



national contemporary art rental

Welcome to Australian Art Review



Partner Links

NSW

Agathon Galleries
 Artfocus Gallery & Studio
 Cudgegong Gallery
 Delmar Gallery
 Harrison Galleries
 Hogarth Galleries Aboriginal Art Centre
 Jeffrey Baker Art
 Macquarie University Gallery
 Mosman Gallery
 Orange Regional
 Paddington Contemporary Fine Art
 TVH Gallery
 Woollahra Times

VIC

Blue Door Gallery
 Boscia Galleries
 Jenny Pihan Fine Art
 Kozminsky
 Ladner & Fell
 Manningham Gallery
 Ngapa Gallery
 Thierry B. Gallery
 Vivien Anderson

QLD

Desert Rain - Indigenous Fine Art
 Robyn Bauer Studio Gallery

WA

Artitja Fine Art
 Gadfly Gallery
 Gomboc Gallery
 Short St Gallery

NT

Aboriginal Fine Arts
 Boomerang Art Aboriginal Art Gallery
 Central Art Gallery
 Injalak Arts
 Mason Gallery
 Mbantua Gallery and Cultural Museum
 Mimi Arts
 Northern Editions

SA

Dacou Aboriginal Gallery
 Gallerie Australis
 Soma Galleries

TAS

Art Mob
 Smibert Studio Gallery

SERVICES

Allplastics Engineering
 Art Gallery Society NSW
 C & Art Transport
 Chroma Australia
 Magnascan
 Tiwi Art Network

First Steps

June 2007 | Elizabeth Fortescue

Elizabeth Ann MacGregor giggles when she remembers the episode of *Absolutely Fabulous* where Eddy (Jennifer Saunders) tells an art gallery assistant to "drop the attitude" because she's just a shop girl.

Macgregor is director of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, and she and her curators are constantly in the marketplace on behalf of the MCA, seeking out the art of today and backing their educated hunches about which artists will outlast the fads and fashions of the day.

But even Macgregor was once a beginner collector, and was a prey to all those feelings of inadequacy which cause many a would-be buyer to pause on the marble step of their first gallery. What are they doing here, they wonder, without a Jeeves parked out the front to cart the money around?

Well, pause no more. You can become an art collector without being wealthy, and your judgement can be cultivated and refined by the simplest means.

You can create a highly personal collection and surround yourself with objects that will lift your heart every time you see them. All you really need is to trust your own judgement and take that leap of faith. Once you've bought your first piece of art, you will probably find you never stop collecting - even when the walls at home are already groaning with the fruit of your passion.

That's what happened to Shirli Kirschner, a business-woman who shares her large and expanding collection with friends, allowing them to enjoy some of her works in their own homes or offices.

Kirschner's collection began when she paid for the restoration and framing of a work by Ben Macala, the black South African artist, which had belonged to her parents. After that, she was off and running. She developed the habit of buying a new piece of art to mark significant life events - like the first oil painting she ever bought. That was a Tanya Chaly painting of a woman emerging from a network of scratchings. Kirschner purchased it in 1996 when she started her own business.

Experienced collectors learn to trust their own eye, and that is a skill starters need to develop. Don't buy artists purely because the market has endorsed them and they are popular. As Kirschner points out, plenty of well-known artists have turned out a certain number of duds, and when they come up at auction a beginner might buy one on name alone.

What you must do is understand and refine your own aesthetic.

Your first port of call is the local newsagency or gallery, where you can pick up art magazines like *Australian Art Review* featuring guides to Australia's galleries and what they are showing, often with maps and contact details included (also check www.artreview.com.au). Even the gallery advertisements in magazines provide some background. Armed with this, be prepared to wear out a bit of shoe leather. If you like, you can sniff out the galleries on the web before you set out.

Stuart Purves, owner of Australian Galleries in Sydney and Melbourne - who has helped many people start a collection, and who has various collections of his own - suggests spending four consecutive weekends doing the rounds of the galleries in your metropolitan area.

"At the end of that, you work out which of the galleries you liked and the work you liked. You will probably like the people in those galleries, too" Purves said.

"Talk to the gallery owner and say you are interested in looking at some works of art. By the sixth week, you buy something. Then you should back your judgement. Dive in at a certain point, otherwise you will never get off the ground. You live with the work and you either like it or not. It talks to you or it doesn't. Or it causes you to have an intellectual battle with it. It's a cultural discourse."

New collectors can also have fun looking for art in unexpected places. Elizabeth Ann Macgregor suggests finding out where the hip young artist-run spaces are located. Then



FREE Listings for Galleries, Artists and Services . . . [CLICK HERE!](#)



AASD AUSTRALIAN ART SALES DIGEST



Brett Whiteley, *The Olgas for Ernest Giles*, sold for \$3,480,000, June 2007.

