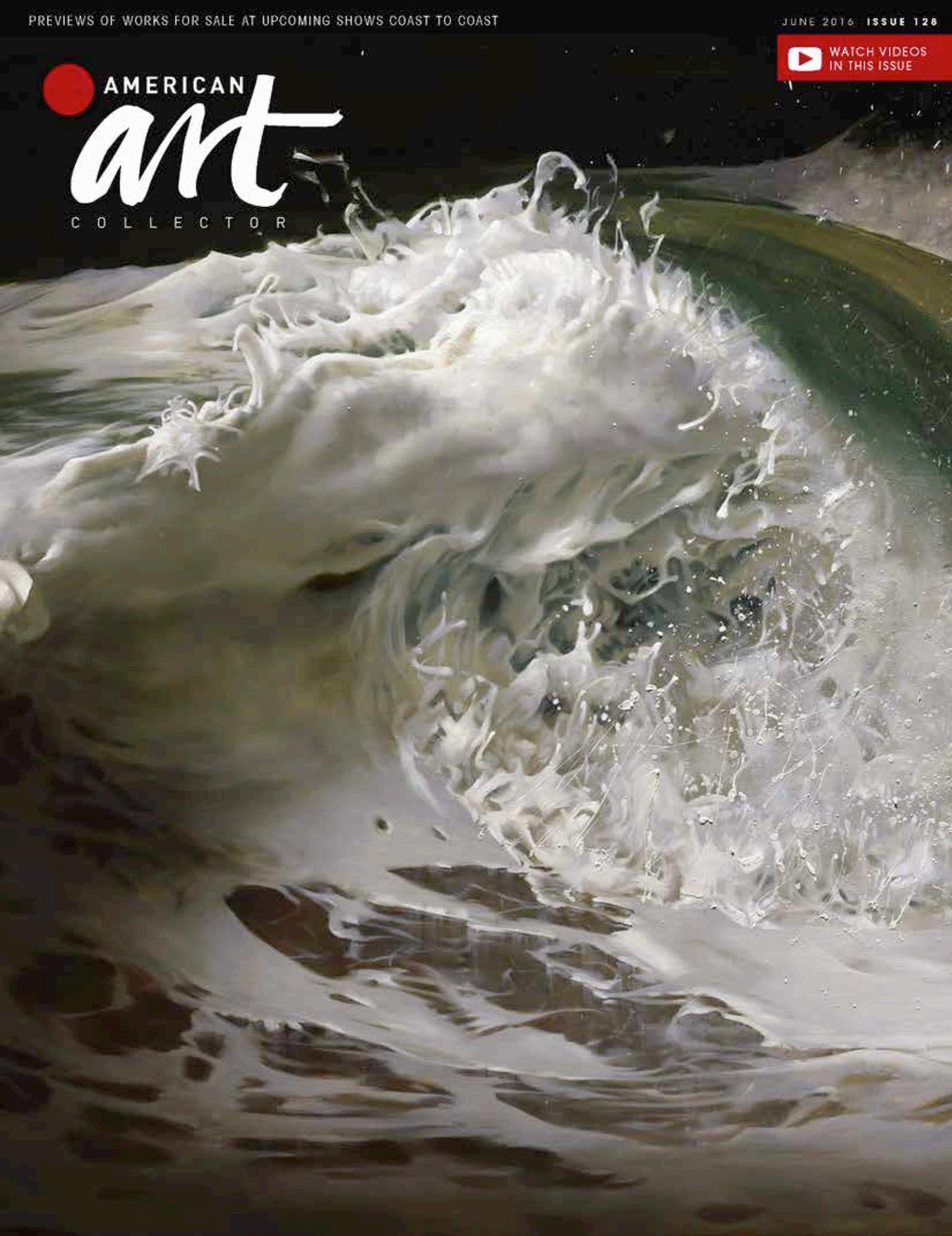




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AMERICAN
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LOYAL READER

LYLE SARNEVITZ USES AMERICAN ART COLLECTOR
TO PURCHASE ARTWORK FOR HIS EVER-EXPANDING
COLLECTION OF REALISM.

BY JOHN O'HERN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANCIS SMITH



COLLECTOR HOME

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To the left is Jonas Schaab's *Paparazzi*; Bryan El Castillo's *8th Street*; Robert Longo's lithograph from the *Men in the City* series; Andrew Woodward's *Manhattan Rises*; Ben Schonzeit's *Roses*; and Rob Brooks' *Alewife*. Displayed around the room are items from a collection of Weller, Roseville and other art pottery.



