

Gill Hedley *The curator's curator*

Article 1998 in the **Independent Saturday Magazine** on **"The Taste Dictators"**:
Why women are ruling British Art. By John Windsor. Photographs by Anthony Oliver.
PTO for photo, which features a sculpture by Carlos Nogueira – see reference in the text.

Gill Hedley directs that extraordinary organisation, the Contemporary Art Society, which buys and sells contemporary art - in order to raise funds to give art away. The beneficiaries are public museums and galleries throughout the country.

Although she is a veteran degree-show scout and popper-in at studios, she now appoints her own curators, so big has the CAS's operation grown. This year, Janice Blackburn is hunting out decorative arts for her, and Jenni Lomax, Director of the Camden Arts Centre, is on the trail of fine art. She rarely vetoes their choices - unless the work will not fit through doors or seems likely to disintegrate within a year. "I select the selectors, so I control the operation," she says. "You don't keep a dog and bark yourself. But I know what they know and I know where they go."

Wherever they go, they uphold Hedley's tongue-in-cheek boast to contemporary art collectors that the CAS will always get their before them and beat down the price. That is what makes the CAS's annual fund-raising market of freshly discovered talent, held this year at the ART98 in Islington, so unmissable.

Hedley prides herself on her championing of the 1966 Turner Prize winner Douglas Gordon, best known for his *24-Hour Psycho* video. He was the first Scottish artist for years to get an international reputation.

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Curating corporate art gives her less choice. "We have to listen to the company - but there's still plenty of oxygen to exercise my taste." There are some impressive names on the client list of CAS Projects, the Society's corporate art advisory service: BUPA, Canary Wharf, Nuffield College Oxford, Unilever, *The Economist*. The Society takes corporate buying committees to exhibitions, private views, auctions, even artists' studios. There's nothing to beat rubbing businessmen's noses in art. The sculpture by Carlos Nogueira, pictured here, is in The Economist Plaza, commissioned in consultation with CAS Projects as part of the first major presentation of Portuguese architecture in Britain since the Fifties.

The Society's first really big spend is about to begin. The Arts Council Lottery has just awarded it £2.5m to develop the contemporary art collections of 15 major museums. That's a lot of curating.

