

The “Collectors Show” at grayDUCK Gallery

Collecting the collectors and showing Austin what they’ve got

By Wayne Alan Brenner, 10:00AM, Wed. May 24, 2017



Collectors: Elisa & Joel Sumner

The “Collectors Show” at grayDUCK Gallery on East Cesar Chavez is, as you might guess, a show about collectors. Or, rather, about what you might infer about collectors (of visual art) from what they collect.

But that’s only a possible subtext, actually, that inference; and so let’s not put the cart before the horse. Let’s, instead, mix it up a bit, putting portions of the cart before portions of the horse, first deconstructing that cart into several pieces and then placing those pieces between pieces of separately vitrined horse-corpse, like a riff on Damien Hirst’s cow-based *Some Comfort Gained from the Acceptance of the Inherent Lies in Everything* – the sort of riff (so equine and in motion, no less) that enhanced the Tarsem Singh movie *The Cell*, remember?

Now that’s an image, hey? An image of something we’d like to collect, for sure – even though our humble home doesn’t quite have the space, and we haven’t the funds to acquire such an artwork in any case. Because Damien Hirst, right?

However.

There’s a world of art out there, of countless types and mediums and price-points, and much of it resides in galleries before it’s taken into a private collection by an appreciative citizen. And now Jill Schroeder, owner and curator at the elegant and adventurous grayDUCK Gallery, has outfitted her venue with an exhibition of works that local collectors have collected.

“There were three main reasons to have the ‘Collectors Show,’” Schroeder tells us. “First, I wanted to acknowledge and thank those people who champion the artists in our community. Each of the collectors in the show has a different story about why and how they buy art, but the common theme is that they all buy what they love. Collectors are vital to the existence of an art community, and they deserve to be celebrated. That leads me to the second reason for the show: To inspire new collectors. There seems to be a misconception about why art is worth buying, about how to decide what to buy and for what price. The couples and individual collectors represented in the show are amazing spokespeople for the cause. Lastly, this is a new take on a big, diverse group show. 85% of the work on display is local to Texas. And this again goes toward inspiring people to buy art – there’s fantastic, important art being made here. It’s worth supporting.”

The collectors featured in this show are: Ann Berman & Shawn Smith, Mike Chesser, Anastasia & Jay Colombo, Donald R. Mullins, Shalini Ramanathan & Chris Tomlinson, and Elisa & Joel Sumner.

We recently asked the Elisa half of that Sumner couple a few questions about this show that includes her and her husband’s collection. Thus:

Austin Chronicle: What’s it like, having your collection be part of grayDUCK’s “Collectors” artshow?

Elisa Sumner: It’s both cool and weird at the same time. We love evangelizing the great work that Austin artists do – and this show gives us a fantastic opportunity to talk about art, encourage others, and meet others who enjoy collecting. We also get to watch other people’s reaction as they see it, and hear what their impression is. It becomes a new perspective on work that’s become familiar to us. We’ve had people congratulate us – but, really, all we did is buy it, the artists deserve the billing. And this show’s a great way to peek at more collections – we loved some of the things that others had purchased and we became more familiar with artists who are new to us.

AC: Do the works on display represent a full time spectrum of your holdings, or are they things more recently acquired, or ... ?

ES: Jill looked at everything we had and everything everyone else had in order to make a cohesive show. That way it wasn’t a jumble of “greatest hits,” but it also can’t be a full picture of any of our collections. All of our pieces in the show are from Austin artists – which is the bulk of our collection. Most of the artists are still doing work, so people who like pieces could potentially get something like it for themselves. The work on display was purchased between 2009 - 2016, so it’s a good mix.

AC: What’s your advice for people wanting to collect art – especially local art? What’s the best way to go about such a thing?

ES: Well, first, come to the “Collectors Show” and see the wide range of really good work that’s available here in Austin. Then, join Art Alliance Austin and go to the Art Breaks to get deeper looks from gallerists and the artists themselves. Read the Chronicle for recommendations and reviews and recommendations for current shows. Spend the day at the next East Austin Studio Tour, seeing all the art you can. Grab a catalog and find artists and galleries showing work that appeals to you – watercolors, photography, collage, dog pictures, just about everything is covered in the tour. And just buy your first piece – that’s the biggest hurdle. Find something that hits you and that you can afford. You’ll be amazed at how great it feels to have original art in your home!

Note: The "Collectors Show" is at grayDUCK Gallery through June 18.