



FT REPORT - ARTS COLLECTING 2008 - FRONT PAGE: MAASTRICHT'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS

By Gareth Harris

Chris Kennedy ... displays his family's trademark fervour as he explains his plans to rebuild Art Chicago, once the US's premier contemporary art fair. His Merchandise Mart Properties company (MMPI) produces more than 300 events each year and threw a lifeline to the show in 2006. "We had about 48 hours to organise the fair when the organiser, Tom Blackman, asked us to step in," says Kennedy. The fair had run into difficulties at its original Grant Park venue so Kennedy transplanted the ailing event to his Merchandise Mart complex, once the largest building in the world at 4.2m sq ft. This Chicago landmark (which has its own zip code) was owned by the Kennedy family up to 1998 and Chris had been organising trade and consumer shows at the Merchandise Mart from 1987. He became president of MMPI, set up to manage the Kennedy family's portfolio of real estate assets, in 2000.

MMPI Art Group keeps gathering art fairs, such as New York's Armory, Art Basel's satellite fair Volta, Chicago satellite fair Next and the Toronto International Art Fair.