



COURTESY OF THE MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID



COURTESY OF THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** *EL CARDENAL*, BY RAFAEL, OIL ON BOARD, MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID, FROM THE RECENT *EL RETRATO DEL RENACIMIENTO* EXHIBITION. **ABOVE:** *LUNCHEON OF THE BOATING PARTY*, BY PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR, OIL ON CANVAS, THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

## *keys to collecting art*

BY MICHELLE F. SOLOMON

IN TODAY'S VOLATILE INVESTMENT MARKET, RATHER THAN STUFFING YOUR MONEY UNDER A MATTRESS FOR SAFEKEEPING, IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA TO LOOK AT OTHER PLACES TO PUT YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH. MANY AN ART-LOVER HAS DISCOVERED THAT INVESTING IN THE RIGHT MASTERPIECE, NO MATTER HOW LARGE OR SMALL, ISN'T ONLY A SMART MOVE FINANCIALLY IF DONE RIGHT BUT CAN BE A REWARDING ENDEAVOR IN MANY WAYS.

**B**ut where to begin? Misconceptions about owning art have been around as long as art itself. Most people believe that they can never become an "art collector" because the quality of work that will appreciate is far out of their financial reach. "Getting over the intimidation factor is actually the first step in becoming a collector," says Josh Garrick, owner of Millenia Fine Art in Orlando. Another good first step is to find a reputable art partner, such as a gallery owner, a museum curator, or an appraiser that can help you decide what's within your reach, observes art appraiser Allison Gee, based in Phoenix. "They can help you to locate a good art match for your taste and stay within the amount of money you tell them you are willing to spend," she says. And, believe it or not, there are ways to own marquee artists' work, such as a Van Gogh, Miró, Dalí, or Picasso, without getting bamboozled into buying a fake or breaking the bank to obtain an authentic master work. Here are some ways to begin building a collection.



PASTORALE, BY VASILY KANDINSKY, OIL ON CANVAS, SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK, FROM VASILY KANDINSKY: *THE BEGINNINGS* EXHIBITION AT THE GUGGENHEIM.

## *learn what you like*

Across the board, experts agree that it's never a bad investment to buy what you like. "Go to art museums and galleries and discover what captures your attention, what speaks to you," advises Gee. Garrick agrees that visiting art spaces and educating yourself will lead you in the direction of what you might want to buy. "There's nothing more personal, and wonderful, than buying your first piece of art," he says. It's also a good idea to seek out advice from experts such as gallery owners, museum docents and curators, art appraisers, and art dealers, all of who can work with you to decipher how the right piece can reflect your tastes and preferences. "Advice shouldn't cost you a dime," says Gee.

Other resources include publications like *artnet.com*, *American Art Review*, and *Gordon's Print Price Annual*, which has 50,000 international auction prices for prints in all price ranges sold during an auction year.

## *decide what to get*

There are a lot of options when it comes to artwork. While paintings and sculptures are obvious options, there are mediums that bear mentioning that can often be affordable, even if they were created by big names like Picasso or Dalí.

**Prints.** These are original works created through one or more of the classic printmaking techniques. These include lithography (drawing an image on a flat stone and transferring it to paper using a special press); intaglio (scratching or etching an image onto a metal plate and transferring it to paper); linoleum or wood cut (carving an image into linoleum or wood, inking it, and transferring it to paper); mono-printing (drawing or painting on a material like glass and then transferring it to paper with a press); and screen printing (using a stencil, a fine screen, and ink to transfer an image to paper). Prints are usually produced in limited edition, signed by the artist, and numbered, for example from 1 to 50. "The smaller the edition size of the group, the more rare it is," says Gee. This generally makes a print from a group of 50 more collectible than one from, say, a group of 500.

Now, often people will call a reproduction of a work a print, such as a poster of a famous painting. But it's important to keep in mind that a collectible print is an original work, not a reproduction of a famous painting like Picasso's *Guernica*. To that end, you'll find original prints listed in a given artist's catalogue raisonné, which can offer a complete overview and a detailed listing of everything the artist has created.

