How to Collect Emerging Art in 7 Easy Steps

By
Rebecca Wilson
Chief Curator, Saatchi Online
Director, Saatchi Gallery

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Discover art. Get discovered.
About the Author

Rebecca Wilson is Chief Curator of Saatchi Online and a Director at the Saatchi Gallery. In May 2006 she brought her expertise from 14 years in book and art magazine publishing to the Saatchi Gallery, where she was instrumental in the launch of the gallery’s online presence.

In 2007 she created New Sensations, a prize for art students which identifies and supports the most exciting emerging artists. Rebecca was formerly editor of ArtReview and deputy editor of Modern Painters.

About Saatchi Online

Saatchi Online is a platform that allows emerging artists to showcase and sell their work, and gives art lovers insider access to new talent from around the world.

Started by London’s renowned Saatchi Gallery, Saatchi Online aims to continue the gallery’s legacy of promoting new, contemporary talent and bringing great art to a wide audience.

A place for first-time buyers and serious collectors alike, Saatchi Online introduces emerging artists through a carefully curated environment. Featuring a diverse range of mediums and price ranges, Saatchi Online makes it easy for anyone to purchase art – and we’ll deliver it directly from the artist to you, anywhere in the world.

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Chapter 1
A little history
(or, you don’t have to be a Rockefeller to buy art)

Damien Hirst’s The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991) exhibited at the Saatchi Gallery in London
For centuries people have been collecting and buying art, whether to be surrounded at home by beautiful works or for investment reasons or both. The Medici family were huge patrons of the arts during the Renaissance, commissioning new works by emerging artists of the day and acquiring works that they loved by major names in the history of art such as Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci. This shrewd banking family also had their eyes on the potential financial rewards to be gained from supporting new artists.

The Medicis had a lot of money to spend on art but there are other well-known collectors whose pockets weren’t nearly so deep. Take, for example, the American couple Herbert and Dorothy Vogel who lived in a one-bedroom apartment in New York and in the 1960s began buying art. Herbert was a postal clerk and Dorothy worked as a librarian. They both loved art, never paid any attention to what critics or galleries thought and had just two rules: first, they had to fall in love with the work, and second, it had to be small enough for them to carry home on foot. The Vogels ended up with an astonishing collection of over 4,000 works by big name artists such as Lichtenstein, Donald Judd and Chuck Close. In 1992 they gave their collection to the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.

This kind of passion – even obsession – is not unusual in the art world. Charles Saatchi, whose mission to support emerging artists carries on today through Saatchi Online, has been visiting galleries, artists’ studios and out-of-the-way warehouses every week for the last 30 years and his curiosity in young, emerging artists has not dwindled.
He was the first person to buy the works of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, and the Saatchi Gallery was the first UK gallery to show the works of Richard Serra, Jeff Koons, Cy Twombly and Cindy Sherman. The works in the Saatchi Gallery collection are now displayed in rotating exhibitions in a 70,000-square foot museum in London’s Chelsea, which is free for everyone to visit.

Buying art from commercial galleries can be an intimidating experience and it is still the preserve of an exclusive group of people who have big budgets. Buying works directly from artists is also very hard to do unless you have ways of accessing them, which most people don’t.

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The internet has made art much more widely accessible to people all over the world, and for the first time, buying art is becoming more possible for anyone who is interested, would like something to hang on their walls or would like to begin assembling a range of works that might one day build into a collection.

Saatchi Online’s mission is to bring together artists and people who love art, to give expert advice about works to buy, and to enable people to buy works at reasonable prices direct from the artists’ studios.

Who knows – you might even catch the art bug that has kept Charles Saatchi scouring the studios of the world for nearly 30 years, and inspired the Vogels to name their cats Manet and Renoir.
Chapter 2
Doing the Knowledge

Art world tourists: Duane Hanson's life-size sculpture Tourists II (1998)
There are two first steps to buying art – one is that you see a work, fall in love with it and buy it there and then; the second is that you spend time going to exhibitions, degree shows at art colleges, and do plenty of background research.

There is of course a third way, which is a combination of the two.