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2 To the left on the stairway is *Trophy Girlfriend* by Miroslav Antić. Next to it are, top to bottom, David Arms' *Fear Not*; Gregory Poulin's *Halloween Hat*; and Ed Stitt's *114 The Fenway*. Emily Eveleth's *Separate Tables* hangs above the doorway. To the right are Lu Cong's *Lola Act III* and Vincent Giarrano's *Twenty One*. Beneath them is a piece from a collection of California pottery. In the living room are *Route 485* by Sarah Supplee (1941-1997) and Amy Lind's *Star*.

3 On the upper left in the Folk Art room are, top to bottom, Diana Card's *Fireflies*; Mary Shelley's *Diner*, which is a three-dimensional wood carving; Ric Howard's *A Day On The Rocks*; and Marion Crow's *Halloween*. The large horizontal painting is Janet Munro's *Winter Scene*. The remaining four paintings are by Rosebee.

4 Hanging above the door is Scott Prior's *Nanny*. To the left of the door are an encaustic by Scott Griffin and a piece from the California pottery collection. To the right are Monica Cook's *Hope St. Studio NY*; Andrew Haines' *Keith's House*; Nathan Ritterpusch's *Old Enough to Be My Mother #48*; Harold Radcliffe's *Cups, Saucers, Bowls, and Pots*; and Prior's *Halloween*. In the hall are Haines' *Street Scene* and Peter Edlund's *Homage To James Byrd*.

5 Reflected in the bedroom mirror is Julia Jacquette's *Women In Bed II*. To the right are Jhina Alvarado's *Sundays Best*; Patricia Chidlaw's *Motel*; and Ethan Diehl's *Navigator*.

Lyle Sarnevitz has a degree in business with a concentration in entrepreneurship and new venture management. "I really always loved art and always wanted to create," he admits. "I was never given any encouragement and thought it would never be. So I decided to collect."

He bought his first piece when he was 18 during the summer after his freshman year at Northeastern University in Boston. It was a collograph at Mary Ryan's gallery in Rockport. It was priced at \$125, which he couldn't afford. Ryan encouraged him to pay it off, \$10 a month. Boston's famed Newbury Street is a short

walk from Northeastern. He visited the galleries there as often as he could. He fell in love with WPA-era prints from the '30s and began buying them, always paying over time. "I kept buying," he says. "I was always paying off something."

"After college I ran a custom framing gallery in Lexington, a suburb of Boston. I closed it after six months and began to deal privately," he continues. "I had to deal in prints to raise money to collect. I handwrote letter after letter and sent them off and would put together catalogs to mail to clients. For every 20 letters I sent out I might get one response.

The big problem, though, was that I wanted to keep the prints."

He ran a poster shop in Boston for 15 years but continued to deal in prints, building a reputation for always handling the best. He says, "I would rediscover artists and go and buy them out. There was one artist in New York City who had maybe a couple hundred prints and I bought them all.

"I would travel all over the country visiting artists, buying art to sell, and keeping some for myself," he continues. "I had three main collectors who would always buy from me. They were very competitive so I would tell each of them that I was offering a piece to them first.

"One day I opened a print



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by Charles Sheeler and found that even with all the protection it had, some light had gotten in and it was stained," he adds. "I decided then to sell that part of my collection, about 1,000 pieces, and to concentrate on contemporary realism."

Sarnevitz moved to North Carolina and had to buy a five-bedroom house to hold his collection of contemporary realism. "One bedroom is for overflow," he explains. "I enjoy every painting and sit in different rooms to enjoy them."

He is a fan of *American Art Collector* and often finds pieces in the magazine that appeal to him. He had seen Amy Lind's *Star* in the November 2010 issue and fell in love with it. He tore out the image, as he does when he finds something he likes, and put it aside. The painting was 5 feet by 4 feet and he was sure he didn't have enough wall space for it. When a friend invited him to go to Charleston, he knew he had to stop by Robert Lange Studios to see the painting. He says, "I met Megan Lange and she showed me the painting. Within 10 minutes I knew it was going home with me." He found a place for it.

