CANADIANART

COLLECTING GUIDE



The home of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais, Montreal, April 2015. Photo Eric Tschaeppeler

Where to Start | What to Look For | Presenting Art | Collector Spotlight



1. Visitors contemplate artwork by Jason de Haan at Gallery Hop Toronto, September 2014. Photo Nicola Betts
2. Collection on display at the home of artist Micah Lexier, Toronto, April 2015. Photo Christopher Dew

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IN THE BEGINNING

COLLECTING TODAY

The art world is more accessible now than it ever has been, with contemporary galleries putting down roots in cities outside of major art centres, museums drawing record crowds with exhibitions that encourage critical thinking and participation and the Internet opening virtual doors into studios, galleries, art fairs, museums and artistic minds around the world. Becoming an art collector is likewise not a path reserved only for the super-rich elite anymore. If you know what to look for and where to look, there are multiple entry points into the growing collecting community and options available that are commensurate with a wide range of buying budgets.

GET STARTED

The collector plays a vital role in the art world, acting as a patron of artists and institutions as well as a cultural commentator whose choices and actions influence the shape of the art market. In this guide to art collecting, you will be given a thorough overview of the terms and processes you will need to know to navigate the art market and collect with confidence. In a collection of case studies, we've profiled key players in the Canadian scene who will guide your collecting journey. Learn about becoming involved with the artistic community and expanding your education, working with consultants, buying from galleries, auctions and art fairs, learning how to safely present, install, store, transport and restore artwork, making sure your investment is protected and how to make the most of the experience of living with art. In a special spotlight on Canadian collectors, six voices from across the country will share how they got started and what being involved in the art world as a collector means to them.

FIELDWORK

EXHIBITION OPENINGS Engage in discussions about works on view with other art-lovers, gallerists and sometimes even the artists themselves.

MUSEUMS With insightful curatorial framing, museum shows provide context for understanding the art-historical influences that inform contemporary art.

READ Artist monographs include essays by experts that provide in-depth historical analyses into artists' practices. Subscribe to art magazines and blogs to stay current on relevant artists, exhibitions and topics.

INTERNET Subscribe to newsletters, such as *Canadian Art*'s, and follow the social-media accounts of galleries, art fairs and auction houses to be the first to know when exhibitions are announced and works are available.

FESTIVALS Attend film, dance and performance-art festivals to expand your artistic horizons and develop a well-rounded appreciation of art in all its forms.

LECTURES, TALKS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS Most museums, galleries, artist-run centres and arts organizations have programs that bring high-profile speakers in to talk about their areas of expertise.

2


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Robin Arseneault, *Success Is An Easy Thing After Reading This,* 2014 Wood, 24K gold leaf and soapstone

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Kathleen Morris | *Back of the Market, Berthierville,* circa 1925

Over several decades, the Klinkhoff family has celebrated the Beaver Hall Group. Galerie Alan Klinkhoff is preparing an exhibition and sale of works by the Beaver Hall Group from October 20, 2015, concurrent with the exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

We invite buying and selling inquiries at info@klinkhoff.ca

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Paul-Emile Borduas, *Three Women Bathing, 1941*, oil on canvas, 24" x 26"

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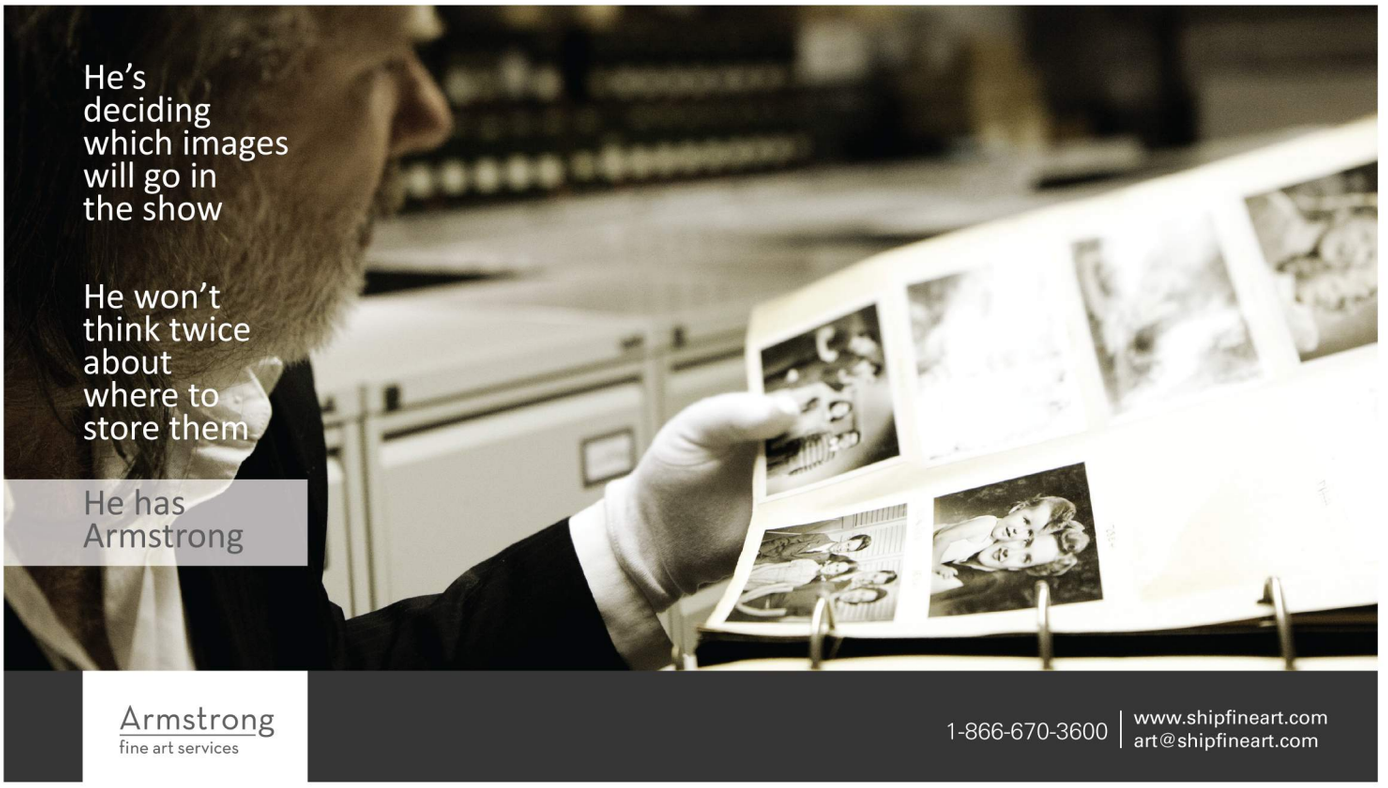
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Emily Carr, *Forest Interior, B.C., 1940*, oil on canvas, 14" x 18"