**Artist's proofs.** These are a special subset of the limited edition. The practice started when prints were created on a press. The artist would examine every 10th print from the press during printing and personally approve it. "In reality, artist's proofs are a way to increase the size of an edition, generally up to 10 percent. They are the same quality and value as the number examples of the edition," explained the late Alan Klevit, an art expert and author of *Art Collecting 101*. There are letters that will appear on prints: AP, EA, and PA; all three stand for artist proof. English-speaking printers use AP. In France, it is EA, the abbreviation for *épreuve d'artiste*, according to Klevit. In Spain, PA is the abbreviation for *Prova d'artista*.



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HAND, BY ERNŐ BERDA, GELATIN SILVER PRINT, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C., PATRONS' PERMANENT FUND



COURTESY OF THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.  
*THE BLUE ROOM*, BY PABLO PICASSO, OIL ON CANVAS, THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.  
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**Remarques.** These are original pen-and-ink or pencil drawings done by the artist within the border margin in the lower corner of the print. These are usually considered valuable.

**Giclée prints.** Pronounced “zhee-clay,” giclée means “to spray,” and these works result from the process of printing the image from a digital scan. A giclée “can be quite colorful and realistic, even gaudy, with lots of ink splashed on the surface,” according to Klevit. That said, the author warned that “its value should be no more than a hundred bucks.”

