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whitehot | March 2013: Alpha Collectors: Peter and Jamie Hort



*Jamie and Peter Hort in their apartment, Artwork: Close wall above piano - Bob Gober, Spencer Sweeney, Cindy Sherman, Cynthia Daignault, Alexander Tinei, Matt Chambers, Jeanette Mundt, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry. Far Wall - Gregory Crewdson, Alex Prager, Augusta Wood, Daniel Gordon, Sherri Levine, Cindy Sherman*

**by Abby Luby**

There are two sides to the art world: one of artists, solely driven by creative energy, who long for recognition by the other side - that of gallery owners, curators and art collectors. For many well-heeled collectors, art is an investment, a tangible item to be bought and sold. But there are collectors who are passionate, deeply sensitive to the aesthetics of a nuanced brushstroke and the poetic flow of a work - collectors who see with their heart and buy with their soul. Enter Peter Hort and Jamie Cohen Hort.

The Hort's readily admit that they only "buy what we love," a mantra long echoed by Hort's parents, Susan and Michael Hort. known to be among the top 200 art collectors in the world. As young. alpha collectors. Peter and Jamie

Hort are attracted to diverse genres and scoop up art by emerging artists.

In their bright, spacious apartment in lower Manhattan, artwork covers most all the wall space without feeling cluttered. There is a comfort zone here. You can pause, relax on one of many couches and appreciate the work while petting the Hort's 13-year old black lab, Eleanor Roosevelt. Above the piano are works by Bob Gober, Spencer Sweeney, Cindy Sherman, Cynthia Daignault, Alexander Tinei, Matt Chambers, Jeanette Mundt, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry. Nearby is the large, vibrant painting "Sketchy Man" (2012) by Ella Kruglyanskaya, a work the Horts own because it is "edgy, creative, new and different."

"It's work like this that make us look at the world in a different way," Hort says, gesturing towards Kruglyanskaya's canvas. "There's something very uncanny about her outfit, the shadows."

At the end of the living room, a jaunty, black and white work by Matt Keegan hangs above a 1970 vintage juke box. Art work overflows into the bedrooms of their four children ages 12, 10, 8 and 7 (there is a work by Larry Rivers in their son's room). Anchoring a wall in their own bedroom is a Franz West chair. "Jamie would kill if you put anything on that chair," Hort intimates.

Along with the work mentioned above, their collection also includes early works of Fred Tomaselli, Nicole Eisenman, Tim Rollins. It is a collection that has grown over the years, each new acquisition vying for coveted space on their walls. Hort says that although they rarely sell work from their personal collection, he admits "Of the artists that we have bought, we're aware that much of their work has increased dramatically in value. We also know that a lot of stuff we buy is followed by others." One example is Hort's purchase of a work by Keltie Ferris - "It has increased ten-fold I would say in the last five years."

Other artists who reaped similar benefits from being in the Hort collection have been Jon Pestoni and Alex Olsen. It's not surprising that today's social media strengthens the connection among art collectors - many of who follow Hort on his Twitter account.

While reflecting the couple's varying tastes, overall, the collection is mostly abstract representational. "Peter and I are good together when it comes to picking out artwork," says Jamie Hort. "We balance each other out. We both look to buy something we love, a piece that's new, different, compelling."

Both are quick to tell entertaining stories highlighting memorable acquisitions. They laughingly remember when Jamie was fascinated with "Lucy Not Funny," a c-print by Sara Greenberger Rafferty (2006) portraying a young, demure Lucille Ball taking in her reflection. "The energy of the piece instantly grabbed me and I knew I had to have it," Jamie recalls. Although undecided about how he felt about it, Peter secretly purchased the work as a birthday surprise for his wife. Days later when Jamie checked with the gallery and learned the work had been purchased by an anonymous collector, she became upset. She was persistent and kept calling the gallery to see if the work had possibly been returned. Between Peter and the gallery owner, keeping the secret was agonizing, but it eventually paid off and Jamie was thrilled with the gift. The work now graces the living room wall outside their bedroom door.



