

club teams. Parker's goals for the season include winning the Ivy Rugby Conference, which embraces those club teams and Harvard's varsity. (As the NCAA classifies rugby as an "emerging sport," it sanctions official competition between varsity and club squads.) She also wants to support the club players as they make the transition

to the more intense level of physical and mental commitment that a varsity sport requires. And Parker plans to cast a wide recruiting net. "I think the fact that I didn't have significant team-sport experience helps me relate to players who are coming to rugby for the first time," she says. "Why not bring everything to the table and be

extremely creative in how we apply strategies and techniques from sports like soccer and lacrosse to rugby, to see if we can catch other teams off guard? No matter what your physical dimensions, there's a place for you on the field if you're curious, motivated, and devoted to becoming a student of the game." ~JULIA HANNA

ALUMNI

An Artful Business

Where inspired artists meet aspiring collectors

AIMING TO CREATE their own "art stimulus package" during the 2008-09 economic downturn, Emma Katz '06 and her sister, Ani, put together an exhibit at the Brooklyn Art Space. Her job as an assistant to a Broadway producer had evaporated with the recession so she was working shifts at an organic bakery in the East Village. Ani, a Yale graduate, was tired of cycling through internships. "There seemed no good reason to wait around to get a job," Emma recalls, "when we could just do what we wanted

and put on a show with our friends—and have some fun."

More than 200 people turned out for their Recession Art Inaugural in April 2009. It featured seven young artists—among them Ani, now studying photography at The Columbia College of Art in Chicago, and Jane Van Cleef '06, Katz's sophomore-year roommate, who makes and sells stuffed toys (woodland animals and interchangeable outfits, such as Catalina Mouse, who sports a red bonnet and flowered skirt) through her company, Hazel Village.

The exhibit's surprising success led to six more pop-up shows—and a full-time occupation for Katz. She is now executive director of Brooklyn-based Recession Art (<http://recessionartshows.com>), which moved into permanent gallery space in March and now represents more than 80 "of the best visual artists of our generation—on the cusp of achieving their dreams." The mission is to find, show, and sell affordable art: generally \$10 to \$1,000.

"The traditional art world is seen as too expensive and too elitist for the average art-lover," says Katz, a calm, organized woman who was named one of the "top 30 influential art professionals under 30" by *Artinfo* last year. "We are trying to engage all levels of collectors, and let them know that they can start even if they only have \$50." Developing this commercial niche—a sustainable alternative-art market—is critical, especially for fledgling artists in need of support. "When you buy art, you're doing it for yourself, to have an object that makes you think and feel more intensely," says Katz, "and you're doing it as a vote for the continued importance of art in society. That's the big picture."

Brooklyn has seen an influx of artists and galleries, along with more affluent gentrifiers, during the last several decades. "It's a great place for us," Katz agrees. "People here have an appreciation for what's different, what's unique. Buying from someone they can meet and knowing the story of the piece or the person is important." The gallery is

At her gallery, Emma Katz promotes sophisticated original work by young artists such as sculptor/photographer David Rodriguez, represented here (left to right) by *A Love Song Played at a Very Specified Frequency*, *Holding Device*, and *The Thing About Distance*.



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among the idiosyncratic, locally owned shops and restaurants that comprise hip Boerum Hill. It mounts solo exhibits and group shows, as well as semiannual larger displays next door at the Invisible Dog Art Center, a three-story former factory building from the 1800s used mostly recently for belt-making. In 2009, the building was converted into studios, spaces for exhibitions and special events, and the Beam Center, which teaches technology and design to those under age 18.

One of Recession Art's earliest artists, Ian Trask, reveals the inherent aesthetics of waste materials: cardboard boxes, wood chips, and old forks and spoons, which he once twisted into elegant chess pieces. The center offered Trask an artist-in-residence post, Katz reports, "which meant he had a room in the basement filled with many hundreds of rounds of belting materials, buckles, and adornments, all piled up all over the place." His resulting sculptures, set in rectangular boxes or on recycled wood, transformed simple webbed belting into gracefully interconnected spools and lines of colors and swirling shapes suggestive of the gears and conveyer belts of early industrial-age machines. "Kids love his art because they recognize the urge to bend their silverware and play with colorful balls of yarn," Katz says. "Collectors love it because it engages a trend toward DIY and recycling, but is also polished and perfectly framed for their homes"—priced from \$25 to \$5,000.