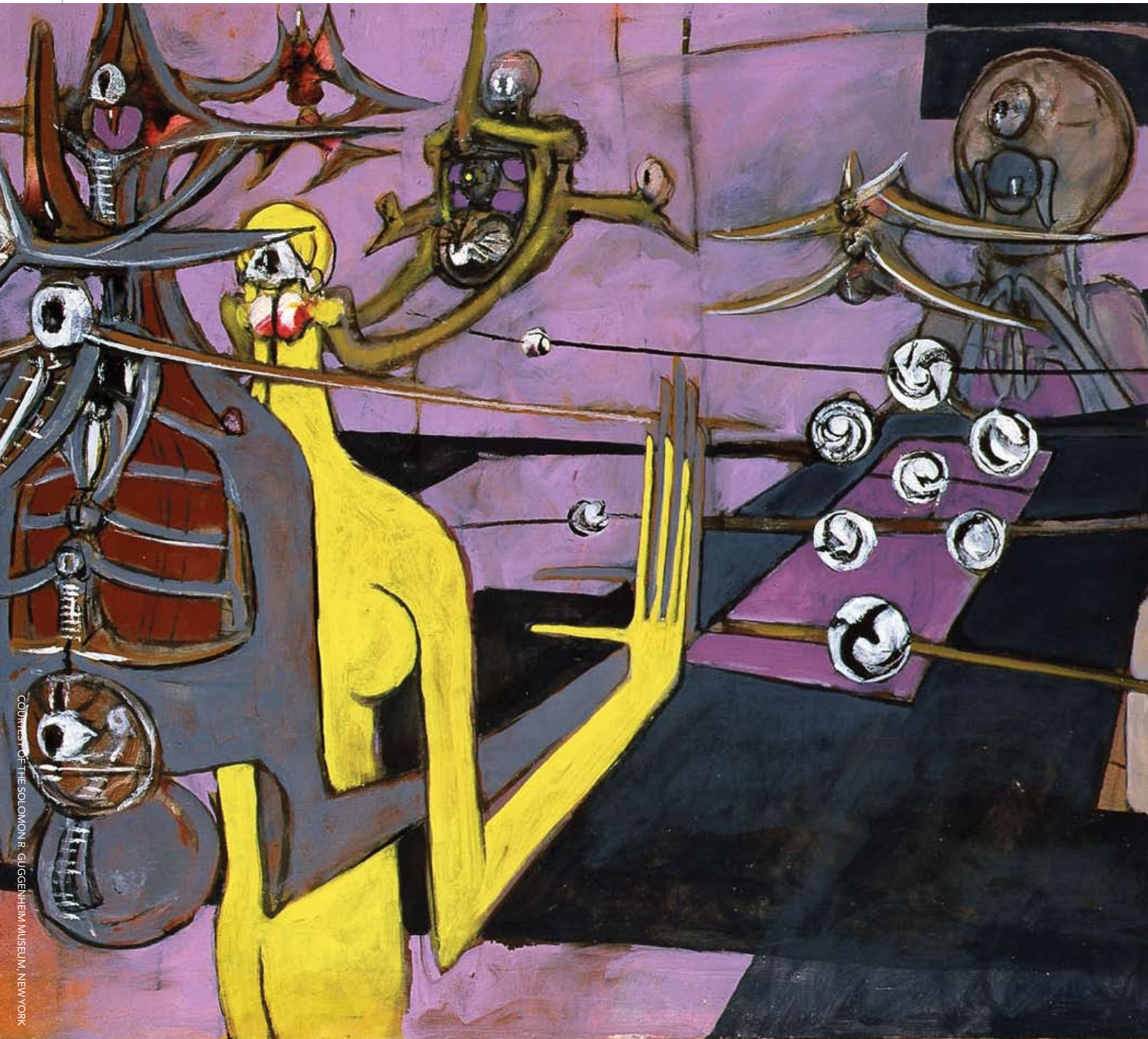
### *don't get faked out*

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. You get what you pay for. Certificates of authenticity are meaningless. Our experts agree that having someone on your side to make sure that you don't get a fabulous fake that is worth nothing is priceless.

Some other misconceptions to help you get the most for your money include the old-school thinking that an antique is always worth more than something new. “Just because something is very old doesn't mean it will be worth something. Also, if an artist is dead, that doesn't mean that the artwork will automatically go up in value,” says Gee. In addition, beware of art that is sold on the internet, on the side of the road, or in a nonsanctioned auction. Finally, when looking at a piece to buy, you may want the dealer to show you the catalogue raisonné of the artist's work, which will list the piece. If the dealer doesn't have the catalogue, art museum libraries or an art appraiser may be able to help locate a catalogue raisonné of an artist. “This could be done to make sure your piece matches what the catalogue describes,” says Gee.

### *start small*

For those just starting out collecting without big budgets, smaller may be better. “That is how I advise people to begin, then when they get their feet wet, they can think in larger terms,” says Garrick. His own personal collection contains a work by Robert Rauschenberg. “I'm very happy with the little Rauschenberg, which was in my price range when I bought it,” he says. The piece has appreciated. “Try to get the best quality that you can afford,” counsels Gee.



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*EACH AND*, BY MATTA, A.K.A. ROBERTO SEBASTIÁN MATTA ECHAURREN, OIL ON CANVAS, SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK FROM THE SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION: NEW YORK IN THE 1940S EXHIBITION



COURTESY OF THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

*SUPER-MALE (ALFRED JARRY) [NADSAMEC (A. JARRY)]*, BY JINDRICH HEISLER, GELATIN SILVER PRINT (HAND-COLORED) OF PHOTOMONTAGE, SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

### *go off the beaten path*

If you're interested in owning something by a well-known artist, there are ways to add a masterwork to your collection by scouting out some of their off-the-beaten-path works. Picasso, for instance, did a number of ceramics, sculptures, and prints. "Some of his ceramics are fun and fabulous," says Gee. To make some of the bigger-name works accessible, Garrick suggests old-fashioned bargaining. "I negotiated with a gallery for a piece of art I wanted but that I didn't have the amount of money for. I was able to pay for it over time in the same way someone pays for a car. Many times they are happy to do it," he says.

### *get in tune*

Just like real estate is location, location, location, art is about artist, artist, artist. It's still the big names that fetch the dollars at auctions, no doubt about it. "Supply and demand creates value," says Gee.

To get a sense of whether a certain work has investment potential, it's best to be in tune with what's selling. Research a particular artist that you may be interested in and see what their track record has been at auctions. You can also read industry magazines like those cited earlier. According to our sources, right now photography is a hot seller, especially works by Spencer Tunick and James Turrell. "Photography has definitely experienced a rebirth," agrees Shelley Liles, owner of Gallery One in Nashville. The contemporary fine art specialist also sees another trend emerging in the current art market. "There is a lot of interest in contemporary art from Asia," says Liles. In March, a record was set during Sotheby's auction *Contemporary Art Asia: China, Korea, Japan* for a Chinese contemporary ink painting, which sold for \$451,000.

Of course, predicting that a work of art will give you a return on your investment is as difficult as choosing the right stock. "No reputable dealer will tell you that something you buy has investment potential. There's no way to predict it," says Gee. Garrick's advice is to adopt the right perspective in making art purchases. "Think of it as an investment in the financial, but also an investment in you. Indeed, the whole idea is to surround yourself with what pleases you," he says.