Doing a little research can help you make informed decisions about what you are buying and give you confidence when trying to understand what it is about a work that you like. Reading art magazines and the arts sections of newspapers is a good way to get a feel for what is going on in the art world, even if the way some critics write about art is incomprehensible and unnecessarily convoluted (remember: the Vogels didn’t care two hoots what the critics said).

Go to lots of exhibitions so that you expand the range of visual material you are exposed to. Even if you don’t read up on every work you see, these experiences will stay with you and help to inform what you buy yourself.

Explore what’s going on in new emerging markets such as South Korea, Brazil, Japan, China, India and Russia. Saatchi Online has some specific collections of emerging art from these areas to help you find out more about these very exciting growing art hubs.

If you want to get your eye in on new trends you could try going to degree shows at art colleges where young artists exhibit the fruits of their BA and MA studies. This will alert you to new trends among emerging artists and is a great way to get your finger on the pulse of what is up-and-coming.

This can be a time-consuming process so to make it easier for you, we run a prize for graduates called New Sensations, now in its 7th year. This
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This can be a time-consuming process so to make it easier for you, we run a prize for graduates called New Sensations, now in its 7th year. This is a prize for UK graduates and gives people a short-cut to the best emerging artists from all over the country. Each year people come to the New Sensations exhibition in London to spot the next Damien Hirst, the latest rising star.

If you can’t get to London to see the exhibition, you can also explore the New Sensations Prize online at: www.saatchionline/newsensations

And watch this space as we’ll be launching New Sensations in different countries in 2014.
Chapter 3
Falling in Love

Luo Yung, Valentine’s Day,
courtesy Saatchi Online

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A recent survey carried out by University College London determined that looking at beautiful works of art has the same impact on the brain as falling in love with a person (or dog). The brain of each participant in the survey was scanned as they looked at paintings by Botticelli and Monet, and the blood flow to the part of the brain associated with pleasure and desire increased by as much as 10 per cent.

We all know that looking at art makes us feel better but, thanks to this scientific survey, we now know what is actually going on in our brains.

When you make any purchase you need to fall in love with the piece of art you are buying. If the work inspires in you a strong feeling, you can imagine it in your home and have an instinct that this is a work you will enjoy having around, then proceed with your purchase with confidence.

You Complete Me
Pawel Przewlocki, You Complete Me, courtesy Saatchi Online

Here are some questions that you might want to think about as you look at possible works to buy:

- How does the work make me feel?
- What is it that I like about it? The colours, the shapes and forms, the subject matter?
- Or is the fact that I can’t put my finger on what it is about it that I like, exactly why I like it?
- Does it make me see the world a little differently?
- Do I have a particular place in mind for it? Above a sofa, in a bedroom?

Larisa Ilieva’s Sunrise and Paulo Uccello pays homage to the Renaissance artist commissioned to create several works by the Medici family
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Martin Stranka is a young Czech photographer whose arresting works have won him awards in many competitions all over the world.

Christina Mitrentse’s works make a striking threesome perfectly in alignment with this sofa – and would be a perfect gift for book lovers.

Kazua Tsui and Alex Hanna’s works go harmoniously together in this bedroom.

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Chapter 4

How deep are my pockets?

An auction of works by Damien Hirst taking place at Sotheby’s
The stories about the art world that hit the press tend to be about works selling for millions, but focusing on work by emerging artists means that you can acquire beautiful works at reasonable prices and find works within your budget.

Buying online can also be a very economical and efficient way of purchasing art as you don’t have to pay the usual gallery commission of 50% and you can browse through a lot of works easily without having to traipse around many galleries that have small inventories before finding something you like.

When deciding that you would like to buy a work of art, it’s a good idea to establish your budget and stick to it. Then within your price range, look and see what works are available – for example, for the same price you might be able to buy a painting or a limited edition photograph or a piece of sculpture.

Here are some selections of works available on Saatchi Online in the categories of painting, photography and sculpture, which will help you to discover what is available at what prices.