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WHERE TO START

WHAT TO COLLECT

PAINTINGS Oils, acrylics and watercolours are always unique, one-of-a-kind works, and can be made in a wide variety of sizes, shapes and forms.

WORKS ON PAPER Works on paper, such as photographs, drawings or mixed-media works, are delicate, and usually benefit from being framed.

SCULPTURE Sculptures range in size, are often editioned and can sometimes be displayed outdoors.

NEW MEDIA Time-based works, in mediums such as video, sound and multimedia, are available in a variety of formats and usually in small editions. A good-quality monitor and media player are necessary for viewing and display.

MULTIPLES, ARTIST'S BOOKS AND LIMITED-EDITION PRINTS Collecting art objects released in editions can be a way to add pieces by blue-chip artists to your collection at affordable prices.

BECOME A PART OF THE COMMUNITY

You don't need formal training to become a citizen of the art world, but it is important to be informed and involved. One way to become acquainted with the histories and ideas driving movements in art is to attend events held at artist-run centres, such as Montreal's SBC Gallery for Contemporary Art. Since 2012, SBC's director and curator, Pip Day, has launched long-term, research-based curatorial programs, called Focus Programs, that concentrate on a particular idea relevant to the present time. The first program, Sovereignty, ran for more than two years, and the second, Água Viva, began in February 2015. Through curatorial and critical-writing workshops, film screenings, publications, conferences and other events, the political, social and cultural implications of the topic at hand are extensively discussed. All of these programs are offered for free, and anyone is welcome to attend. SBC's active and generous curatorial approach makes it a community-forming institution that serves as a site for open-forum conversation where ideas can evolve and expand. The aim is to demystify the art world and get the general populace comfortable talking about art.

SBC also runs At Home With Art, an educational program geared toward collectors who want to know more about more about their local arts scene, as well as the theory and history behind the artworks they acquire. Day leads small groups on paid visits to exhibitions, artist studios and corporate collections. She readily admits that she has little interest in the art market, and doesn't see her role as advising people on what to buy—she leaves that to the dealers and consultants. Instead, she conducts classes on philanthropy and the history of collecting. She brings up New York collectors Herb and Dorothy Vogel, who amassed one of the most important collections of Minimal and Conceptual art in America with just a meagre income, as prime examples of collectors to emulate. She strongly believes in generating a culture of philanthropy, and recognizes that private support is essential to spreading and propagating the world-changing ideas for which contemporary artworks are vessels.



Art consultants Roxanne Arsenault and Pascal Desjardins in Montreal, April 2015. Photo Eric Tschaeppeler

CONSULTANTS

La petite commission is a Montreal-based venture founded by Roxanne Arsenault and Pascal Desjardins, whose mission is to promote contemporary art through consulting, curating and video production. "Everything we do is about education," says Arsenault, who has art-history degrees and years of working at non-profit institutions under her belt. Desjardins' entry point into the art world was as a collector, and this merging of non-profit and collector mentalities has resulted in the interests of the artist being kept at the core of their business mandate. They emphasize making direct connections with artists, and seek to instill the concept of "becoming a patron in a non-paternalistic way," says Arsenault. Desjardins conducts educational visits to businesses to teach companies about how art enriches workplace culture and morale, and how corporate collections stimulate new buyers and contribute to building a vibrant art market.



