



THE ART OF COLLECTION

Photos courtesy of
Anna Dunbar, Galerie d'Orsay

Once people retire, they can devote time to passions they may have neglected during their working lives. Art collecting fills that role for some.

by **SUSAN WEINER**

A smart approach can make the difference between amassing a haphazard group of objects and creating a coherent collection that brings you joy and holds its value. Doing research, using galleries, and setting goals are a few of the steps you can take to launch your art collecting project to the next level.

“As baby boomers retire and move beyond the demands of raising kids and pursuing careers, they’re treating themselves to art,” says Sallie Hirshberg, owner of Galerie d’Orsay in Boston. For example, one couple she knows bought a sculpture by Israeli artist Tolla Inbar to celebrate their downsizing to a townhouse. “Retirement frees people to enjoy their passions,” she adds.

For most people, collecting art isn’t about finding items that stun the experts on *Antiques Roadshow* or set records at auctions, like Andy Warhol’s *Triple Elvis (Ferus Type)*, which went for more than \$81 million in November 2014. Collectors find joy in art that speaks to them. “Art enriches your life,” says Bill Gorelick, a Charlotte, North Carolina, collector of glass. It’s not just a matter of savoring the art in their homes. Collectors also find that art enriches their lives as they share it with others and research potential purchases. “When we go to a new city, we check out the galleries,” says Gorelick. He also enjoys bringing art to others because “the more people who see art, the better off we are.”



On the opposite page, an exclusive collection of contemporary Bruno Zupan paintings adorns an entire wall of the gallery. Above on the left, Richard Erdman's Ariette bronze sculpture stands next to a painting by Luc Leestemaker. On the right, works from Marc Chagall hang near the gallery window on a snowy Boston day.

Research is essential for the budding collector. Before you start buying, view art in as many places as possible to get a sense of what you like. "It's like refining your tastes for cheese," says Duane Bousfield, senior art consultant with Franklin Bowles Gallery in New York City. "You sample a wide variety of cheeses to get an idea of the entire spectrum of tastes."

There's a wide variety of places to look, including museums, art shows, galleries, open studios, and gatherings of art collectors. Gorelick found SOFA CHICAGO, an annual exposition of sculpture objects and functional art, particularly helpful in identifying galleries with tastes that appealed to him. The three-day 2014 SOFA expo featured 70 galleries from around the world.

Galleries can help. Gorelick prefers to buy through galleries, rather than directly from artists, because he values how galleries screen for artists who are established or up and coming. "You pay for that" through the gallery's markup, but he says it's worth it. Bousfield says that galleries screening for quality means you're less likely to find works that make you wonder "why'd they waste the frame." A gallery that represents an artist you like can also help by notifying you when new works become available so you get first pick. This is important, because new releases are likely to include works of varying quality. They may also introduce you to artists with a similar aesthetic.

Budget is an important consideration. Before you make your initial purchases, think about your long-term goals and how much you're willing to spend on a single piece. Gorelick sets an annual art collecting budget that has risen over time. "It's like candy," he says, which used to sell for a penny a piece and now may cost more than a dollar. Hirshberg suggests that collectors "Buy the best that you can afford. It's better to buy one important piece than to fill your house with decorative art you may later regret owning."

How do you decide on a purchase? The work has to speak to you.

How do you decide on a purchase? The work has to speak to you. "Trust your gut," says Bousfield. However, he warns, "Don't go art shopping on a partied-up weekend in Cabo. Everything looks good then." Gorelick tests items' appeal by waiting at least 24 hours between initial viewing and purchase.

Bousfield suggests looking for galleries that offer short-term loans of works or will buy them back within 30 days of purchase. Something that looks great on a spacious, well-lit gallery wall may not look as good in your living room.

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Hirshberg warns that collectors shouldn't let other people drive their art-buying decisions, especially if their tastes aren't aligned with the collector's. The most common mistake of collectors is to second guess themselves, she says. "They live in beautiful homes, drive great cars, but have inexpensive art, like posters, on their walls because they don't trust themselves."

Consider whether a purchase is likely to maintain or rise in value. Artists with a long history of exhibits in galleries and museums tend to hold their value better. The same goes for artists who have been the subjects of monographs or books. However, don't count on making money off your art. Gorelick doesn't view his art as an investment. "Art is for buying, not selling. When you go to sell art, if you get your money back, you're lucky," because a gallery needs to make 30 to 40 percent on a sale, says Gorelick. Still, Hirshberg says, if you buy high-quality art and hold it a

long time, it can appreciate significantly. She has seen that, for example, with pieces like a Chagall purchased prior to the artist's death in 1985.

Once you've bought a piece, protect it and display it at its best. Bousfield suggests putting the artist's biography and certificate of authenticity in a clear sleeve and attaching it to the back of the work. "If your painting is published, even in a gallery catalog, keep a copy with your records as it can enhance its importance in future sales," he adds. Consider installing lighting. Talk to your insurance agent to see if you need an amendment to your homeowner's insurance to cover more expensive pieces. Hire professionals to work with your pieces, whether it's simply moving a piece from one home to another or making some kind of repair.

Lastly, think about how your art can bring joy to others. You can't count on your children loving your art the way that you do. Even if they do, their spouses may not like it or their homes may not accommodate it. Museums are short on space and funds to accommodate new acquisitions, even if you donate them. If you can interest a museum in your entire collection, rather than just one outstanding piece, you'll probably need to provide some sort of funding.

Gorelick is sharing his collection with his community through an agreement with Central Piedmont Community College, which is creating galleries on multiple campuses that will display his family's glass collection. Gorelick provides funds to support the project. "Younger people don't go to museums, so you have to bring the art to them," he says. **V**

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Pictured below, the gallery has a few Picassos hanging on the wall behind Richard Erdman's Vela sculpture.

