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The Art Market: Christie's Robert Ellsworth auction

Georgina Adam

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During Art Dubai last week, a glamorous dinner was held in Alserkal Avenue to celebrate its newly developed extension in the warehouse district of Al Quoz. Businessman Abdelmonem Alserkal, resplendent in an impeccable white dishdasha, was on hand to introduce the innovative hub which he founded and is promoting as a new cultural destination in Dubai.

The area already houses some of Dubai's most respected galleries, among them Green, Lawrie Shabibi, Isabelle van den Eynde and Carbon12, but the 23,000 sq m extension, which has cost Alserkal US\$14m, will not only group art dealers. Indeed, as Kourosh Nouri of Carbon12 explains: "Outside Art Week, centred around Art Dubai in March, there are very few visitors here. It wouldn't work if there were just more art galleries." So the new project is bringing in a mix of businesses, from the performing arts venue Jam Jar to Nostalgia Classic Cars, design store M.A.D. Gallery and architectural firms. The idea is to make a hip destination in the capacious, metal-clad industrial buildings, an attractive contrast to the luxury-goods bling of

much of Dubai.



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Two art dealers are opening there in the autumn: Stéphane Custot, partner in Waddington Galleries, says he wanted to do something different from London and explore a new market — “This enables me to have my own contemporary art programme, and rents are much, much lower here,” he says. He will launch with a Mark Quinn show. New York’s Leila Heller has taken an immense 12,000 sq ft space: “I’ve grown with this region,” she says, “and I’ve seen people move from knowing little about art to really getting educated. Every year I meet new young collectors.” She will launch a “global programme”, bringing in artists from Asia, the US and Latin America: “I am not only going to show Middle Eastern artists,” she says.