Elaine Waisglass, 42" X 42", archival limited edition pigment print on Arches paper, 3/12, "Rose of Sharon"
Roberts Gallery, 641 Yonge Street, Toronto, Canada M4Y 1Z9, 416-924-8731, www.elainewaisglass.com



Crowds gather at the opening of "First The Pleasure, Then The Thesis" at Clint Roenisch, Toronto, July 2014. Photo Jennifer Toole

WHERE TO BUY: Commercial Galleries

LOOK BEYOND WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD

With offices in Montreal and Toronto, and service across the country, Galerie Alan Klinkhoff offers three generations' worth of expertise on Canadian art made between 1850 and 1970. "We offer a vetted selection of authentic, quality works at fair market value," Alan Klinkhoff says. "Collectors can trust our experience, and should see us as allies in the acquisition process." Gallery staff are available to provide expert advice—at no extra cost—to anyone interested in collecting art, and will assist in determining a focus to suit an individual's taste and budget. When it comes to evaluating the quality of a work, Klinkhoff notes, "a genuine, market-respected expertise does not buck to trends." An artwork's rarity and popularity are not the only characteristics to think about when considering a purchase. "Novices look for shortcuts like these," warns Klinkhoff, and doing so can lead to a buyer paying a higher price for a work than is necessary. He also warns that collectors should not dismiss less well-known works or less familiar artists, and that market pressure should not dictate the personal value of a work. "Great artists are not one-hit wonders," says Klinkhoff. "With a truly great artist, there's more to it than just one hot year, or one hot colour. To place value on only a narrow portion of an artist's output is to misrepresent that artist's career."

"Ask a million questions—then follow your heart."
Jane Irwin, Vancouver

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Giving an artist a label can be a nebulous concept, and careers aren't necessarily linear. Here's what is meant by the commonly applied terminology.

EMERGING New to the professional art world, emerging artists can be found at graduating-student thesis exhibitions at art schools, as well as at many commercial galleries and benefit auctions. Supporting artists at an early stage is vital to keeping an art scene alive and active.

MID-CAREER Artists reach this stage after receiving attention in local and national exhibitions and notable publications. Pierre François Ouellette, director of Montreal's Pierre François Ouellette art contemporain, says, "The advantage of buying work from mid-career artists is that you can see their perseverance and staying power. They have proven that they're not flashes in the pan."

ESTABLISHED In addition to having had their achievements recognized, often on an international stage, these artists are considered to have made valuable contributions to the discipline of art itself.





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WHERE TO BUY: Auctions and Art Fairs

A work by artist An Te Liu at the Gallery Hop Gala auction, Toronto, September 2014. Photo Christina Gapic

AUCTIONS

Toronto-based Consignor Canadian Fine Art Auctioneers and Appraisers holds both live and online auctions. Consignor's president, Rob Cowley, stresses that pre-bidding preparation is key before participating in either. "If you are not familiar with the artist of an artwork of interest," says Cowley, "read about them and view their recent auction market. Many auction databases are available online and some are free, allowing the client to see other works by the artist and how those works have performed at auction recently." Most important, he says, is to view the artwork in person. Consignor offers clients the opportunity to view all works going up for auction in extended live previews, during which specialists are available to discuss the artworks on view and the services they offer. "Viewing the artwork in person allows you to see how the artwork appears in real life," says Cowley, "and gives a definite impression of size and colour. If you are unable to attend a live preview, our firm is happy to provide additional multiple images of an artwork as it hangs in our gallery."

Consignor provides detailed and well-researched condition reports for each work included in their auctions, and lists all known details that pertain to provenance, exhibition history and inclusion in publications within their auction catalogues. Every measure is taken to give bidders a high level of confidence in the purchasing of works of art.

> "First and foremost, when purchasing a new work, we look for the emotion we get from the piece. Then there is the interrogation related to the emotion: will it last, or is it just a one-liner?"
>
> Alexandre Taillefer, Montreal

ART FAIRS

Art fairs are an excellent place to train your eye. With national and international galleries gathered together under one roof, and only their best works on display, visitors are given a convenient cheat-sheet as to what is popular, as well as the opportunity to see works in person that one might ordinarily have only been able to see as computer-screen sized JPEGs.

There are more than 100 art fairs held around the world each year, with the most famous taking place in London, New York City, Basel and Miami Beach. Toronto has its own calendar of fairs, with the largest happening in October of each year. In addition to gallery booths, there are often satellite events and public artworks on display.

When visiting a fair, don't be afraid to ask gallery staff questions, including how much a work costs. Keep conversations short, but follow up via email afterward to begin developing an ongoing relationship with a gallerist. No one knows the holdings of a gallery better than its staff, so if you let them know what you are interested in, they can show you work that may be perfect for you that didn't make it to the booth walls.

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Mélanie Rocan, *Table pleine de peinture / Table full of paint*, 2015. Oil on canvas. 14 x 18 in.

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Passions of the Eye details by J. Tomic, Michael Adamson, Gabriel Schachinger, Thomas Nisbet, Joža Uprka.

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A collection of works on display at the home of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais, Montreal, April 2015. Photo Eric Tschaeppeler

HOW TO PRESENT ARTWORK

CUSTODIANS FOR THE FUTURE

"We talk about 'owning' art," says Ian Muncaster of Zwicker's Gallery in Halifax, "but really we are just trustees for a while, looking after it for generations to come." Muncaster has been director of Zwicker's, founded in 1886, for 45 years. He has a wealth of knowledge about the history of art and artist's materials, and brings this expertise to his fine-art gallery and framing shop, which works with private clients as well as museums and university galleries. Zwicker's frames anything from contemporary work using off-the-shelf mouldings, which run from $20 to $300 per foot, to million-dollar works that can carry the weight of hand-carved and hand-gilded custom frames, which run into the $12,000-and-up range. "Good framing should grow naturally out of the work itself, with the artwork dictating the framing style," Muncaster says, noting that as well as choosing a suitable moulding, clients should make sure that conservation-grade archival materials are used, such as acid-free backing, hinging and matting. He says that he seldom uses regular glass for glazing, choosing museum-quality ultraviolet-resistant glass instead. This filters out UV light, which damages artworks, especially those works on paper where fugitive colours have been used. "Everything done in the framing process should be reversible," Muncaster points out. "People should be able to open the frame and find that the artwork has not deteriorated, and is essentially in the same condition as it was when it was originally framed."

