

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Clarion List brings online review model to art world with international database

July 20, 2016



Clarion List image

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Art service database The Clarion List is bringing the insular sector further into the digital age.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

The art world has long been one of insider referrals and word-of-mouth discovery, making it hard for new consumers to enter the market and even for some veterans to find the services they are looking for. Countering the sector's opacity will help businesses and individuals with expertise throughout the sector and attract more consumers to the art world.

"The art world has been a slow adapter to the digital age because for most of its history - for several hundred years it has involved a very small group of people," said Jessica Paindiris, co-founder of **The Clarion List**. "The art market is still small compared to other industries but it is seeing recent growth in the last couple of decades as more collectors are entering the market.

"I think this is because of an increased art education and appreciation among the general public, because of the globalization of the art market due to art fairs and because art has become an asset class for investors," she said. "The Clarion List is bringing the art market into the present by providing the first comprehensive, searchable, sortable directory of art businesses with ratings and reviews.

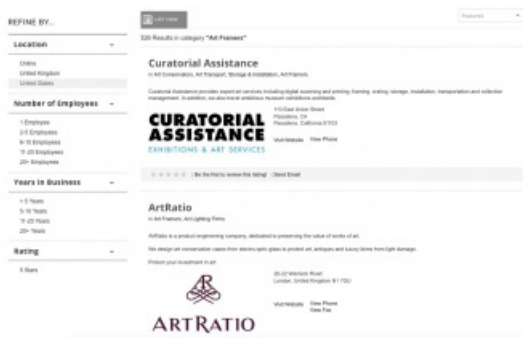
"We've created a one-stop platform for finding information about art businesses. No longer do collectors or would-be collectors need to rely on word-of-mouth referrals or be timid to start collecting without an established network; instead they can do their own due diligence in minutes online and share feedback with fellow collectors via reviews."

Peer-reviewed

The Clarion List was founded by former Christie's executives Jessica Paindiris and Gaia Banovich. Their new company provides listing and reviews for appraisal, research, legal work, insurance, collection management software, risk consultancies, framers, dealers, consultants, security and recovery services and dozens of other of the art world's finer specialties.

The Clarion List does not remove the word-of-mouth tradition from the art market altogether; it simply moves it online. In each of the 36 service categories, users can rate and review the company or service they contracted or worked with.

With the database and reviews, dealers will now have access that goes beyond the referrals of their immediate circle without having to compromise security. As sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp as well as social media in general has shown, consumers' willingness to share their experiences with others has a similar effect as more traditional word-of-mouth referrals.



Clarion List search page

"We want to convey that the art market is more than just transactions," Ms. Paindiris said. "The service side of the industry is huge - we have over 4,000 companies in just 24 U.S. markets plus London at the moment.

"Consumers need to be educated that, in order to preserve the value and condition of the art, an expert service provider is needed, whether that be for storage, framing, installation, conservation or many other needs," she said. "We want to convey that becoming involved in the art market does not need to require a preexisting network - it's easy to get started at any price point.

"We are a resource to get started collecting via our lists of galleries, ecommerce platforms, private dealers, leasing firms, consultants and more."

The increased competitiveness that visibility brings, as well as the platform for negative testimonials for those who do not provide good service or reasonable prices, will likely create pressure on all aspects of the industry to improve.

Conversely, those that provide the best service and value now have access to consumers beyond a potentially small circle.



Giorgione painting

The Clarion List's Web site also includes a blog entitled The Clarion Circle. The Clarion Circle will host editorial content written by the founders and redirect to pieces published elsewhere.

While much of art journalism focuses on news, The Clarion Circle highlights and contributes to more service-based journalism. Recent articles include predictions for the art market in light of Brexit, the impact of new German regulations, characteristics of the next generation of collectors and a guide on avoiding tax fraud allegations.

The Clarion List began earlier in 2016 in major U.S. markets as well as London, but will soon expand into major European markets. New cities will include Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Geneva, Istanbul, Milan, Monaco, Paris, Prague and Vienna, plus several more.



Rodin sculptures; image courtesy Sotheby's

Across both markets, The Clarion List will service 54 cities 29 in Europe and 25 in the U.S.

"Our plans are to grow our list globally to benefit consumers around the world," Ms. Paindiris said. "We are expanding our database to 29 European markets in early August including Paris and Berlin.

"This will add thousands more companies to our list and create a more connected, accessible market for consumers in the U.S. and Europe," she said.

Art for the people

While art has been slower than most sectors to adapt to the digital economy, legacy players are still taking steps to digitize and democratize the sector.

For example, in May, auction house Sotheby's made it easier for consumers to bid on art from contemporary and modern masters through eBay's live auction platform.

The Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale on May 10 and the Contemporary Art Day Auction on May 12 were accessible to eBay's millions of active buyers, who could sign up to bid live. This opened museum-quality pieces to a wider international clientele and likely raised the prices as a result ([see story](#)).

Others have also sought to shake up the art world with creative and digitally minded updates.

In early June, UK Creative Idea Limited elevated the art sector's digital presence with a dedicated top-level domain.

UKCI became the exclusive operator of new .art domains, which will launch in late fall 2016 as a dedicated arts and culture platform. Transitioning fine arts to the online world is a challenge given their tactility and detail, but a dedicated domain could lead to meaningful connections and effective infrastructure ([see story](#)).

"The upper echelons of the art market will always have exclusivity simply because of the funds needed to participate," Ms. Paindiris said. "But having a more transparent and accessible service industry referral system can only benefit consumers and qualified industry professionals as it will create a more efficient market.

"Those who should be concerned are industry professionals who are not providing quality service, fair fees or proper expertise for their clients," she said. "Because now consumers will realize they have better options available and dissatisfied clients have a public forum to express their concerns."