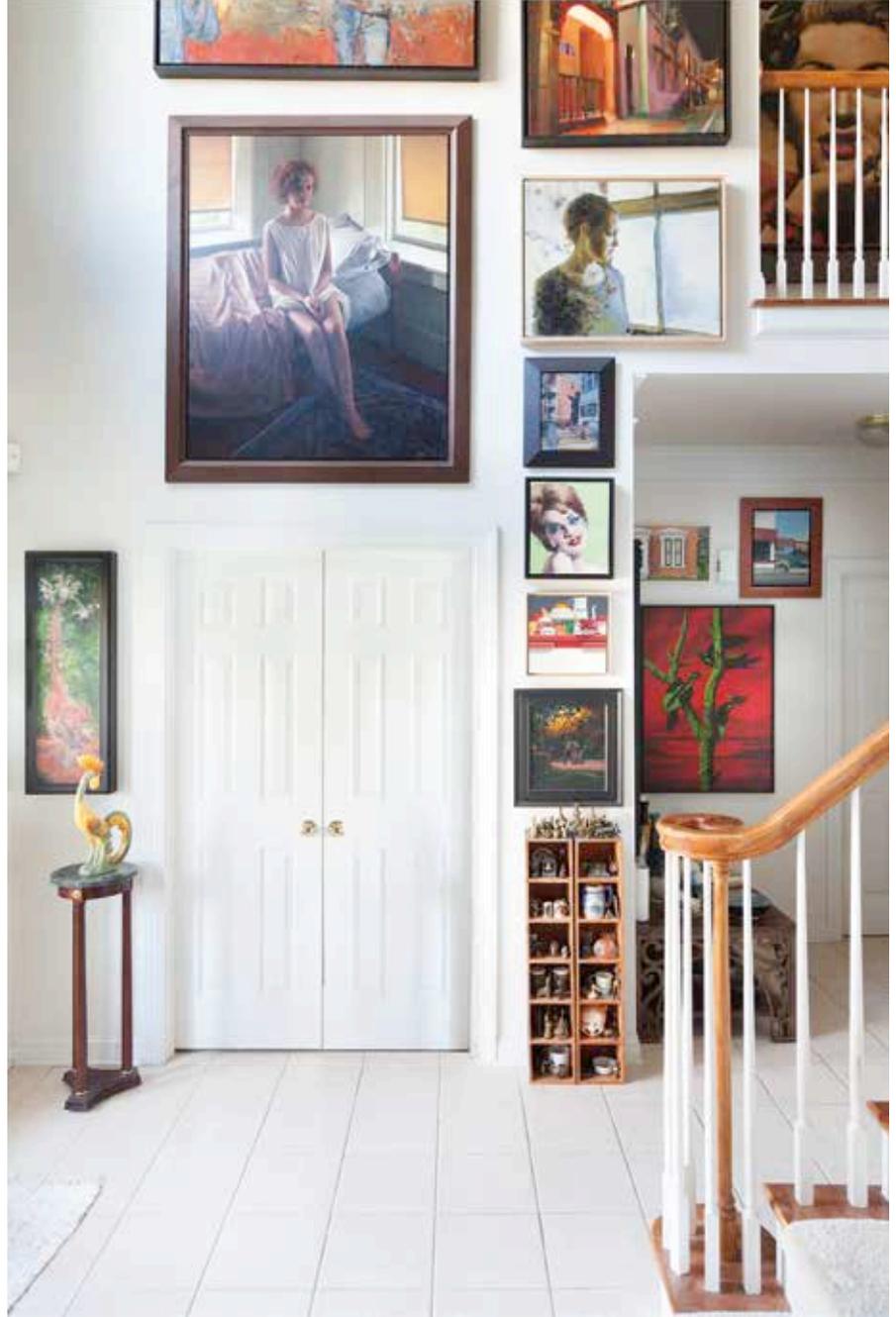
"It's just beautiful," he explains. "She's so sensual and sexy and contemplative looking. The curtain's about to go up and she knows she's going to have to go out there and perform."

In the case of a painting by Vincent Giarrano, "I had to let it sit on the floor for a couple of hours and then it dawned on me where it should go," says Sarnevitz.

When he first saw Scott Prior's portrait of his wife, Nanny, Sarnevitz thought it was too expensive for him at the time. But, as he acknowledges, "Where there's a will, there's a way." He bought the painting with four monthly payments. "She's so sensual," he says. "And very pensive. To a man, the most beautiful thing in the world is a woman."

He doesn't collect nudes, preferring the sensual and evocative. "When I saw Miroslav Antić's *Trophy Girlfriend*, another guy wanted to buy it. His girlfriend wouldn't let him so I was able to get it," he explains.

Almost overshadowed among the nearly 140 paintings (he's hoping to get to the 150 mark) is a collection of art pottery. A tradition among New England collectors and browsers is the Brimfield Antique Flea Market held several times over the summer in Brimfield, Massachusetts, between Worcester and Springfield. The market opens at sunrise. "I would get up at 4 in the morning and make my first walk around with a flashlight," Sarnevitz confesses. "You have to get there early because of the



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6 From the left are Julia Katz's *Dance* and Kim Cogan's *Garden Of Eden*. The large painting is Ben Freeman's *Seduction*. To the right are, from top to bottom, Jacqueline Bishop's *Temple of Flora* and Adrienne Stein's *Red Bride*. On the adjoining wall, top to bottom, are *Bremmer Gaffers* by Barnett Rubenstein (1923-2002); Benjamin Shamback's *Rainbow Roses*; and Ben Aronson's *Twilight Rain, Boston*.

