

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BARTHA & SENARCLEMS



# Canvas Opinion

IF YOU WANT TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON YOUR INVESTMENTS, YOU COULD ALWAYS HANG THEM ON THE WALL. WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE GROWING INTEREST IN ART COLLECTING FOR PROFIT

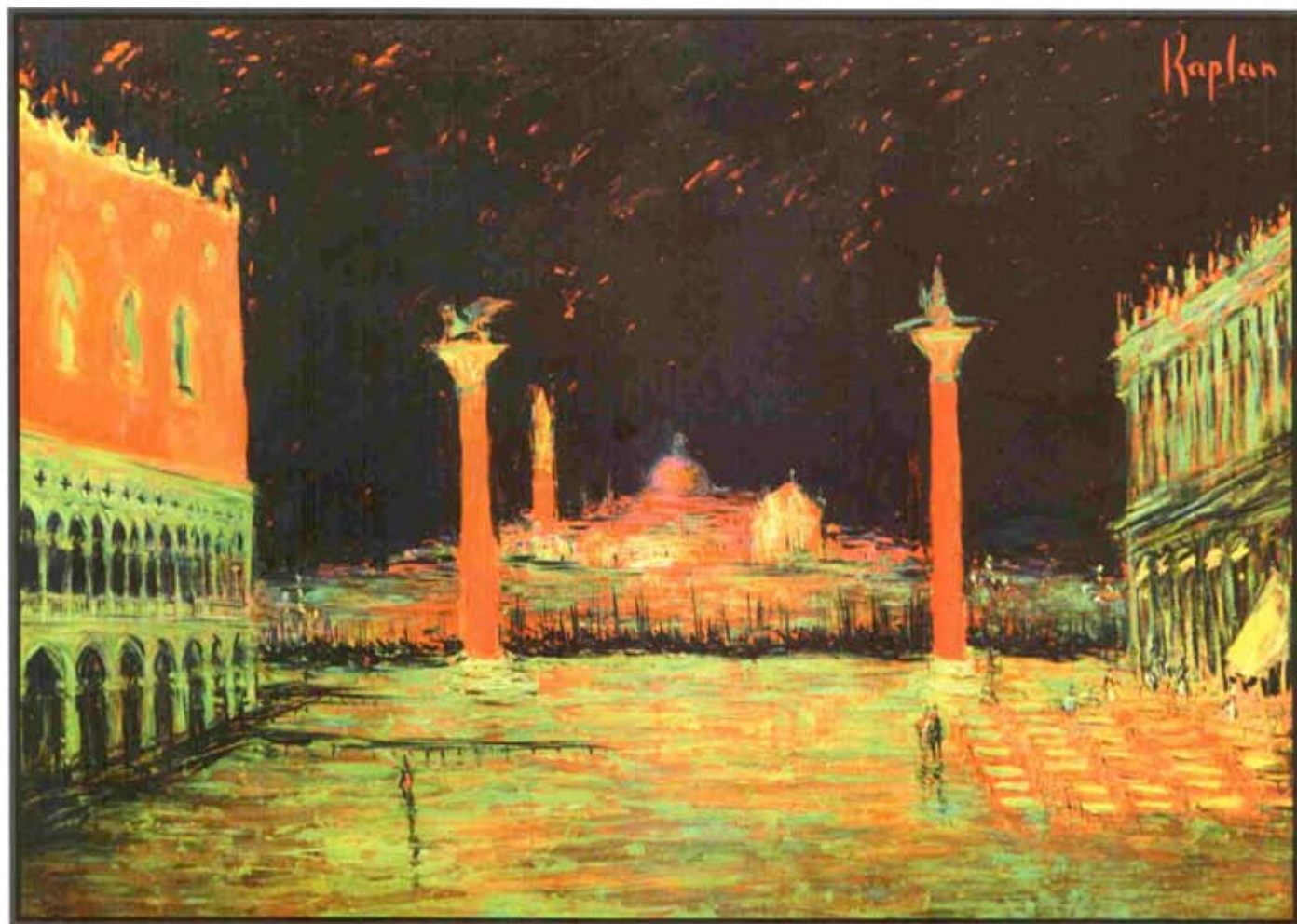


PICTURES COURTESY OF MOMENTOUS ARTS

LEFT: FERNANDO BOTERO: WOMAN WITH COAT

TOP: LIZ MCKAY: CAFE DEL FIGLI

BELOW: TANG HONG LEE: DAY AND NIGHT



PICTURE COURTESY OF OPERA GALLERY

Singapore is unlikely to shake off its reputation as a workaholic, business-minded nation any time soon (nor would it want to) but it is, happily, losing its image as a land of Philistines. The art world, in all its forms, has blossomed in the last decade. And there is no reason why business and pleasure can't go together; art investment can be the perfect blend of head and heart.

It is why Bartha & Senarclens, a leading art dealer and art investment consultancy based in Geneva, Switzerland, judged it the right time to open a private gallery here last year, specialising in modern masters and top international contemporary artists. The company believes that Singapore's position as an established centre for private wealth management makes it an ideal choice for its first international office.

Frédéric de Senarclens, partner and CEO, says: "In Europe, art is an established investment vehicle for both individuals and the corporate sector, where personal interest and passion can translate into long-term financial gain. Bartha & Senarclens helps clients to identify and source art pieces internationally that will deliver a long-term financial

appreciation and at the same time have a positive impact on their personal or corporate space."

In addition to its art investment services, the company provides an international platform for new artists to the world's serious art collectors. As part of its Singapore launch, the company's exhibition features recent works by Fernando Botero, Marc Quinn, Robert Longo, Julian Schnabel, the Stern Brothers, plus Swiss sculptor Yves Dana. For further information, visit: [www.bartha-senarclens.com](http://www.bartha-senarclens.com)