Saatchi Online artists set their own prices based on previous sales, their level of experience, awards won, education, and the time spent on making each piece of work. All the prices are vetted by Saatchi Online’s team of curators and if anything seems awry we contact the artist and make necessary adjustments.

When determining your budget, also bear in mind the cost of shipping the work to you – a cost which is always covered by the buyer – and if the work comes framed or not. If you are buying a photograph (sometimes this applies to paintings as well but it is essential to consider when buying photography) find out whether the work comes mounted and/or framed or if that will be an extra cost.

Here are some additional collections of available works in popular affordable price ranges:

**Original Works for $1000 and Under**
- OVERFLOW BY DAGRUN AND BOOM
- THE BOAT BY PIER

**Originals Works for $500 and Under**
- GIULIA PESARIN AND KEVIN SLOAN

For just $350 you could buy this painting by Jim Harris

This large-scale framed abstract painting by Italian artist Michele Senesi is $2000

Grazyna Smalej’s oil on canvas painting entitled The Couple is $1200

**For just $350 you could buy this painting by Jim Harris**

Abstract Painting
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The Naked Eye: New Photography

Object Lessons: Contemporary Sculpture

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Chapter 5
Curating Your Own Collection
The best advice when it comes to acquiring art is always to buy what you love. And this applies whether you decide to buy one piece of art for a specific place in your home or a selection of works.

Many famous collectors have acquired a wide range of works from painting to photography and sculpture. The Rubells collect all kinds of contemporary artworks and now have one of the largest private collections in the world, which you can visit in Miami. Charles Saatchi has for 30 years been acquiring works from all over the world and in every medium, giving visitors the chance to expand their knowledge of new work from countries such as China, Germany, America and the UK, and across all media.

We have curated a variety of collections with works by Saatchi Online artists for you to see how different mediums work together and to help you to begin to curate your own collections. Here are some selections of works grouped by colour or by aesthetic sense.

Another path to follow is to could focus on one area, like Elton John who has built up an important collection of photography; Peggy Guggenheim who collected abstract and Surrealist painting and sculpture, the contemporary art of her day; and Cornelius Vanderbilt who amassed a collection of 670 drawings, which he gave to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

We have curated some collections dedicated to specific media – collage, photography, drawing, sculpture and painting.
The best advice when it comes to acquiring art is always to buy what you love. And this applies whether you decide to buy one piece of art for a specific place in your home or a selection of works. Many famous collectors have acquired a wide range of works from painting to photography and sculpture. The Rubells collect all kinds of contemporary artworks and now have one of the largest private collections in the world, which you can visit in Miami. Charles Saatchi has for 30 years been acquiring works from all over the world and in every medium, giving visitors the chance to expand their knowledge of new work from countries such as China, Germany, America and the UK, and across all media.

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- movies
- portraits
- animals
- fashion
- nudes and figures

Or particular themes – the movies, portraits, animals, fashion, nudes and figures:

Or specific styles, such as surrealism, minimalism or street art:

- Surrealism
- Minimalism
- Street art

Or you could be like the Vogels and decide that it’s all down to size. We think they would have liked our Small is Beautiful collection (and appreciated the low shipping costs).

Charles Wilkin Appreciate The Void is 11 x 8 inches and part of our Small is Beautiful collection.
Chapter 6

In Focus – Buying Photography

Zena Holloway, Angel 5, limited edition of 10 + 2 APs
The American writer Susan Sontag wrote in her groundbreaking essay On Photography that ‘To collect photographs is to collect the world.’ This is not the only reason that photography as a medium requires its own chapter.

Photography is a great medium for first-time buyers to focus on. Quite often prices are lower than for painting or sculpture, and often it’s a particularly arresting medium that is easy to fall in love with and to live with.

When thinking about buying photography, as opposed to painting or drawing, there are additional elements that need to be considered and understood.

1. Do you love the photograph?
As with any art purchase, your first criteria should be that you love the work and it will make you happier to see it on your walls.

2. What kind of photograph is it? What is the medium?
Find out if the photograph you are interested in is a C-print or digital or a nearly extinct Polaroid. Learning about these different processes will inform your decisions.