FRAMING Choosing a frame moulding that complements and enhances your artwork is an art in itself, so professional input is a must. Framing is also a vital step in protecting your artwork from physical damage. Museums and galleries can advise on trusted framing shops that will provide a variety of profiles, colours, materials, styles and textures to choose from.

MATTING Matboard provides a smooth visual transition between the artwork and the frame, and prevents the glass from touching the surface of the artwork. Because the matting is in direct contact with the artwork, only archival materials should be used.

GLAZING All glazing protects artwork against moisture, mould, insects and other physical damage. Regular glass is the most affordable option: it's scratch-resistant, but can break easily, and only filters about 50% of harmful UV rays. Non-glare glass is made by marking the surface with fine etching marks, so it can have a soft, fuzzy cast, and also has low UV protection. Plexiglas, shatterproof but easy to scratch, offers 60% UV protection and is lightweight, so is suitable for larger works. Conservation glass is made by applying a 97% UV-protection coating to regular glass, and is one grade down from museum-quality glass, which, as the name suggests, is the kind used by the best art institutions. It filters out 99% of UV rays and is glare-free. It's also the most expensive of the options available, but for good reason.

MICHAEL ADAMSON



Untitled, 2015, oil on canvas, 68 x 84 in, 173 x 214 cm

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1. The framing shop at Art Placement Inc. in Saskatoon. Photo Art Placement Inc.
2. Work by Jenine Marsh in the home of gallerist Simon Cole, Toronto, April 2015. Photo Christopher Dew

HOW TO PROTECT ARTWORK



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INSTALLING

"Using professional art installers will give you piece of mind that the art will not fall off the wall," says Ryan Barrett of Toronto's artverb*, naming one of every collector's greatest fears. Barrett states that the most common mistakes he sees in his business are people hanging works using wire, explaining that "professional art installers will always hang directly from two D-rings, so the artwork will not get 'out of level' over time," and using the wrong weight of hardware. He reveals, "Our rule is to double the weight, so if the artwork weighs 40 pounds, we'll hang it with two 50-pound rated hooks, meaning it has 100 pounds of wall support and is in a proper safety threshold." In a collector's home toolkit, Barrett recommends having "a tape measure, a hammer, premium-quality hardware, laser and spirit levels, a stud finder and a cordless drill. Also, a roll of thin, low-tack green painters' tape, for marking the wall instead of leaving messy pencil marks." His installers each travel with no less than six highly accurate levels. They are also equipped with adjustable museum hanging hardware that can save the day when confronted with large, heavy works or uneven walls.

HANDLING

Levi Nicholat, one of the owners of Art Placement Inc. in Saskatoon, advises collectors to always hold works with two hands, and strongly suggests finding a second person to help carry a work if it is large or heavy. Especially when dealing with delicate works, such as works on paper, "Always wear gloves," Nicholat says, "and never handle artworks with bare hands." He recommends that fragile artworks be kept in a rigid folder, portfolio or box, and "if a paper work needs to be lifted, hold gently but securely at the corners or edges of the sheet,and lift slowly, allowing the sheet to sag naturally in the middle—do not grip paper towards the centre, because it can easily be dented."

STORING AND TRANSPORTING

"At PACART," says president and director Mark Starling, "our mantra is 'regardless of value, each item entrusted to our care needs to be considered as an irreplaceable treasure.'" The company specializes in transporting valuable works of art, and takes every precaution to ensure that works do not incur damage while in transit. Using polyethylene to wrap and completely seal artworks, PACART's art handlers create a micro-environment that helps to mitigate the effects of fluctuating relative humidity. As for when works are on the move, Starling says, "they should be stored in the intended orientation, and generally not flat or stacked." He ensures that the "CAR principle" (care, attention and respect) is applied to each and every artwork that his company transports.



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CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION



1



2

1. An 18th-century painting showing various stages of cleaning.
2. A conservator at work. Images courtesy Odon Wagner Gallery, Toronto.

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

"Are your paintings dying of old age?" asks Odon Wagner, owner of Toronto's Odon Wagner Gallery, who first opened his business as a restoration studio in 1969. In art, as in life, wrinkles are an inevitable part of aging, but there are many professional treatments available to slow the process. Odon Wagner Gallery has since expanded to become a turnkey operation that buys and sells historical and contemporary art by more than 30 represented Canadian and international artists, provides appraisals and offers framing and installation services. Its full-time staff of conservators have extensive training in both science and art history, and work to stabilize, restore, preserve and prolong the lives of art objects using minimal intervention. Among many challenging restoration projects, they have saved a rare 17th-century German painting by transferring its gesso and paint layers from a warped wooden backing to a light and rigid aluminum-honeycomb cored panel, and rescued numerous Emily Carr paintings from disintegration due to acidic vapours from kraft-paper and plywood supports. "This is the most satisfying business you can imagine," Wagner says, "because there is almost always a solution." When wear and tear is determined to be irreversible, the best solution is to stabilize the work as much as possible, and to accept any imperfections as part of the history of the piece.

