

The Collector

Christmas comes but once a year - so spend it wisely: we ask Gallery Director Bridget Sterling to provide some expert advice on buying art for an investment...

INVESTMENT in Contemporary Art is an unpredictable game. Some artists shoot to fame early, seeing their prices double in a matter of years (such as our artist Ben Kelly); in other cases, artists whose work is really good seem never to achieve high prices for their work.

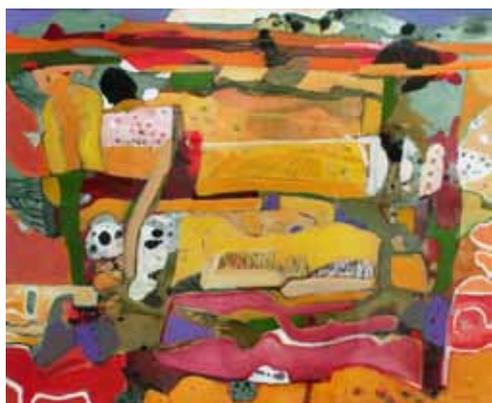
Sometimes an artist's work will escalate in value when they die, but this is not always the case. Indeed, it may take time to see a growth or appreciation in value for their work.

One key to identifying a potential investment is traceability. In terms of spotting young, budding artists with a promising future, one can explore their exhibition history, read reviews and keep an eye on which galleries are offering them representation, and who is talking about them.

With more established artists, a traceable presence in the press or within education can be important, plus accreditations from various federations where the artist has gone through an application and selection process. Especially respected are the Royal Academy (RA) artists (such as John Wragg RA).

With artists who have died, the value of their work can largely depend on how their estate is handled after their death, which can be difficult to judge in advance. For example, in some cases an artist's studio can end up being sold at auction as job lots, which can devalue the work enormously.

If you're new to collecting art and



Desert Harvest, Derek Balmer PPRWA



The Moon was Full and Bright in the Room, John Wragg RA

possibly on a budget, a good idea is to start with original prints. Unlike a giclée print, which is a reproduction print produced on an ink-jet printer, an original print has been hand printed by an artist and is far more likely to hold its value. With prices starting at around £50-£100, buying an original print is a great way to test the waters when it comes to investing in art.

Above all – especially when buying art for your home – you should buy a piece because you love it. If you find artwork that makes your heart jump, the pleasure you'll get from it is a worthwhile investment in itself.

Peter Ford is Bridget's top investment tip for original print entry level investment, and both Derek Balmer and John Wragg for higher level investment. ♦

Bridget Sterling is Gallery Director at Bath Contemporary. bathcontemporary.com

THIS MONTH

11 December BROCANTE AT CROCADON FARM

More than 40 stalls of antiques, vintage, bric-a-brac and a café offering French-themed refreshments.

*Crocadon Farm
St Mellion, Saltash
crocadon.co.uk*

18 December GRAMPOUND ANTIQUÉ & VINTAGE FAIR

Up to 28 stalls offering antiques, collectables and furniture. Entrance 50p
*Grampound Village Hall
grampoundantiquesfair.
co.uk*