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Arts: Features

Stan Storer, collector

By [Megan Voeller](#)

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An arts community without collectors is like a garden without soil. You *could* just have plants (artists), sun (creativity) and gardeners (curators and other "meta" types). But without rich black earth for nourishment, nothing's going to grow.

Just how rich that soil's got to be is open to debate. At the Miami Basels of the world, you need to spend \$30,000 a year on art to qualify as a VIP collector; but to many, that dollar figure looks more like a salary than a personal budget line item. Tampa Bay should aspire to be a community of midlevel collectors, says Erika Greenberg-Schneider, owner of gallery and printmaking studio Bleu Acier, in Tampa Heights. Leave the blue-chip fantasies to the jet set and support the local scene with a few grand a year. The problem, she says, is that we're not even hitting the middle mark.

"Right now, there's an abundance of artists [in Tampa] and nobody to buy the work," Schneider says. "We need people who are between the ages of 30 and 50 to spend money on art. Without the collectors, you can't have a healthy art market, and without a healthy art market, you can't have a healthy cultural environment."

Could it be that there simply aren't more than a few regular, passionate art buyers in the Bay area? I don't believe it. At least, not after meeting folks like Stan Storer. A South Tampa resident who works for a pharmaceutical company, Storer is obsessed with collecting, and he has the art-laden walls to prove it.

Storer caught the bug in 1999 when he realized (after a spontaneous heart-to-heart with a stranger on a cross-country flight) that his life revolved around work. In search of a passion, he attended Art for Life, an annual charity art auction last held in 2006, and bought a painting by Theo Wujcik, a Tampa artist with a long resume of national and international exhibitions. Titled The "Barking Dogs Signaled the End of the 20th Century," the painting juxtaposes realistically painted but seemingly unrelated objects in a fragmented picture plane; for some people, the work might be disturbingly unconventional, but it spoke to Storer. Meeting Wujcik flipped a switch, and now Storer owns eight of the artist's works: paintings, pencil drawings and prints.

"I'm a little bit OCD," Storer jokes. "Instead of one, I buy 10."

He buys because he loves, but he's not immune to the appeal of art as investment. Prints by James Rosenquist and Robert Stackhouse from USF's Graphicstudio are among his beloved pieces, and they'll surely grow in value. (While he'd rather have paintings, the lower-cost prints are his way to buy into a well-known artist's work, Storer says.) Other pieces are by local artists or are purchased from local galleries. They include a deep green canvas by Edgar Sanchez Cumbas that reveals an evocative face and the light-filled curves of a glass vase by Duncan McClellan. He purchased others during his frequent travels for work. All are reminders of pleasurable moments that triggered him to buy a piece.

"It's a positive experience, a fun evening, a great trip, a connection with the artist," he says. "It's almost like connecting with someone on a date. You connect with the artist and then you want a piece of the artist."

Last year, Storer commissioned Dunedin potter Polly McFate, whose work he'd seen and purchased at The Arts Center in St. Pete, to fill his glass-paneled kitchen cabinets with ceramic plates and bowls painted with images of Mediterranean fruit. Commissioning is a delicate area, Storer admits, and only a good idea if you're willing to give the artist free rein. With McFate it worked, and around the same time he commissioned Wujcik to create a large painting based on the artist's recent interest in comic book figures.

"There isn't a single day that I'm in my house and I'm walking room to room that I don't love that [art] is hanging there on the walls," he says.

But while he may love it, the acid test is whether his mother can't stand it, Storer deadpans.

"My mother hates my art, but that validates why I buy it," he adds with a laugh.

Collectors: I know you're out there. From now on, I'll be profiling an art collector each month on my blog at [artsqueeze.com](#). If you know someone whose art collection -- big or small, highbrow or lowbrow -- deserves to see the light of day, e-mail me at megan.voeller@creativeloafing.com.



enlarge

Shanna Gillette

HE HEARTS ART: Stan Storer at home with one of the works in his art collection, Robert Stackhouse's "Immersed."

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RE: [Stan Storer, collector](#)

Posted by [Megan Voeller](#) on 03.02.08 @ 01:49 PM

Hi, Greg. We met last year (or was it 2006?) when I wrote a story about Ray Paul. I remember you and your paintings. Drop me a line at megan.voeller@creativeloafing.com if you have a show up or would like to do a studio visit.



RE: [Stan Storer, collector](#)

Posted by [latch](#) on 02.28.08 @ 04:00 PM

once again i get shows in museums new york and LA ,wherever and here i get listed below the puppet show ive been showing art in tampa since 93 and i still get no respect from you guys. i have a studio on 7th ave ybor who cares. 12 years on channel side 70,000 hits a month on my web site big deal.just like ray paul i have to go out of tampa even then i get no respect.you would list the ushers in platforms before me. on one note good story on the collector. we do need people like him.

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Whether housed in an empty storefront, a spare room or a rehabbed historic building, artists' st...

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