COMMON FORMS OF DAMAGE

UV LIGHT Both natural sunlight and artificial light cause pigments to fade and fibres to weaken. Install blinds or curtains on windows, glaze works with UV-resistant glass or Plexiglas and use incandescent, low-wattage light bulbs in rooms.

PHYSICAL DAMAGE Tears, dents and punctures are often caused by poor storage and handling practices. Make sure nothing leans on or touches the surface of an artwork when it is in transit or in storage by using foamcore or cardboard to keep works separated from each other.

MOISTURE AND HUMIDITY The ideal temperature for art is set at 20°C ± 1°C, with humidity levels at 50% ± 3%. Keep artwork out of damp, moist or poorly insulated areas of the home such as the kitchen, bathroom, attic and basement.

FIRE AND SMOKE These days, not many people smoke indoors or have active fireplaces in their homes, but many older works have suffered discolouration from nicotine, tar, soot and smoke residues. Artworks that have been affected by building fires will also have damage from synthetic materials burning nearby.

POOR RESTORATION Preventative conservation methods have advanced considerably since the 19th century, when heavy-handed restoration techniques resulted in crushed impasto, overpainting, skinning and structural deterioration due to organic materials decomposing or acidic vapours penetrating supports.

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Jack Bush, *Pink on Red* (1961)
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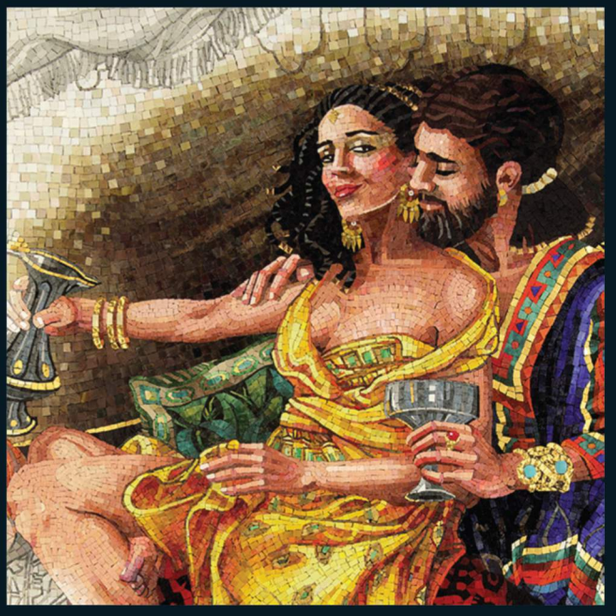
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"TA2" by Paul Robert Turner for TorontoART.ca.

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Judith Seducing Holofernes, 2014, detail. 73" x 96." Diptych. Byzantine smalti, millefiori, gold smalti, ceramic tiles on border. Honeycomb panel.
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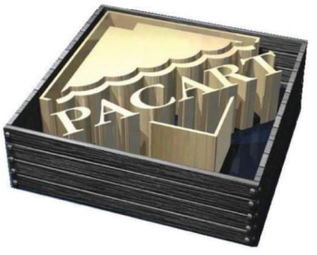
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WHAT'S IT WORTH?

INSURANCE

Standard homeowner-insurance policies usually set a limit of a few thousand dollars for all valuables, including jewellery and collectibles, so it's a good idea to add a special fine-art floater to your existing policy to include all the pieces in your collection. "Fine-art insurance policies should provide comprehensive coverage for your collection against major perils such as loss by fire, theft, water damage and damage during transport," says fine-art specialist Tannie Ng of Chubb Insurance, a company that specializes in insuring high-net-worth clients and their art and collectibles. "Accidental damage is by far the most frequent cause of loss due to the fragility of works and the special requirements in their care and handling." Below, Ng recommends some coverage options that are available through Chubb.

BLANKET COVERAGE This is a convenient option if your collection is comprised of items under $50,000 in value. "This enables you to cover smaller items under one total value without the need to schedule each work individually," explains Ng. "This approach makes it easy for you to add to your collection as long as you periodically increase the total blanket coverage as you continue to acquire and follow art-market values."

SCHEDULED COVERAGE A scheduled form has no minimum value, and allows you to list all the works in your collection by artist, title, year created, dimensions, medium and value. "You can also protect your collection through a mix of both blanket- and scheduled-coverage options," says Ng, "which allows you more flexibility in collection management and greater peace of mind that you have the right coverage in place."

"As much as possible, I try to personally meet all the artists; for me it is about supporting great people as much as it is about enjoying their work."
Rob Sobey, Pictou County

APPRAISALS

"The majority of the reports that I prepare in my appraisal practice," says Art Advisory.com's Kathryn Minard, a fine-art appraiser and certified member of the International Society of Appraisers, "are for insurance purposes and cultural-property donations." She defines an appraisal as "an objective and supportable opinion of value or estimate of cost based on an analysis of market information," and says that a professional appraiser "will be knowledgeable about the item, trained in research and valuation methodology and adhere to a code of ethics." Minard warns against hiring someone who collects a percentage of what a work's determined value is, because there may be a conflict of interests at play—instead, expect to pay an hourly rate, flat rate or fee per object. Most important to note, says Minard, is that appraisal reports "should conform to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice, a set of rules for developing and reporting an opinion of value or cost estimate, intended for both appraisers and users of appraisal reports."



