

## ART APPRECIATION AND COLLECTING BASICS

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**E**xperiencing art at museums, exhibitions, and galleries is the best way to develop an understanding of and appreciation for it. More self-education is available through magazines such as *ARTnews*, *Art on Paper*, *Art in America*, and *Art & Antiques*, and through reading exhibition and auction catalogs and books by and about art and artists.

Collectors learn about art history from many sources, including courses at colleges, universities, and continuing education centers, and art lectures at libraries and museums, where audience members can ask the lecturers questions. Public libraries have art books and other materials for research. Useful web resources include Artnet ([www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com)), and search engines can help locate information on specific artists and their work.

Showing enthusiasm will attract the interest of experienced and knowledgeable people who will share their expertise. Over time, exposing oneself to art provides expertise and confidence in understanding and appreciating different media, styles, and materials. One develops one's own "eye," connoisseurship, and tastes, which evolve and change over time.

Art is not necessarily a good investment; many experts say the first rule is to "buy what you love." A collection can start modestly. A checklist—at least mentally—of areas of interest is important. Nonetheless, many collectors at some point need professional expertise regarding valuation, authentication, disposition, protection, transfer, insurance, conservation, transportation, or conversion of art assets to cash.

A collector can consult with academics, curators, or art appraisers, who can offer advice and referrals regarding a particular need. The International Association for Professional Art Advisors ([www.iapaa.org](http://www.iapaa.org)) includes many of these art-service professionals who can provide technical assistance.

Much art is purchased through dealers and from galleries, but this can be expensive because of the overhead and other costs involved. Many artists sell directly to collectors. Collecting the work of living artists generally assures one of buying an authentic work and also offers the satisfaction of supporting a favorite artist. Be alert to the fact that unscrupulous dealers offer fakes, forgeries, and reworked pieces.

Artwork appreciates in value more if the artist gains public recognition. The more an artist is listed in reference guides and written about in the media, the more valuable her work is likely to be at various points in her developing career. Therefore, many collectors maintain clippings files on their favorite artists.

Many collectors visit auction houses on a regular basis. Auction catalogs are useful reference guides when valuing artwork for insurance purposes or tracking the provenance (ownership and exhibition history) and pricing on a work or comparable works. □