

# Some Exhibits That Are Still On View

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The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) in Winston-Salem, NC, is presenting *Graphic Design: Now in Production*, on view through Feb. 23, 2014. If money makes the world go 'round - design makes it stop. Take notice. Feel. Think. React. And buy. Today, design is all around us. We're immersed in it. It permeates our daily lives, influences our behavior and is defining the human experience as a strikingly visual one. Once the exclusive domain of skilled professionals, new tools, channels and software have emerged in the last decade to create opportunities for anyone to design, distribute and put their ideas on display.



cyan, "Flieger," 2010, Courtesy Maharam Digital Projects. Copyright: Maharam Digital Projects

For further information call the Center at 336/725-1904 or visit ([www.secca.org](http://www.secca.org)).



## A Few Words From Down Under

**Editor's Note:** Judith McGrath contributed her writings about exhibits and events taking place in Western Australia to *Carolina Arts* for about a decade. Although she was writing about events taking place thousands and thousands of miles away, they seemed relevant to what was going on here in the Carolinas. Her contributions were very popular when we first ran them and continue to be popular on our website's archives. We've decided to revisit them from time to time.

### A Few Words From Down Under on Collecting Art

by Judith McGrath, first run in our October Issue 2005

Today I received an invitation to an exhibition that included a press release, to encourage a written review. The invite had the usual pictures and CV of the artist but the press release had me laughing all the way to the keyboard. It was a justifiable verbal tantrum about how this artist has been continually ignored by the 'art establishment' in his home land throughout his forty year career, despite the fact that he is "the richest living artist in Australia" whose income is derived solely from his art. He dared go it alone and forever damned for doing so.

When first rejected by a commercial gallery, the artist began selling black and white drawings, small hand painted cards and large colourful canvases from his studio. He turned his popular images into limited edition prints, created designs for fabric, and set up a gallery-cum-shop in a tourist section of the city and sold only his own work. His art is bright and colourful, capturing the high key colours that are synonymous with Australia. People who like pretty pictures buy his work, tourists purchase ties and tee shirts bearing his designs, collectors in other countries acquire his original paintings, while agents from around the world commission him to prepare designs for various national events.

Meanwhile, the self-proclaimed astute collectors at home disregard this artist's work because 'those who know best' do not recommend him (they can't get a piece of the action). In this light, I say to the gallery who told the truth in their press release, "Good onya Mate." And to those art snobs, who are impressed by name or fame rather than good art, I say, "Get orf ya Drongo."

Art collectors fall into one of two categories; corporate and private. Corporate collectors buy art for its asset value. They employ professional curators who access art galleries or dealers to acquire work by well-established practitioners that will provide a return on the company's investment. Little attention is paid to the art beyond knowing its certified value and

if it's a wall covering, floor piece or niche filler. The selections made by these curators, galleries and dealers are dictated by their own vested interest so it's not about the art, it's just business.

Serious private collectors acquire art for more personal reasons and tend to buy works they like for aesthetic, as well as, asset value. In my experience I've noted three distinct types of private collectors, which for lack of any existing classification I'll label Patron, Stylish and Appreciative.

Patrons are not ignorant of the investment aspect of art although they do have personal preferences in what they collect. They buy work they like at auction or from a gallery, and sell through a dealer, according to the ebb and flow of the market. To them art is a commodity only it's prettier than stock certificates. The Stylish collector purchases art to decorate the home and will select works that reflect their place and taste at the time. They have no qualms about disposing of a whole collection when they redecorate or relocate, and start anew in a different style. Appreciative collectors are passionate buyers of art who love each purchase like a pet. They acquire art with the intention of keeping the work until it becomes part of the family then passing it on through the generations.

In my job I've interviewed many private collectors and have noticed a certain rule of thumb. Those who collect art as an object for trade (Patron) will buy and sell what's hot; those who want to enhance the domestic environment with original art (Stylish) prefer abstract works by the newest big name; while those who buy art to live with (Appreciative) choose mostly figurative works they can personally relate to. When interviewing serious private collectors, I never have to ask 'Why do you buy art?' because the answer is often 'written on the wall'.

I recall one Patron I had the pleasure of interviewing, a man who enjoys the business side of art collecting. The large acquisitions and installations of his eclectic collection are on loan to universities, hospitals and government offices while the smaller works are precisely placed about the house. However the bulk of his collection is bubble wrapped, neatly labelled and standing in racks or huddled in corners of a locked storeroom in his home. This charming man can name every artist currently represented in his continuously evolving collection, the title of each work, where it is physically located, when he bought it, at what price, and where it fits in the artist's overall career. He keeps up to date by reading international art magazines, attending auctions by Sotheby's in Sydney, and knows who to buy and when to sell.

