



## MIMI SPERBER

Founding Partner, Off the Wall Gallery

**What were your biggest challenges of 2020?** Navigating the pandemic while running a business was the challenge of a lifetime. Having to temporarily close doors for several weeks due to Houston's lockdown brought financial uncertainty and difficult decisions. Staffing and budgets were drastically cut, and it was personally hard and emotional at times. While our Main Gallery had to remain closed and unable to generate cash-flow from walk-ins, we built a brand new L'Atelier Gallery inside Galleria One by Prada, replacing our smaller Art Boutique by Neiman Marcus and Chanel. The planning had been in the works for over a year, permits issued, and construction started right when the city closed. The timing was disadvantageous, but we stayed focused and solvent in all of our financial responsibilities, and L'Atelier was finished when Houston reopened.

**How did you adjust and overcome obstacles? How did you reset?** Our walk-in traffic slowed down, but our online outreach was strong, and we were still reaching far and wide in Europe, Asia and Central America. Locally, our services got more personalized, and safety,

a priority. Home became the best and safest place to be, so if clients were not coming to the Gallery, we brought the Gallery experience to them. We participated in virtual art fairs and added a fun and free virtual augmentation tool onto our website, allowing clients to safely and independently try paintings on their walls before deciding on a work. We had the opportunity to source several important pieces for clients, which helped boost our enthusiasm and understand new buying behaviors.

**What's the secret to staying hopeful and forward-looking in tough times?**

In any area of our lives, and especially in business, we must learn to stay open, positive, and adapt to change. To do what you love — and believe in it — helps immensely through the tough days.

**What did you learn about yourself, your business, or your community that might inspire others?**

Staying hopeful helped me realize how fortunate we are despite it all. Reminiscing of the past, WWII and civil rights movements hit close to my heart and family history. This pandemic helps us understand that we are all connected, and our decision affects others. My gratitude goes to doctors, nurses, first responders, delivery drivers and grocery workers. They helped keep businesses and the community going.

**What's new for 2021 that you're excited about?**

I am excited about new opportunities for our country, the vaccine and getting back to a world that feels safe, friendly and free again. To be able to travel, one of my biggest passions in life! We are welcoming a new grandbaby in our family, and that alone fills our hearts with joy.

At Off The Wall, we are thrilled to launch our new e-commerce website, [shopoffthewallgallery.com](http://shopoffthewallgallery.com). We are also scheduling a Bernie Taupin Exhibition for January 2022 in conjunction with Elton John's Farewell Tour. A Gallery trip to Mackenzie Thorpe's Studio in the UK and other art-travel adventures will happen as soon as we can all travel safely.