An Evan Penny sculpture in the home of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais, Montreal, April 2015. Photo Eric Tschaeppeler

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LET ART BE THE ANCHOR

"The most significant artwork we have, in terms of a shift in how we live with our collection, is a piece we acquired about eight years ago," says Vancouver artist Jane Irwin, who is also co–vice chair of the Vancouver Art Gallery board of trustees and a Canadian Art Foundation board member. "It's a large installation by Simon Starling called *Inventar-Nr 8573 (Man Ray) 4m-400nm*, which we dedicated an entire room in our home to." Even if you're not yet ready to devote a spare room to house your art, there are still ways to make your home feel like an art gallery. Allow a large-scale artwork, or a grouping of smaller artworks—in a diptych, triptych, grid or cluster formation—to be the focus of a room, and build a visual game around the art. Create meaningful or unexpected groupings around certain concepts, themes, mediums or visual elements that are of particular interest to you, and extract shapes, colours or ideas present in the work to guide your decisions on what decorative items to position near the artwork in the room. Letting artwork take centre stage in a room allows it to function as a conversation piece and object to admire.

WHAT MAKES A COLLECTION "GOOD"?

At a University of Toronto Art Centre panel on the topic of collecting Canadian art in Toronto, gallery director Jessica Bradley defined a "good" collection as one that had the potential to become great because of the legacy it would leave in the future. She defined a good collection as being "rarely a democratic survey, but rather a series of connections and counterpoints between compelling works that build upon each other." Bradley continued, "Seen together, [these works] collectively produce a narrative of a given moment or moments of artistic concerns or debates. [The collector] may not at the time recognize entirely what those concerns and debates are, but in time they will become recognized as important, as having advanced and changed something."

GROW WITH YOUR COLLECTION

There's something to be said for keeping a collection feeling fresh by swapping out works for others. Toronto collector Bill Clarke has started a tradition of rearranging his collection on an annual basis, but perhaps you will decide to do so whenever a new piece is added. The placement of an artwork produces a narrative, and putting works in dialogue with each other can infuse a well-loved work with new life. The sum of a great collection is greater than its individual parts, and as your tastes diversify and expand, the works you add will lend depth, breadth and maturity to the collection as a whole. Your collection should tell a personal story and leave a legacy that is entirely your own. "An art collection is a barometer that speaks about our moods and the different periods in our lives," says Alexandre Taillefer, chairman of the board at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Always trust your instincts, pay attention to the visceral reactions you have and use your collection to express yourself.

LIVING WITH ART

"Living with other people's creativity around me inspires my own creative endeavours."
Bill Clarke, Toronto



Bill Clarke, who periodically rotates and rearranges his collection to keep things fresh, at home in Toronto, April 2015. Photo Christopher Dew

Bill Clarke, executive editor of *Magenta Magazine,* Toronto, Ontario

"I try to buy the best I can with the money I have," says Bill Clarke, who has amassed an impressive collection, focused on works on paper, with an average person's income. Clarke's collection feels like a snapshot of the Canadian art world at the turn of the 21st century, and its more than 200 pieces fit snugly into his apartment alongside other idiosyncratic collections. "I can usually only afford a single work rather than several, so I choose the one that resonates with me the most," Clarke says. "Often, it's the work that doesn't quite 'fit,' the one that sticks out at a show. I think, 'That's the experiment; that's the direction the artist is going in.'" The most he's spent on a single artwork is $3,000. "How much a piece of art costs is probably the least interesting way to assess its social, cultural, technical or historical value," he says. "It doesn't matter if an artwork is $50 or $5,000,000; if it makes you see the world in a different way, if you find it pleasurable to live with, that's where its real value lies."



