

ADVICE ON BUILDING YOUR COLLECTION



by **Rebecca Horne**

Prior to taking on the directorship at blue-chip gallery Joseph K. Levene Fine Art, Ltd. in Manhattan, Robert Grunder trained his expert eye as a painter. Mr. Grunder earned his MFA at the Andy Warhol founded New York Academy of Art, and studied closely with such painters as Mark Tansey, Eric Fischl, among others. Mr. Grunder has also held management positions at the Marlborough Gallery and artnet. Here he shares some of his considerable insights as a gallery director on collecting and finding what you love.

Rebecca Horne: I'm curious how you began your own collection. Can you tell me how you got started?

Robert Grunder: My collection started in 1999, an artist gave me a small painting that was a study for a larger work in an exhibition I curated. The painting is by Peter Drake and depicts, in his signature style, a father and son watering a suburban lawn. He uses a reductive technique, sanding away the paint on a thickly gessoed surface to create light. The surface resembles old photos.

Rebecca Horne: Has the way you collect changed since then?

Robert Grunder: It has changed immensely. Collecting art can become downright addictive. I started bidding and buying works from auction, benefit auctions, Oxbow and from artists themselves.

Rebecca Horne: What is the most satisfying thing about it?

Robert Grunder:: Supporting the arts in any capacity has always been fulfilling for me, but there is even greater satisfaction in surrounding yourself with beautiful and challenging works of art. At times it seems, the only limitation is wall space, especially for a New Yorker!

Rebecca Horne: How do you guide other collectors in building their own collections?

Robert Grunder: *The first thing I always ask a collector is show me the one thing you can't live without. It may sound simple, but it's important to buy art with your eyes and not your ears.*



Peter Drake *Lawn*, 1998

For example, for a first time buyer of Warhol prints I recommend browsing the Catalogue Raisonné to discover which prints the collector responds to most. It's better to purchase a signature work, subject matter the artist is most known for, rather than the lowest priced.

If possible, you also want to buy the right work at the right time, there are opportune moments. For example, Jasper Johns prints, he is arguably America's greatest living artist and the most skilled printmaker since Pablo Picasso. Given the limited number of paintings and drawings he has created his prints are, in my opinion, undervalued.

The Bottom line is you must love it.



Rebecca Horne is a Writer on photography in national publications from The Wall Street Journal to CNN.

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