The importance of Singapore for Asia's serious art collectors has been given a further boost with the decision to open Christie's Fine Art Storage Services here. Part of leading art business Christie's International, CFASS is this month due to open a facility at The Singapore FreePort at Changi to provide an ultra-high security storage for fine art, antiques and collectibles for international collectors and institutions around the globe. The Singapore FreePort, whose shareholders include the Singapore National Arts Council and the National Heritage Board of Singapore, is the largest freeport dedicated to the storage of fine art and high value collectibles in the world.

ABOVE:  
MARK KAPLAN,  
SAN GIORGIO  
MADGIORE VUE  
SAN MARCO

There is a good chance that Christie's new storage facilities will house works originating in this part of the world. According to the company, the market for Asian contemporary art has grown rapidly in the last few years alongside strong sales in modern and classical art, and Southeast Asia offers some of the most dynamic and exemplary works of a diverse group of artists working in the region.

Christie's has had a specialist department devoted solely to modern and contemporary art in Southeast Asia since 1994, which is sold through its Hong Kong salesroom. In May 2008, it achieved its highest sales record in the category with a sales total of US\$9.2m. Modern artists such as Rudolf Bonnet, Le Pho, Le Mayeur, S. Sudjojono, Affandi and Hendra Gunawan have been among those contributing to auction sales records.

Irene Chee is gallery manager of the Opera Gallery in Singapore, which is now at ION Orchard and carries a wide range of artworks, which start as low as \$1,000 and rise to "six or even seven figures". Its clients comprise both those who buy primarily for pleasure and those who buy for investment, although the gallery suggests to investors that they buy something that appeals to them. "Quite a number of clients are knowledgeable, but mostly not," she says. "Even with knowledge, they will still like to listen to different views and expert advice to guide them towards something new or what's in trend."

How can you judge what is likely to prove profitable in the long term – and not just temporarily in vogue? "One

“Botero’s unique rotund figures and forms appeal to modern art collectors”



PICTURE COURTESY OF OPERA GALLERY

PICTURE COURTESY OF OPERA GALLERY



RIGHT:  
FERNANDO  
BOTERO, VENUS

can't guard against trends," admits Chee. "Our advice to art collectors is to look for and buy art that speaks to them regardless of trends. In the down market, collectors will tend towards the conservative contemporary art as they have proved the test of time."

