



# magpie

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## PICK OF THE PICS

dubai is to get a major international-grade photographic exhibition in March

## BEST OF THE BOOKS

the dubai literary festival is back, bigger, better, brighter and longer than ever

## ME AND MY STUDIO

big sounds and lots of them come from a small corner of chad glass's villa

## A CAPITAL FESTIVAL

the abu dhabi festival programme looks like one of the best yet: from straight classical to clever jazz picks

# COLLECTING ART FOR BEGINNERS

Last month Carbon 12 founder Kourosh Nouri outlined the principles of pricing an emerging artist, a process that's necessary for the gallery but should also be useful to the collector. Let's see how to choose the 'right' artist ...

With a good understanding of how a Base Price is arrived at for an inspiring artist, let's navigate the world of the collector – researching, comparing, and finally selecting an artist.

There's an ocean of choice, of course. So what makes one artist a better or more interesting acquisition rather than another?

For a start let's avoid the "buy what you love" fallacy. Stick to the golden rule:

## Do your homework

And what does that mean? There are plenty of good (or totally wrong!) reasons why two artists in the same category are priced differently, and your level of knowledge and the astuteness with which you collect the data will determine the best answer. So here are four basic moves:

### 1. Read the literature and collect the necessary documentation.

As with most businesses, the art industry has a large pool of qualitative and quantitative information which can point you to an acquisition of a work from a contemporary (living) artist.

Study the artist's biography, find out where he or she is based and works, get a list of exhibitions – especially participations in Biennial and museum shows – and read the com-

mentaries and artists' statements, do the same permanent collections where his/her works are displayed, trawl the internet and the art magazines for articles about the artist's work.

### 2. See the art in person.

Don't miss the opportunity to discover an artist and judge them after seeing a show. It's not called visual art for nothing: looking at art is an intellectual and an emotional experience, and it starts with what you're looking at. The eyes transmit electrical pulses to the brain, and the brain allows your heart to rock ...

Millions are invested each year by galleries in putting together great shows, and years have been invested by artists to make this possible. The more art you see, the better you can evaluate it. So when travelling, always visit museums and galleries. Get into good habits ...

And it's easy to check out a show. Enter the gallery, read the exhibition text while you

are viewing the work, ask any questions you have. Take your time, ask as many questions as you want (and there are no stupid questions), let the gallery do the work of explaining and justifying. This is what I call establishing a level of comfort between the gallery and the collector.

### 3. Contact the gallery representing the artist.

You need to be straightforward; introduce yourself, state your request, share your intentions. That should make a good impression and elicit the right kind of response. Bear in mind that collectors have a reputation to protect, and you want the books galleries to regard you as a serious and respectful person.

The galleries should be equally concerned with their own reputation. It is our professional duty to respond to any email, and unless you send a very cryptic email most galleries will get back to you within 48 hours.

The kind of response you get is a great test of

the gallery; the degree of professionalism will indicate whether the artist is in good hands, and that in turn suggests whether you as a client/collector will also be treated correctly.

Artists are represented by several categories of galleries, differentiated by factors like how long they have been in business, how specialised they are, and the number of artists they represent and how established those artists are.

Some great artists are represented by young galleries, and some very mediocre artists by blue chip galleries. There is no way to make an immediate assessment about the type of gallery where your favourite artist is represented. It's about the quality of the gallery's programme – exhibitions and their represented artists, the museums and biennials they deal with, the art fairs they take part in, and so on.

But a professional gallery is a commercial

institution generating profit only by selling art and by knowing about their core business. It is safe to eliminate from your research those galleries who do furniture, jewellery, clothing, design or run a parallel business, no matter how 'arty' they want to appear to be.

### 4. Use the internet.

There are plenty of online platforms, some even selling art directly, some pointing you at bricks-and-mortar establishments, many offering news, information and background.

Personally I think artsy.net offers a professional platform, and other research platforms such as artifacts.net or artprice.com should feature in your research. Remember that most of the platforms are not free for the galleries (and sometimes for the artists) that they reference. So you need to learn how to read between the lines – on some platform the galleries paying the highest membership fees get

significantly better exposure. If a great artist represented by a great gallery doesn't jump out to you it – or is not listed at all – that doesn't mean you should be alarmed.

In addition you have tools such as Facebook and Instagram, and you might be surprised by the conversations you can generate via social media. Most galleries, gallerists and artists have their own accounts; quite often we get contacted on Instagram, and we end up sharing great load of information with those interested in our represented artists ...

This has a pleasantly informal quality that ameliorates the hard commercial edge.

But at the last, as the fabulous Rumi beautifully summarised back in the 13th century: "Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment."



Bernhard Buhmann, Untitled, Oil on canvas, 2015, 200x150 cm, image copyright the artist, courtesy Carbon 12



Bernhard Buhmann, artworks copyright the artist, image courtesy Carbon 12