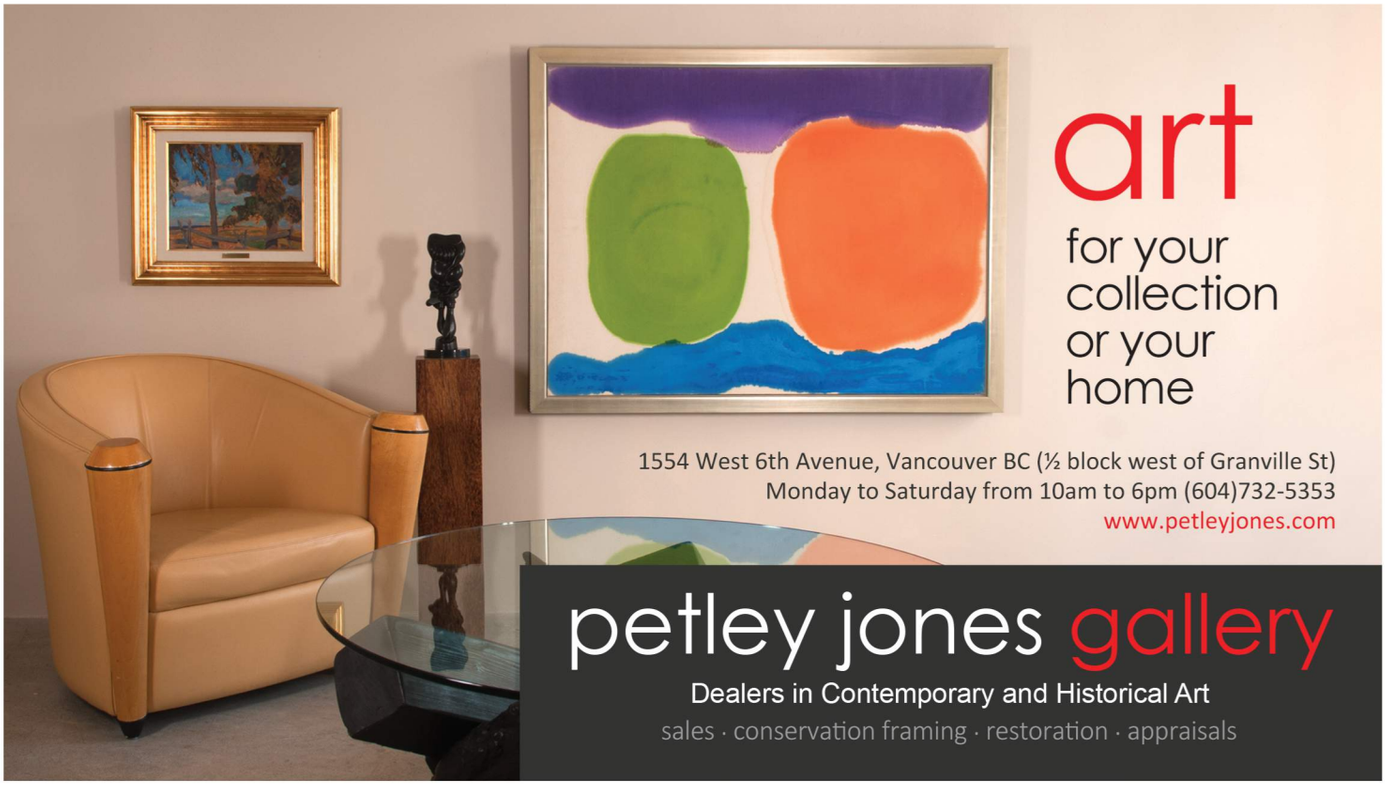

(detail) Amanda Reeves, Untitled #12-15, acrylic on canvas, 50" x 50"

Michael Levin, Canal Boats, archival ultrachrome print, ed. 9, 50" x 50"

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Jim Davies "Burning Plain" acrylic on canvas 55 x 62 inches

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Gerald Ferguson (1937-2009)



Lobster on Corinthian Capital with Wine Glass and Flowers, 1989. Enamel, acrylic and conté on canvas, 40" x 35"

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GreyChurch Collection and Project Space, Vancouver, with works (from left) by Jane Irwin, Marlo Pascual and Adad Hannah. Photo Scott Massey

Jane Irwin, artist, co–vice chair, Vancouver Art Gallery board of trustees, and board member, Canadian Art Foundation, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Jane Irwin and her husband, Ross Hill, are lifelong collectors. "We love to travel and explore history," says Irwin, "and through that we've acquired small collections of taxidermy, anatomical models, antiques, vintage clothing and more. In concert with our contemporary-art collection, our home is a well-curated wunderkammer." Irwin has fond memories of first encountering art as a child at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where she is now co–vice chair of the board of trustees. Motivated to support and give back to the community that fostered their own appreciation of art, Irwin and Hill open their collection space, GreyChurch, by appointment and often allow local visual-arts organizations to use it for residencies, lectures, performances and celebrations. As a practicing artist herself, Irwin realizes the need to provide opportunities for artists that are unfettered by bureaucracy and free to develop organically.



Paintings and sculptures live harmoniously at the home of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais, Montreal, April 2015. Photos Eric Tschaeppeler

Mary Dailey Desmarais, art historian, Montreal, Quebec

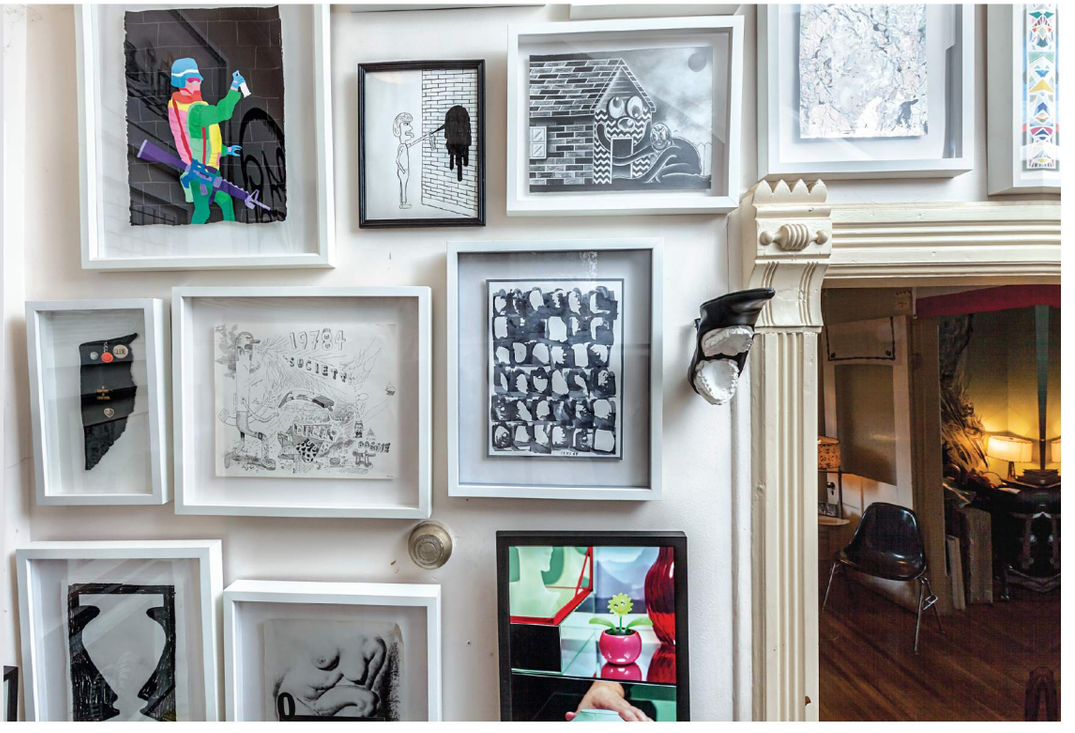
Mary Dailey Desmarais and her husband, Paul, have built up an impressive collection with a focus on historical and contemporary Inuit drawing and sculpture. Desmarais, an art historian, is also a self-professed American Civil War buff, an interest represented in the collection by works such as a Marc Séguin charcoal-on-canvas that depicts the attempted assassination plot on Abraham Lincoln. With her diverse, studied and eclectic tastes, it's fitting that her advice to new collectors is to "Research artists that you like, and spend at least a year looking around and developing your tastes." Despite the personal connections that she and her husband form with their acquisitions, they consider themselves custodians of their collection, and are happy to loan work out to exhibitions. They believe that collectors bear a responsibility, both to the artists they buy from and to the general populace, to make sure that purchased works continue to circulate and are seen by the public.

