

Jacqueline Becker: Are you a Collector?



A hallway display in Bunny Mellon's Virginia estate. *Darren Higgins, The New York Times*

A good deal has been written about today's highfalutin world of art collecting, but little about how the 2015 art collector differs from those of the past, and what it means to be a "true" collector.

Only a few generations ago, dedicated collectors traditionally came from the very upper echelons of society. Secure in their wealth and privilege, some collectors sought to simply further enhance their social prestige. But the most interesting of the old world collectors were notoriously private people. The recent Sotheby's auction of the collection owned by the Rachel Lambert "Bunny" Mellon, gave us a rare glimpse into the world of one such ardent collector. Bunny was a legend. Independent, free spirited yet understated, she amassed a world class collection of 900 works. From baskets to Braque—she lived with it all at her farm in Virginia—including a Van Gogh still life above her bathtub. Her motto was, *"Nothing should be noticed."*

A new breed of current day art collectors, and art dealers, has reconfigured the landscape of the super charged world of art collecting.

Art has become, first and foremost, a financial investment. The recession of 2009 and the interconnectedness of financial markets all seeking a common currency are factors in this new focus on art as investment by a class of newly super rich. A small number of highly influential art dealers single handedly control the contemporary market by deciding who will be the next art star. Their clientele purchases said artist's work, and are thrilled to be in the know. Social media and high profile auctions serve to future the very public nature of the 2.0 collector. In some ways, high end art collecting has become more democratic, since it is wealth and connections, not pedigree, that sets the bar to entering this game. Art collecting in this rarefied realm is still the province of privilege, as it's always been, with the notable exception of those occasional astonishing collections that are created by extraordinarily astute collectors with extraordinarily little money. Bless them!



Former janitor Oscar Murillo's "Burrito" recently sold for \$322,000.00 at auction, a meteoric rise in price fueled at least as much by the marketing of his work by dealer David Zwirner as by inherent talent.

Photo courtesy of *Christies.com*

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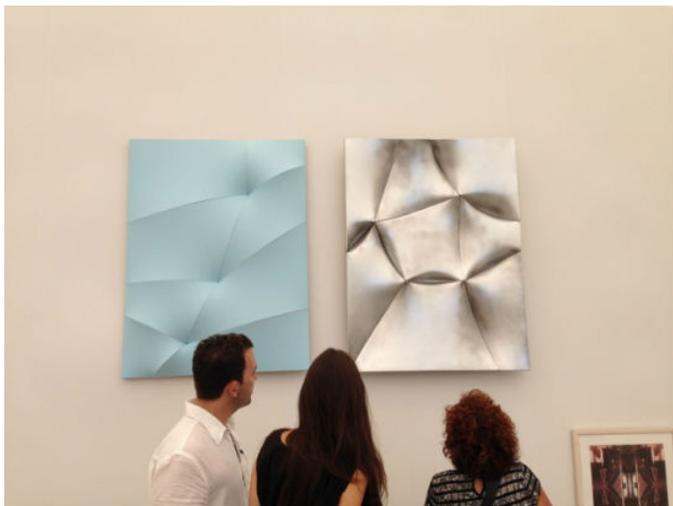
Photo Courtesy Jacqueline Becker Fine Arts Consulting Services

And then there are the rest of us collectors, with our small, personally significant art collections.

When you buy art work do you seek to invest your money, match your couch or feed your soul? Consumers often report their money is better spent on experiences than on things. Is that why so many art buyers purchase artwork on vacation, disregarding how it will find a place in their home in favor of its sure fire ability to evoke lasting happy memories? When we choose art work do we seek objects that encapsulate our unique definition of happiness, and as an added bonus complete our living spaces to perfection? Which comes first, the object or the experience it evokes?

Assembled over years or over an afternoon, your collection is as personal as you.

If you can say it is the experience that drives your pursuit of a work of art, you have the soul of a collector. Whether you own one or 100 works of art, if you buy what you love, free from the dictates of fashion or investment consultants- you are a collector. If you buy to be happy rather than to impress- you are a collector. Some collectors are blessed with great taste and originality. Others seek to hone their eye with the assistance of a trusted ally. Whether you stomp the hipster byways of Miami Basel or the no longer so new frontier of Boston's South End galleries, whether you walk the pavements for open studios, or buy your art on line, if what guides your art selection is love, not money, you are a collector.



At Miami Basel, engaging with the art of Jan Maarten Voskuil, acrylic on shaped canvas. Photo courtesy Jacqueline Becker Fine Arts Consulting Service

Since 1982, the award winning firm of Jacqueline Becker Fine Arts Consulting Services has been guiding residential and commercial clients in finding their perfect art work. Jacqui holds an MA in Art History and a BA in Journalism, and has been thrilled to share her passion for art collecting with live and print audiences throughout New England.

JACQUELINE BECKER
FINE ARTS CONSULTING SERVICES

Jacqueline Becker Fine Arts Consulting Services
Newton, MA | O: 617-527-6169 | C: 617-513-6856
info@beckerfinearts.com