This and more than 300,000 auction results of over 11,400 Australian and New Zealand artists available online.

The Australian Art Sales Digest
www.aasd.com.au

[Free Racing Form Guides](#)

Free formguides for all australian horse & harness racing.
www.way2bet.com.au

[Modern Aboriginal Art](#)

Browse Centred Art's online gallery and prepare to be surprised!
www.centredart.com.au/gallery/0

[Wedding Photographers](#)

Over 35 to choose from... View portfolios and galleries here
www.yourwedding.com.au

[ARTERY - Aboriginal Art](#)

New artworks arriving weekly. Be the first to see them online -
www.artery.com.au

there are the so-called degree shows held by all the big art schools towards the end of each year.

Learning about art is endless, and you can go to art fairs and public lectures, read books and flip through art magazines like this one. It will all increase your awareness and help develop your taste, and your ability to recognise good art from mediocre.

Macgregor suggests visiting public galleries and museums and educating your eye by looking at what their curators have acquired for the collection, particularly in the genre that you like and want to collect.

Macgregor also recommends doing some research on prices to find out what is reasonable and to ensure that your inexperience doesn't cause you to pay too much.

Stuart Purves discourages new collectors from having a preconceived idea about whether they should specialise in one particular genre or artist. "Your collection will grow with you," he said, "even taking a different turn as your sophistication and understanding increases". And don't be afraid to follow your instincts. "If you buy something and don't want it, you can always sell it," Purves said. "But if you miss out on something, you will be sorry all your life."

People buy art for love or for investment, and often for a mixture of the two. If you see art as an investment, then find an art consultant to give you informed advice. Don't take advice exclusively from the dealer who is selling to you.

A few final tips: consider buying a work on paper (see aAR issue 13) and storing it flat while you save up to have it framed. It's your birthday? Why not ask friends and family to put something towards an artwork you've chosen?

"Shirli Kirschner recommends checking the options for the re-sale of any artwork you are buying, since not all artworks are suitable for sale by auction. Remember to ask the dealer who represents the artist whether he or she will re-sell the work for you down the track, should the need arise."

And finally, one of Stuart Purves' collections was until recently on show at the Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest in Sydney. The collection is of art by members of a group called Arts Project Australia (APA), which is based in Melbourne. Purves said other venues for the exhibition are in negotiation and he hopes the show will tour extensively. It is titled *Pearls of Arts Project Australia: The Stuart Purves Collection*.

APA was founded in Melbourne in 1974 for artists with an intellectual disability to exhibit their work in the same dignified and respectful way as other artists. Purves has collected about 180 APA works over the last 10 years. He bought his first ones for his grandchildren and kept going when he saw how fabulous they looked on the walls.

Image: John R. Walker, *Untitled*, 1988, watercolour on paper, 125cm x 97cm. Courtesy Utopia Gallery, Sydney.

Art Gallery of Auction - where should you buy?

Sydney art dealer Nicky Ginsberg prefers galleries.

"The auction houses are for people who are too afraid to have an opinion of their own," Ginsberg says. "They are people who can afford to go up the higher end. It's all investment." Ginsberg said she is more about buying art for love and treating any increase in value as "a lovely surprise".

David Hulme, of Banziger Hulme Fine Art Consultants, encourages clients to buy at auction as well as from reputable galleries. Hulme argues that a work is "validated" when it appears in an auction catalogue and can be resold at auction - even quite soon after purchase, if the need arose. If the piece were sold again for the same price, the main loss to the original buyer would be the 20 percent buyer's premium paid at purchase.

Hulme also prefers clients buying Aboriginal art to do so at auction because a work's inclusion in the catalogue gives it a provenance, or history.

Also, Hulme said, art bought from a high quality auction room has a commodity value, while works purchased from a gallery often have no actual re-sale value and may never have. The exception is work by artists such as Peter Booth, Rick Amor or Bill Henson, who have both established secondary market and gallery values.

Ginsberg argues that the fun of collecting is in supporting emerging artists, honing your nose for the stars of tomorrow, and enjoying spin-offs such as studio visits. Any increase in value will be a bonus.

She said an "amazing" artwork can be bought for between \$1000 and \$5000. Works on paper can be even cheaper. As for researching an artist's prices, various market reports and on-line databases can be accessed by subscription. And be aware of the difference between fine art and decorative art. The latter can be worth nothing once you've bought it.

What about gallery commissions? They range between one third and 40 percent.



Web www.artreview.com.au