



Seek

Home

Art me up



Works by Kent Rogowski at Jen Bekman Gallery (on view through June 14)

Owning a masterpiece may be less than a week's paycheck away.

By Allison Williams

Ready to become an art aficionado, but left your trust fund and Rockefeller pedigree at home? There's a better (and more financially realistic) route to art ownership than spending a fortune, a way to become just as enriched as any Sotheby's auction: goer at a fraction of the cost. Hit up next week's Affordable Art Fair (135 W 18th St between Sixth and Seventh Aves, aafny.com, Jun 12-15; \$17 with these do's and don'ts of cheap art purchasing. As the owner of the eponymous Jen Bekman Gallery (6 Spring St between Bowery and Elizabeth St, 212-219-0166, jenbekman.com) says, "My whole philosophy is 'Live with art, it's good for you.'"

DO See what's out there. Your new favorite oil painting isn't going to fall into your lap, so work the shoe leather here in one of the world's premier art cities. Besides the well-established Chelsea galleries, there are more price-conscious art purveyors to be found on the Lower East Side, including 33 Bond (33 Bond St between Bowery and Lafayette

St, 212-845-9257, 33bond.com) and Sunday L.E.S. (237 Eldridge St, between Houston and Stanton Sts, 212-253-0700, sundayles.com).

The Internet is also a key tool—but "it's always better to see art in person if you have the opportunity," says the singularly named Sto, a Brooklyn artist and founder of Cinders Gallery (103 Havemeyer St between Grand and Hope Sts, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, 718-388-2311, cindersgallery.com). "You might be able to hold it, get your nose right up to it." Also important is finding people you trust; forging a relationship with a gallery or dealer can broaden your horizons and help you take progressively bigger risks.

DON'T Let someone tell you what to buy. All-art-world insiders worth their salt will tell you the same thing: Art is first and foremost about what you like. That's you and your taste, not that of the gallery owner, the press or the museums. "I think it's really important to buy what you love," says Bekman. "It's really what your gut instinct tells you," says Sto. That means that there's no wrong, or right, answer to the question "What's good?"

DO Get students' art while they're young. If you're hell-bent on finding the next Warhol, look to the kiddies just

getting their feet wet at art school shows. "There are certain M.F.A. programs that have reputations for turning out the next hot generation," says Bekman, pointing to Yale, Hunter, Columbia and Pratt. But these schools churn out as many ultimately unsuccessful artists as they do future hotshots, so don't bet the bank unless you really dig the work.

DON'T Break open the piggy bank. Bekman, who doesn't have an art background, thinks the biggest mistake she made in her early collecting days was assuming that she couldn't afford anything. Now her 30x200 (20x200.com) site sells limited-edition prints starting at just \$20. "The first piece you buy shouldn't be a 20-grand original painting," she says. "What if, after six months, you don't like it anymore?"

Cinders sells prints for up to \$300, and their original paintings range from \$100 to \$5,000. In the gallery world, substantial-sized paintings are hard to find for less than \$2,000, but work by a curbside artist in Soho is just as valid, provided you like what you see.

DON'T Consider this your next egg. Chances are the thesis project or Soho street art won't fund your retirement someday, but know that gallery

purchases probably won't either. "Historically, the grandest collections have been accumulated by people gathering what they love, which then came to be more valuable," says Bekman. Buying art as an investment isn't her favorite approach, and it isn't particularly feasible at the lower end of the spectrum. The resell-for-a-profit deal doesn't really work for pieces priced under \$10,000. If big names are important to you, look to their more-affordable prints.

DO Spend some time on research. The hardest part of buying art is deciding what it's worth to you, but doing your homework is easier than ever before. "The best source is the Internet," says Sto. "It's a whole new age of art. Most artists and galleries have websites; you can see what things are going for online." You can dig up information on artists' experience, collection history, museum representation and grants are all factors that can go into the pricing of their work.

Of course, these tangible factors will always be trumped by the slippery, subjective scale of what each viewer considers "good." "It's overpriced if you can't afford it," says Bekman, and worth the cash if you can't live without it. Turns out that buying art is nothing more than a simple, accessible and frustratingly personal endeavor.

44 TIMEOUTNEWYORK.COM June 5-11, 2008

Smart art

Affordable Art Fair director Laura Meli's three favorite picks from this year's event:

Dan Baldwin
Apocalypse Wow Last Chance, 2007
\$595

"Baldwin incorporates elements that are part of our daily lives—American flags, U.S. dollars, pop-culture imagery, cartoons—and meshes them in an eerily beautiful way. This is a piece that will certainly instigate interesting discussions, but is also an easy piece with which to coexist."

Giclée with silk-screen varnishes on 310gsm paper; Gallery One (galleryone.com)



John Olsen
January 2006, 2007
\$500

"January 2006 is based on a series of photographs depicting mundane scenarios in which the main subjects all wear the same

striped sweatshirt. The viewer is made to feel uncomfortable by the fact that there is no explanation. I can't stop trying to come up with backstories for this piece."

Oil on MDF panel; Sam Lee Gallery (samleegallery.com)

Ross Bonifanti
Bear C212, 2008
\$450

"In a twist on taxidermy, a child's toy is stuffed with concrete, distorting our associations. Bonifanti alters our ideas of humor, beauty and our cherished childhood memories."

Concrete, plastic, fur; AWOL Gallery (awolgallery.com)

