



THE SPECIALIST

Masterpiece theater

Auctioneer enjoys the deals — and the art

My parents dragged me around museums and galleries as a kid, and in the beginning it was a drag. And then I fell in love with it. Particularly if you know a work from an art history class or from a book or maybe a postcard, actually standing in front of it is such a different feeling. I really feel a connection.

I've been auctioneering for about 10 years. Becoming an auctioneer is something that there's no training for; it's just learning on the job. I remember the first time I was on, I was so petrified, because you can't train, you can't practice it. I had visions of how I would run away to avoid the sale. And then I took the sale and I loved it. Being an auctioneer is an absolute thrill.

For a work of art to be valuable, one of the most important things is that it be recognizable. It has to be typical of the artist's work. People will want you to see it from across the room: "Oh, you've got a Picasso hanging there." If it's from Picasso's earliest period, or something he was just trying out, then it's not so popular. Buyers want to have things that are known, that are from the artist's main period.

A big misconception is that it's all about these million-dollar prices that we hear about from Sotheby's and Christie's. The median price of something sold at auction worldwide is something like \$800 or \$1,000. Because these spectacular auctions of top lots make the news, we forget that there's a broad market below that.

I collect female artists, because, as we all know, female artists were disregarded for a very long time. The museums are full of male art. My belief is, if you want to change this, buy female art. Mostly I buy young artists. One reason, of course, is money; their work is cheaper. But I also want to support them.

It can be quite difficult to know what you like, because there's such a mass of art out there. It's about seeing, seeing, seeing: Go to exhibitions, go to galleries, go to auctions and see what you like. You can't really make a mistake. — AS TOLD TO KRIS VIRE

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