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Then there was the interview with an intelligent Stylish collector who lives in a modern multi-storey, high ceiling, steel, glass and concrete, all white home where the art is Minimalist, from Melbourne, and mostly black. Although an art advisor guides her purchases, there is no doubt the lady makes her own decisions and loves each piece in her current collection. However, she admits to being in the third 'art chapter' of her life, and should her décor, address or mood change, so too will her art, albeit with a keen eye to the market. Meanwhile, she gets a great deal of joy from being wrapped in an environment aesthetically attuned to her current life-style.

My favourite interview was with an Appreciative gentleman who buys work he falls in love with and commissions local artists whose work he admires. Mostly figurative paintings and sculptures by celebrated contemporary practitioners and unknown art students share floor and wall space with work by artists we learned about in Australian Art History. The collection is so well integrated with the home any sense of ostentation is lost. When shown around, I was told the 'story' behind each purchase and when discussing a sculpture his hand absentmindedly stroked the artwork. This collector rarely sells a work, preferring to pass it on to his children when wall or floor space becomes scarce. That's how he received his first art piece, the one that started his journey and

which he still has.

There may be a Corporate collection in this town that owns a work by the above-mentioned artist but none of the Private collectors I've met do. Besides being steered away from supporting an 'outsider' by the local art establishment, the Patron wouldn't have come across the artist's work at auction (those who have his work don't want to sell it) and the Stylish lady would not have his colourful imagery invade her black and white world, at present. The Appreciative buyer would ignore the bias of the establishment and, if he saw the press release, applaud the gallery's tirade. If he attends the exhibition and sees an exhibit he can relate to, no doubt he'll buy it, no matter what anyone says. And isn't that what collecting art is supposed to be about?

Judith McGrath lives in Kalamunda, Western Australia, 25 minutes east of Perth. She received a BA in Fine Art and History from the University of Western Australia. McGrath lectured in Art History and Visual Literacy at various colleges around the Perth area, and was an art reviewer for *The Sunday Times* and *The Western Review* both published in the Perth area. McGrath was also a freelance writer and reviewer for various art magazines in Australia. She also co-ordinated the web site *Art Seen in Western Australia* found at (<http://www.artseeninwa.com>). McGrath is currently enjoying retirement.

## NC Museum of History in Raleigh, NC, Offers Three New Exhibitions

The NC Museum of History in Raleigh, NC, is presenting three new exhibitions including: *The Tsars' Cabinet: Two Hundred Years of Russian Decorative Arts Under the Romanovs* and *Windows into Heaven: Russian Icons from the Lilly and Francis Robicsek Collection of Religious Art*, on view through Mar. 5, 2014; and *For Us the Living: The Civil War Art of Mort Künstler*, on view through Jan. 5, 2014.

The year 2013 marks the 400th anniversary of the beginning of the Romanov Dynasty, or the House of Romanov - the imperial monarchy that ruled Russia from 1613 until 1917 and included the reigns of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and Nicholas II, the last tsar.

"To commemorate this anniversary, the Museum of History will present these exhibitions that give visitors a rare glimpse into the splendor of Imperial Russia," said Dr. Jeanne Marie Warzeski, Exhibition Curator.



"Vladimir Mother of God," egg tempera and gilt on wood, Russian, 19th c. Photo credit: NC Museum of History.

encrusted personal items, the spectacular objects in this exhibit reveal the extreme lavishness and opulent lifestyle of the Romanov reign. Many of the pieces were made for the ruling tsars and their families.

The exhibit includes objects produced by the Imperial Porcelain Factory in St. Petersburg, one of the oldest porcelain factories in Europe, as well as wares made by the Imperial Glass Factory in St. Petersburg and examples of intricate enamel work from renowned firms such as Fabergé and Ovchinnikov.

Among the treasures in *The Tsars' Cabinet* are items from a Kremlin ceremonial table service, yacht service pieces, and elaborate urns made for imperial palaces. Stunning personal artifacts include an Ovchinnikov silver gilt and lapis-lazuli jewel casket and a Fabergé gilded silver and shaded cloisonné enamel cigar case.

*The Tsars' Cabinet* was organized by the Muscarelle Museum of Art at the College of William & Mary from the Kathleen Durdin Collection, in collaboration with International Arts & Artists.

From the life of sumptuous excess under the tsars, *Windows into Heaven* plumbs the mystical depth of the Russian spirit and offers a glimpse into eternity via the dignified grandeur of the Russian Orthodox Church. The exhibition brings together 36 Russian icons dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, during the time of the Romanovs, from the collection of Lilly and Francis Robicsek of Charlotte, NC.

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"Campana Urn Illustrating the Arts," hard-paste porcelain, Imperial Porcelain Factory, Russia, ca. 1845. Photo credit: Giovanni Lunardi.

The NC Museum of History is the only mid-Atlantic venue to host *The Tsars' Cabinet*, a traveling exhibition showcasing more than 230 objects that exemplify the craftsmanship of artisans under the Romanov tsars. A feast for the eyes, the exhibit features decorative arts dating from the reign of Peter the Great to that of Nicholas II.

From richly ornate table services designed for coronation banquets to jewel-