

For the Love of Art

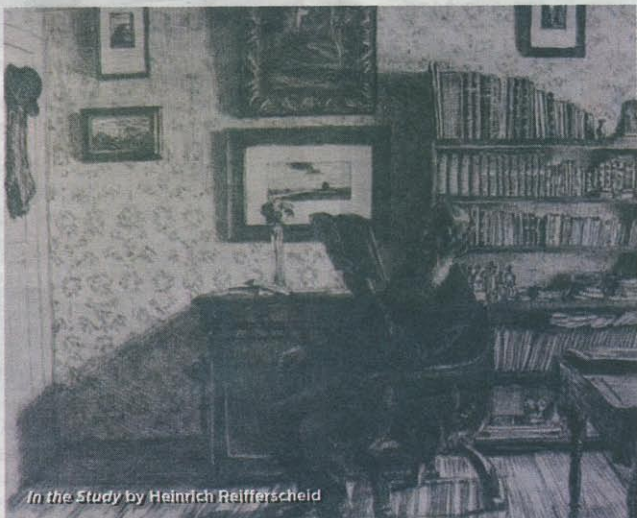
Bert Gallery peeks into an extensive private collection

Art by Renee Doucette

In a city known as "The Creative Capital," artists are important players. The influence of emerging and established artists is felt at openings on Providence Gallery Night, at artist studios like the Steel Yard, or even in projects run by the city to decorate utility boxes with their designs; despite all of this, we tend to overlook one key player: the collector. Perhaps they are forgotten because there are so few here in Providence, but they are the saviors for every artist. Like sweet puppies in the window, each artwork is searching for that perfect owner to bring it home to display. Without a collector, work is forgotten after an opening and when the show closes, it returns to someone's inventory to be kept safe in storage. It is for our pleasure that Bert Gallery is giving the public the chance to peek into one man's private journey as a collector through its exhibit, *The Passionate Collector*.

At the family's request, the man who amassed 3,000 works of art has been kept anonymous, but a selection of his collection of drawings and etchings has been allowed to be re-released into the market to find new homes. A distinctive element of this man's collection is that unlike many high brow contemporary collectors, he was drawn to technique and talent rather than to celebrity status: names like Andy Warhol and Pablo Picasso, whose overly inflated markets continue to set standards every art auction season. This is good news for those who may never be compared to the likes of those superstars, meaning there is a potential collector out there for every artist.

Catherine Bert, director of Bert Gallery, has taken care in this exhibit to remove any intimidation factors about art collecting. In most museums and galleries, work is hung at eye level, creating a ring around the room; for this exhibit Bert hangs pieces how they might be displayed in a collector's home. While every one is worth reflection, there are a few that stand out. A series of etchings by Anton Schutz done in imperial Japan captures a history before industry arrived on the island. The image of the Sacred Bridge



of Nikko is a wonderful example of the changes in Japan when compared to a present day photograph of the same location. Another series of etchings worth noting is by the late 19th century French artist Félix Hilaire Buhot. *Un Debarquement en Angleterre* is a rare work showing several etchings on a single piece of paper. The owl stamps on half of these works were added when Buhot felt he created a truly perfect edition.

A watercolor artist to look out for in the exhibit is the late H.A. Dyer. A native Rhode Islander, Dyer held the position of president at the Providence Art Club from 1905-1914. He mastered the watercolor technique to the point that it becomes difficult to distinguish whether the medium is indeed watercolor before checking the wall plaque. Dyer drifted back into moderate obscurity after his death. This exhibition helps recharge the late artist's reputation by reminding viewers that over 100 years ago Providence was already a creative capital.

Anyone can be an art collector, though many use the excuse that they "don't know much about art" as a way to remove themselves from this unique world. The fact is that even though many may not be able to recognize a Rembrandt etching without reading

the wall plaque, we are all visual people. We know what we like and what we don't by what we see, and as a result by how it makes us feel. This is the reason that Catherine Bert is holding a panel discussion August 18, the same night as Gallery Night, to teach people about art collecting. Though wealthy patrons of the arts like John Paul Getty, Dr. Albert Barnes and Francois Pinault are names typically associated with collecting, people like Dorothy and Herb Vogel, who were mere civil servants, are sometimes forgotten. These two managed to collect over 4,000 works over the course of 45 years on meager salaries. The Vogels collected art according to what they liked, and not who made it. Many people might spend their bonus checks on a vacation or a fancy pair of stilettos as a reward, but the purchase of a work of art, no matter who created it, is a reward that lasts far longer than a vacation and is more comfortable than a pair of high heels. Collecting art not only helps the artist, but it helps us to appreciate the finer things.

The Passionate Collector
Through August 26
Bert Gallery
540 South Water Street
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