7 Above the fireplace is Ben Schonzeit's *Roses* and to the right is Rob Brooks' *Alewife*. On the adjoining wall is *3 March 2006* by Lynn Boggess. The pottery is by Roseville, Weller and other art potters.

8 The top two paintings on the left are Oriana Kacicek's *Cupcake* and *Orange Creamsicle*. Beneath them are Jhina Alvarado's *Purple Birds*; Kimberly MacNeille's *Niagara*; and Annie Dover's *Shake it Up*. The large painting on the right is Zachary Proctor's *Amid a Crowd of Stars*.



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From the left are Karen Ann Myers' *Striped Zig Zag*; Suzanne Vincent's *Shower*; Paul Kelley's *On Crescent Beach*; Sara Scribner's *By Her Hand The Wind Swirled And Danced*; and Sarah Helsers' *Lilac Hem*. On the right wall are, left to right and top to bottom, Tracy Harris' *Hammered*; Scribner's *Spring*, Seamus Conley's *Untitled II*; and Sandra Jones' *Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree*.

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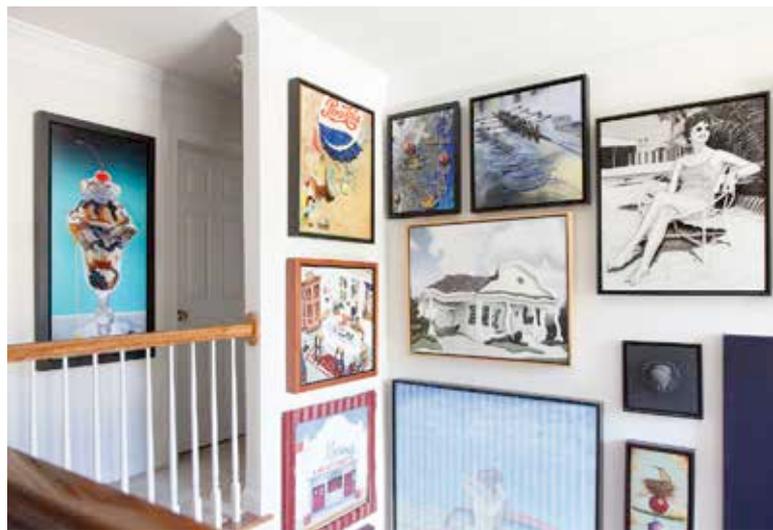
Mary Ellen Johnson's *Hot Fudge Sunday* hangs in the hall. To the right are, from top to bottom, Michael Mew's *Pepsi Generation*; *Dining Room* by Nan Hass Feldman; and Jude O'Connor's *Baronet Theater*. On the facing wall are Jerry Bernstein's *Coastline* and Kay Bradner's *Early Morning Crew*, which hang above Robert Selwyn's *House III*. To the right is David Lyle's *Interstate Oasis*. Beneath it is a small cast-paper relief by the collector.



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competition. Then I'd walk the field a second time to see what I'd missed. I found prints galore and would restore them and take them to my clients in New York. The third walk was to find some souvenirs. Every year I'd buy one or two pieces of Roseville pottery. I bought books on Roseville and Weller. I also found a great Stangl art deco pottery vase at Brimfield.

"After I moved to Charlotte," he continues, "I started buying California pottery, mostly on eBay. It's becoming rarer and rarer to find quality pieces. I also have 30 to 40 pieces of carnival chalkware, all in near mint condition. I have Pinocchio and the Lone Ranger

among others. If you want a particular piece and if you wait long enough, it will eventually turn up. It's called patience."

Among all his interests, his collection of contemporary realist paintings is his pride and joy. "Paintings give your eyes so much pleasure," he explains. "I pride myself in finding young artists whose work is still reasonable. I always say, 'Go to reputable galleries. See it. Like it. Buy it.' Artwork is affordable. Remember that the work is going to hang on your wall for years. An expensive piece may have cost you \$100 a year. You still have the piece and you will always enjoy it." ●

John O'Hern, who has retired after 30 years in the museum business, specifically as the Executive Director and Curator of the Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, N.Y., is the originator of the internationally acclaimed Re-presenting Representation exhibitions which promote realism in its many guises. John was chair of the Artists Panel of the New York State Council on the Arts. He writes for gallery publications around the world, including regular monthly features on Art Market Insights and on Sculpture in Western Art Collector magazine.