The June show, *Facts and Fictions*, was mostly photographs and video art co-curated by Ani, who maintains a small role in Recession Art while in school. It featured arresting color portraits of older women, including one of a swimmer floating like melting wax in the water, by Barbara A. Diener, along with almost surreal images of average people in modest settings that are offset by luminescent objects by Julie Renée Jones, which cost between \$550 and \$1,800. (Ani knows both artists through Columbia College, where they also studied.) Katz is inspired by how Jones creates the mysterious, ethereal light; it offers a poignant glimpse of hope amid mundanity. Art provides "a window into someone else's perspective on whatever big questions they are grappling with," she adds. "You take that in and you can learn from it—or recognize your own thoughts and feelings in it."

The gallery also has a small store, where

drawings and collages sell for \$100 to \$350, and smaller items like original magnets, coasters, and cards cost around \$6. "I don't want the gift-shop look, full of knick-knacks," Katz says. "We keep the more commercial items to a minimum." Notable

are cards and illustrations by Andrea Tsurumi '07, who lives in Queens and recently graduated from the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. A set of digital reproductions of her pen-and-ink drawings, *13 Witches*, depicting imaginary animals and eccentric people, sells for \$20. Coming soon are her two new children's books: *Andrew Jackson Throws a Punch* (a comic loosely inspired by Jackson's first inaugural and proclivity toward violence) and *But Suddenly, an Octopus* (a twist on *Little Red Riding Hood*).

TSURUMI, who met Katz through their work in the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players (HRGSP), calls her friend "extraordinarily clear-sighted." Running Recession Art "brings together her love of the arts, her logistical talents from theater and event-planning, and her interest in working with other creative people. Recession Art has also made itself culturally accessible by making 'unpretentiousness' a key goal. Most of that has to do with Emma."

Katz emphasizes that she is an art-lover, not an artist. Growing up in Bay Shore, Long Island, she played the cello and learned traditional art appreciation through visits to museums in New York City and Europe with her family (her mother is Susan Barbash '76). At Harvard, she immediately joined the close-knit institution that is the HRGSP: "Half the people there were already really into Gilbert and Sullivan before college," she says. "The other half wanted to do theater and stumbled upon it, and stayed."

She played cello in the pit orchestra, then was elected to the board, and soon became a driving force in producing the organization's fiftieth-anniversary celebration in 2005-2006. That entailed planning for 15 events in four days comprising more than 200 alumni, students, and their guests, as well as building, from scratch, a 5,000-alumni database that helped her



Recession Art's home is a repurposed belt factory in Brooklyn.

raise the gala's needed \$20,000. Katz had always wanted to be involved with the arts, but administration had not occurred to her as a career until "I started to realize that I was more organized than a lot of other people," she says, "even a lot of very smart, very talented Harvard students." At the Dudley Co-op, Katz was first elected United Steward, in charge of ordering all the food from wholesale vendors, and later served as treasurer, then president. "Emma is at home among spreadsheets and checklists—which is not to say she is uptight or robotic. She is actually really warm, and she has a great sense of humor," says Van Cleef, her former roommate. "She is a natural organizer, but tolerant of artistic types. I think she's proud that she can help them. And she really can."

As business manager for Van Cleef's Hazel Village, Katz was pivotal in moving the company beyond a one-woman operation. Katz not only worked out a business plan and marketing strategy, Van Cleef says, but during the holiday season was also there to help physically open booths at two lucrative Manhattan street markets in Union Square and Columbus Circle. "I needed to find and schedule a bunch of salespeople and general helpers—elves, basically," says Van Cleef, "and I had not planned ahead, naturally. But Emma stepped in, found the people and scheduled them, told me how much I owed them."