*Jamie and Peter Hort, Artwork: Above piano - Bob Gober, Spencer Sweeney, Cindy Sherman, Cynthia Daignault, Alexander Tinei, Matt Chambers, Jeanette Mundt, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry. Large work by Ella Kruglyanskaya*

You could say art is in their blood. Like Peter, Jamie grew up surrounded by art because her parents, Eileen and Michael Cohen, are also known collectors. "People in my life were artists. I don't recall not loving art," Jamie says. (In fact, the Cohens have a significant art collection housed in the Brooklyn Museum).

When White Hot visited the Horts, Jamie was busy curating Susan and Michael Hort's vast collection to be shown as a preview to the Armory Show. Traditionally, as members of the Armory Show Centennial Committee, the Hort Family ushers in the Armory Show by hosting the annual Welcoming Brunch in their Tribeca loft to showcase their collection. This year the [Armory Show](#) runs from March 7 – 10

"The Armory Show is exciting and as fresh as ever," says Peter. "We see art we've never seen before, we share ideas with friends. It's huge and I'm so looking forward to it."

As art trendsetters, Peter and Jamie Hort accept the persona but play it down, suggesting the label is residual of being avid collectors. Hort says he and his wife and his parents are not part of the upper crust art world. "The art market has a different economy and it's the economy of the elite. We aren't billionaires - we aren't that elite. What works for us is that the high end art market puts upward pressure on the market for emerging artists."

And where do they find emerging artists?



Integral to keeping their finger on the pulse of young, undiscovered artists is the [Rema Hort Mann Foundation](#), a non-profit organization created by the Horts in 1995. The foundation is named after Peter Hort's older sister Rema, who tragically lost her life to stomach cancer at the young age of 30. Hort says that he, his siblings, and friends of Rema, came up with the idea for the foundation to keep her memory alive. "My mother responded very well when she started looking at new art. She knew how much Rema loved art. This foundation honors her life by giving grants to artists and cancer patients."

RHMF has a two pronged mission: funding artists and aiding those suffering from cancer. The Foundation has a team of oncology social workers who field possible grant recipients. "We try to help cancer patients maintain a support community while they are undergoing treatment and healing," Hort explains. To this end, the foundation provides grants for travel, accommodations, child care and related expenses that seek to bolster emotional and familial support for cancer patients.

The foundation awards artist grants every year. Initial nominees are selected by a visual art committee made up of noted professors, critics, museum professionals, artists, curators, and former grantees. There could be as many as 50 - 80 nominees from New York City and Los Angeles based artists and of those, a handful are chosen by a separate independent selection committee who award each artist \$10,000. Over the years, the Rema Hort Mann Foundation has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to artists such as Sarah Sze, Kehinde Wiley, Dana Schutz, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry, Keltie Ferris, David Altmejd, Mika Rottenberg, Eli Sudbrack and Banks Violette.



The ongoing outreach by the foundation to the art community is notable. Past fundraisers have included such events as a panel discussion "GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUNDS PROGRAM" at the La Mama Galleria. The talk was subtitled "Women & the (In)equality of the Art Market." A few years ago RHMF held a silent auction at the Marian Boesky Gallery specifically to connect emerging artists with art aficionados and possible patrons. The two stipulations for artists - create work on an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper and submit the piece unsigned - instilling the Hort's practice of buying art you like.

Art may be a big part of Peter Hort's life, but he is also a practicing lawyer. Since 2007 Hort has held a part time post as an Administrative Law judge for the New York City Environmental Control Board. In 2004 he tested the rough waters of New York City politics and ran unsuccessfully for Congress. Will he try again? "You never know - I'm not closing that door completely," he says.

Law and politics aside, Hort considers himself extremely lucky to have art as a major part of his life. "I'm living a dream. I am in a unique position in the art market, and have been called a princeling. But we're enjoying it nonetheless and we are taking advantage of it."



Abby Luby is a journalist in New York.

<http://www.abbylu.com>

[abbylu@abbylu.com](mailto:abbylu@abbylu.com)

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