Rob Sobey, chair of the Sobey Art Foundation, Pictou County, Nova Scotia
Rob Sobey began collecting when he and his wife, Monique, bought their first house and decided to "ditch the rock posters and start acting like grown-ups." "We had the dubious honour of setting a record for a J.E.H. MacDonald work," says Sobey. "A close confidante pointed out how much contemporary art we'd be able to buy for that price, and that altered the course of the collection." The couple also collects track cars, and gets the same kind of excitement from securing an artwork as they do from winning a checkered flag. "I've been strapped into cheap race cars and have had the time of my life," says Sobey. "It's a reminder to me that good art need not be expensive." He is a member of a prominent art-collecting family that has been supporting the Canadian art scene for generations, but he and his wife only purchase artworks that they respond to on a personal level. His advice to new collectors is: "It's like a tattoo: get it for you alone, not someone else."



A salon-style hanging of historical Canadian works at the home of Rob and Monique Sobey in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, April 2015.

Simon Cole, director of Cooper Cole Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
Simon Cole's interest in the art world was influenced by growing up in graffiti and skateboard culture. At 23 years old, he maxed out his credit card to buy his "first real work of art." This experience not only sparked an interest in collecting, but also in the business side of the art world. At 25 years old, Cole quit his job and established a gallery in his apartment. Almost 10 years later, his gallery and artistic tastes have evolved. Text-based and humorous conceptual works, contemporary abstraction, photography and sculpture are all present in his collection. Cole is attracted to emerging art because it's generational, and also because he likes to support his friends' artistic practices. He collects in depth, often owning multiple works from a single artist. "It is important to collect at various stages of an artist's career," Cole says. "Continuous patronage helps artists to create more art, and you can watch the value of your collection increase over time as they become more established."



Works on paper, sculpture, video and mixed-media works at the home of Simon Cole, Toronto, April 2015. Photo Christopher Dew

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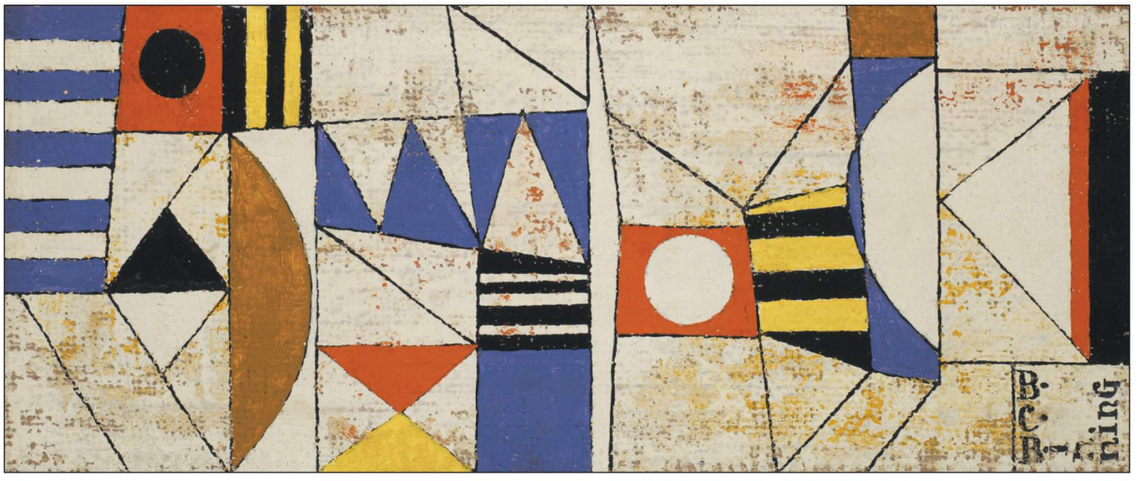
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