

CLIFTON BENEVENTO

LOCATION: 515 BROADWAY NEW YORK NY 10012 PHONE: 212 431 6325 FAX: 212 334 4703
EMAIL: INFO@CLIFTONBENEVENTO.COM WEBSITE: WWW.CLIFTONBENEVENTO.COM



Art

Michael Clifton and Michael Benevento

A dynamic new dealing duo talks about setting up shop. *By T.J. Carlin*



Photograph: Marianne Rafter

One of you already has a gallery in Los Angeles. What made you decide to start a space together here? How do you know each other? Michael Clifton:

We met nearly eight years ago during my first month of working at Anton Kern Gallery in Chelsea. Michael was a familiar presence, as he and Anton were friends, and soon we developed a close relationship. Over time we introduced each other to new artists, collectors, and a couple years ago Michael invited me to curate a show at his gallery in L.A. I guess that enabled us to move forward.

How did you each come to dealing art? Michael Benevento: My first job was as an intern at *Artforum* in 1988. Then in 1989, I started working on a newly launched publication, *The Journal of Art*. My focus was on the publishing side—advertising, subscriptions, circulation, distribution. *The Journal of Art* was then sold to Rizzoli, who eventually sold it, and it became *The Art Newspaper* in 1992. My move to opening a space was initiated by a client of mine in Los Angeles, whose belief in me gave me the opportunity to grow and eventually start a gallery on Sunset Boulevard in 1996. **Clifton:** I entered through the back door—by collecting art in my twenties. But it was Anton who gave me my first job, which progressed from juggling his travel schedule to becoming director.

You've decided to represent just a few artists for now, correct? Why? And how do you go about choosing artists? Clifton: We're building the program slowly—no instant roster of artists. As of today, we represent two artists: Ned Vena and Martin Soto Climent. I can't imagine taking on an artist without making the commitment to live with their work first. Both decisions involve a certain degree of intimacy. **Benevento:** The best part about running the gallery is working with the artists! The pure excitement of starting a project and having it come to fruition—for me, it's magic.

This first exhibition, "Big Apple," looks great. It was curated by the folks behind Apartment Show, right? Can you tell me a bit about it? Clifton: Joshua Smith and Denise Kupferschmidt are cofounders and organizers of the Apartment Show. Joshua and I had briefly worked together at Anton Kern and became friends, so we turned the space over to them. Having been to a few Apartment Shows I really admired the transparency of it all—a community platform with no thematic curatorial pattern aside from the social proximity of the artists. Also, they encourage artist trades over commercial sales. And in the event of a sale, they take no commission! As our gallery also occupies a live-work space, I see "Big Apple" as aiding us in the transition to a commercial enterprise. And in the spirit of Apartment Shows, we're taking zero commission on sales. It's a good vibe to kick things off.

Clifton Benevento's "Big Apple" is on view through Sun 11.

April 6, 2010