Supporting women in business and in other ventures is also an outgrowth of Katz's Harvard concentration in studies of women, gender, and sexuality. Her senior thesis was on the Queen's Company, an all-female Shakespeare theater group. After graduation, she moved to Manhattan (where she now lives with her husband, "C.J." Christos Ginerros, a computer engineer), with plans, now on hold while

she builds Recession Art, to become a theater producer. Katz's résumé includes a string of theater internships and jobs, most recently with Frigid New York, an independent theater festival. Producing an art show, she has found, is not dissimilar. "You're bringing people together and seeing everything that has to happen from day one and making sure you have people doing all these things" collaboratively, she explains. Do artists need her? "I think so," she says, laughing. "There are plenty of artists who would never even think of putting up their own show."

In addition to Katz, the gallery employs only two part-timers who assist especially with cultivating collectors. Galleries are constantly forming, nurturing, and balancing relationships with those who make the art and those who buy it. "We find our buyers through targeted networking, using our friends, artists, and neighbors as starting points," she reports. She has also partnered with the Wassaic Artist Residency in upstate New York and the new Ground Floor Gallery in Park Slope (Brooklyn), and routinely visits galleries, open studios, and the Affordable Art Fair, which has a similar mission, albeit at higher prices (around \$10,000). "In general we are a very grass-roots operation," she says. "I e-mail and call people individually about our openings, updates about artists that might interest them, events, and new artwork in the store."

To make the monthly rent, Katz must sell \$7,000 worth of art. "We're not quite there yet," she adds. "But that's the goal." She generally splits, 50-50, the selling price of a piece with its artist, and collects significant revenue from the semiannual open calls, based on given themes (such as *Open Notions and Broken Boundaries*, the fall group show): artists pay \$30 per submission to the gallery committee that decides whether the art will be in the show and another \$30 if they want critical feedback. In addition, Katz offers artwork documentation services and art-related administrative support, as for Hazel Village.

Pricing art is an art. "There are no set rules and no obvious reference points. Even the artist doesn't know," reports Katz. "The biggest problem I have found in selling art is that customers hesitate because they don't know how to gauge whether something is worth the price. And some artists don't want to sell their art for below a perceived value they hold. It's a constant

negotiation between the artists and buyers, and I am the middleman."

Recession Art's September 7-October 13 solo show features new paintings by one of Katz's favorite artists, Brooklyn resident Megan Berk. Her work, including renderings of the mid-century glass and flat-roofed suburban California homes designed by Joseph Eichler, has a spare, moody feel, softened by lush, liquid-like coloring. "Sometimes you can clearly see that she is painting a landscape or a house and sometimes that landscape becomes just a flashing of light and color," says Katz. The paintings appeal to a diverse group of people, she adds, such as those "interested in traditional representational painting, cutting-edge techniques, abstract art focusing on shapes and colors, architectural or interior-design aesthetic." Sales are consistent, even at higher prices: Berk's large acrylic paintings, about five feet by six, go for around \$5,000.

The fall group show (October 26-November 24) is curated by the gallery's associate director, Christian Fuller, and further explores the fluidity of abstract and representational art. Works will include the surreal topography of illustrator Maximilian Bode, abstract primordial landscapes by Leo Castañeda, and the bold, tactile paintings of Summer Wheat.

Practically, "we need good variety, something at every price, and something for everyone's taste," Katz says. Ultimately, though, what's shown is based on what she finds interesting. "It's very hard to sell anything you are not passionate about. When I think about owning visual art, I think about having something in my life that is a representation of an idea or an emotion or a memory. If I connect with something on that level, it's fantastic to be in its presence every day, because then every day can be a transcendent experience—outside of my own mind." ~NELL PORTER BROWN

Capital Connections

An energetic alumni leader emphasizes her "ability to listen."

CATHERINE A. GELLERT '93, the new president of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA), joined the organization as an elected director in 2007. At her first dinner, "Everybody seemed to know each other," and to want to catch up, she says. "I quickly

learned that this was the spirit of the HAA: folks who care deeply, who are experienced volunteers, and who want to make a difference for the betterment of the Harvard community. I was hooked!"

Such enthusiasm will serve her well this



Catherine A. Gellert