye of the collector to make that collaborative spark."

Consistently voted one of the 500 best galleries worldwide, York has built an international reputation for representing exciting midcareer and established contemporary artists. Her program at Madison includes the celebrated and controversial street artist RETNA, abstract painter William LaChance, and Australian artist Jason Sims, who is best known for his sculptural lightbox installations. Spanish artist Lino Lago is the latest addition to the fold. Lago, who specializes in realistic oil portraits layered with bright, peekaboo abstracted fields of color, already looks set to be a hit with San Diego collectors. 320 S. Cedros Ave., madisongalleries.com