3. Is it a limited edition?
This means that the photographer will only make a certain number of prints, unlike an open edition where the work can be printed endlessly. As a result, limited editions have greater value and are more expensive.

A photograph which is large scale in terms of its dimensions will usually exist in a small edition and be more expensive. Take as an example Alfonso Batalla’s The Joy of Bankruptcy which is in an edition of 6 prints, each 39 x 39 inches and priced at $4000.

A work which has more prints available in the edition will usually be cheaper, such as Tadao Cern’s Revealing The Truth – Vincent Van Gogh, which is in an edition of 100 prints each priced at $300.

4. Is it unique?
Some artists make unique, one-off photographs. This is especially the case if the artist has started with a photograph then added to it with perhaps collaged elements, or drawing on top of the photograph or, in the case of Michael Pannier’s unique piece combining photography with gold leaf and wax.

5. What’s an AP?
If you see this after a photograph, as in Zena Holloway’s Angel 5, it means that the photographer will be able to reserve a certain number of artist’s proofs of the work in addition to the number of prints available. The number of APs is usually 1 or 2.
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To help you navigate your way around the world of photography we have curated two collections by Saatchi Online artists: 

**Spotlight on Photography**

**The Naked Eye**

Michael Pannier, Corner, unique photograph, 6 x 4 inches
Wax, gold leaf, paper with deckled edges
$300
Peter Doig made his famous painting, White Canoe (1990-1), while he was a student at the Chelsea College of Art & Design in London. The work was acquired by the Saatchi Gallery and sold many years later in 2007 at Sotheby’s for £5.7 million.
There are no guarantees when it comes to purchasing art and you should always feel happy with what you’re buying as it may be on your walls for a long time.

But if the investment side of buying art is an area that you want to consider then buying works by emerging artists is probably the best place to start. David Stevenson in the Financial Times says buying emerging art is “the equivalent of investing in frontier market equities. Rather than buying the global names that appear in the big auctions or the best galleries, you invest in the artistic equivalent of Mongolia or Cambodia: the young artists coming out of MA programmes”.

If you are in the market for placing bets then doing some extra research can definitely help you. For example, Saatchi Online artist Daniel Coves was selected for the 2013 BP Portrait Award, which is the most prestigious prize for portraiture, featuring “the most outstanding and innovative new portraits from around the world”. The exhibition takes place at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Another case where various elements can build into an artist attaining recognition and value is Nina Fowler who makes very large works inspired by film. Her prices are already increasing which is not surprising when you find out that she has a First Class fine art degree, was shortlisted for the Jerwood Drawing Prize and The Young Masters Prize, and her work is collected by Jude Law, Sharleen Spiteri and Caroline Issa.

Works by emerging artists have the potential for increasing in value and leading to future gains, and they are also much more affordable than bigger name artists and much more easy to access.
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Buying art as an investment might not be important to you and you may never wish to sell the works you buy. The Vogels, our favourite collectors, could have become millionaires if they’d sold some of the works in their collection but they never did. They were happy to live with them and never tired of their company.

But even so, it’s an exciting thought to imagine that the work you are buying could be by a future art star – even the next Peter Doig – and that you got their first.

KwangHo Shin is an emerging artist from South Korea. We recently featured him in our One to Watch series, focusing on emerging artists of particular promise and have sold 14 paintings by him.

Super Future Kid is an emerging artist from Germany who now lives in London. We hung her work in a recent Saatchi Online exhibition at the Hyatt Regency – The Churchill in London, and it flew off the walls!
Thank you for sharing our passion for emerging artists

I hope you have enjoyed this mini tour around the world of art and feel better informed about buying works by emerging artists.

If you would like any further advice on buying art from Saatchi Online artists we run an Art Advisory service designed to help you find the works you are looking for. All you need to do is submit a brief and we will respond with a proposal of works you might like. To find out more about this service, please visit: saatchionline.com/artadvisory

Thank you, and keep on looking!

Rebecca Wilson
Chief Curator, Saatchi Online
Director, Saatchi Gallery, London