

The Virginian-Pilot

PilotOnline.com

November 27, 2011

Region's art collectors share their works

by Theresa Annas

An exhibition at the Chrysler Museum of Art is proof that this region's art collectors are growing more sophisticated and plentiful.

"Our Community Collects: From Dürer to Warhol and Beyond" features more than 160 works from 40-plus local collections. The show runs the gamut, opening with 16th century old masters Albrecht Dürer and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, and going straight through to contemporary works such as video art and glass art.

In between, you'll find American Impressionists Mary Cassatt and John Singer Sargent, a Winslow Homer and another late 19th century American artist, Albert Bierstadt. The show also includes lots of appealing lesser knowns as well as big names: Thomas Hart Benton. Grant Wood. Frank Stella. Robert Motherwell. Tara Donovan.

The museum mounted a similar show featuring local collections nearly two decades ago, but the selection wasn't as impressive.

Many of the collectors are prominent citizens who have been associated with the Chrysler.

We interviewed three of the collectors. Each had their own tastes and approaches, but all bought more out of passion than for investment.

"I guess the best advice people give you is 'buy what you love,'" Joan Brock said. "Life's very short. We might as well enjoy it with beautiful things."

Martha and Rob Goodman

Rob Goodman has had the collecting bug since his days at Dartmouth, where the Norfolk attorney enjoyed art courses.

On his honeymoon with Martha, the two bought art. They eventually made it a family affair, spreading their enthusiasm for original works to their two children.

The clan's attitude: "If we like it, and it's within our budget, we try to collect it," Rob Goodman said.

Their Oceanfront home is modern, so they've leaned toward contemporary works. One of their most cutting-edged pieces is in the show – "Bird's Eye: Chapters I, II and III," a video art piece by Daniel Phillips.

Phillips' work is usually installed in the couple's entryway.

"We kind of want people to feel, when they come in, that there is art in the house," Martha Goodman said.

In "Bird's Eye," the artist is shown in his studio, from a bird's-eye view, toting work materials here and there. "He's telling a little story of creating something," Rob Goodman said.

Phillips was commissioned to create a video for screens inside the Virginia Beach Convention Center; Goodman instigated the commissioning of videos at the center as part of his push to make Virginia Beach a hub for video art.



Daniel Phillips, Bird's Eye Chapter I, 2008, video still

By contrast, Vik Muniz's "Grace Kelly" is almost conventional. The Brazilian artist was lent a pile of diamonds with which to make art and came up with his "Diamond Divas" series – likenesses of famous women, based on Andy Warhol's portraits but created solely with gems, which he then photographed.

"We really just liked the piece," Martha Goodman said. "Muniz makes art from odd things, like sand or chocolate syrup, these diamonds."

When a friend who advises them on art purchases sent them images from Muniz's series, the couple forwarded them to their children.

"We asked them, 'What do you think?' They may not get as big a vote as we do, but it's fun to have those discussions."