She points out that the Opera Gallery has an art board with experts on the panel to look out for promising new artists and also has the advantage of being one of a wide network of galleries internationally "where we can place new as well as up-and-coming artists' works to test the market reaction and to seek feedback from art collectors".

At the moment, she says, the trend is still leaning towards modern contemporary and, in particular, pop art. Picasso and Botero are two artists much sought after for investment value, she adds. "Picasso, being the most well-known founder of the cubist movement, and Botero's unique rotund figures and forms appeal to modern art collectors. Both artists are well-known internationally and their artworks can be seen in many museums around the world."

And, moving to the bottom line: how much are art purchases likely to increase in value? "It is difficult to put a figure or percentage to expectation on returns in art," says Chee. "There are pieces, for example by Jeanne Lorioz and Mark Kaplan, that are sold three to four times in one or two years, meaning that sometimes works purchased can be placed back into the market and re-sold at a 10 to 15

ABOVE:  
PAULO PICASSO,  
TÊTE D'HOMME  
BARBU

“In Europe, art is an established investment vehicle for both individuals and the corporate sector”

per cent return in a span of one to two years, whilst others take a longer time to change hands. Art is really very personal and subjective to individual collectors.” For further information on the Opera Gallery, tel: 6735 2618 or visit [www.operagallery.com](http://www.operagallery.com).

Allan Teo, director of Momentous Arts in Lor Telok, off Boat Quay, which showcases an array of modern and contemporary art, says of his clients: “Most come into the gallery with an open mind to see what we have. We will introduce them to the artists and their style of work and will share with them more if they show interest in any particular work. Some clients may come in for a particular artist’s work, having some prior knowledge already of the artist and seeking out certain work that they want. Most buy for pleasure; a handful buy for investment.” The gallery caters for clients seeking to buy artworks averaging from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

“Usually an artist who has been painting professionally for 10 years will give a clue as to the skill and direction of his work. He must also have regular exhibitions, and awards and reviews are a good measure of his progress. Importantly, his work must show originality. The subject must be consistent with his idea for the series of work he set out to do and not something that is in vogue. For example, the iconic Mao and Monroe portrait has been painted over and over again by many artists because it sells.

BELOW:  
EDWIN  
WILWAYD  
SCHERZO XXXA



PICTURE COURTESY OF MOMENTOUS ARTS



PICTURE COURTESY OF MOMENTOUS ARTS

ABOVE:  
RENE ROBLES  
PASTEL ON  
PAPER

Teo’s criteria for spotting up-and-coming artists are: “They are hardworking, ambitious and very prolific in their output. They are confident and their work displays a certain maturity that is beyond their years.” He says paintings are the most popular art form for investment at the moment, followed by sculptures. “Photography is getting some attention, but not as an investment genre yet.”

He cites Filipino artist Rene Robles, who founded the art discipline ‘Assertionism’, on the principle that ‘art that has power asserts, transforms and transcends’, as an artist who is garnering attention for his unusual perspective of everyday objects. “He displays a mastery of lines with intense colour and unnerving composition,” says Teo. “Young Australian artist Liz McKay’s quirky, figurative works are highly popular,” he adds. “She brings a certain uniqueness to the figures’ postures and facial expressions in the cool settings of cafes and jazz bars.”

He cautions that the gallery does not promise returns on purchases “although our popular artists’ prices have appreciated over the years”, and that it can take years for an artist’s work to be accepted by collectors and art critics. He adds: “Prices also move in tandem with economic growth. Sometimes when prices go up a lot it can be due to speculative elements at play and we can see that sometimes at auctions.” Contact the gallery at 6535 3961 or visit [www.momentousarts.com](http://www.momentousarts.com).

#### IN THE FRAME

Unless your painting is so valuable you daren’t leave it on the wall without armed guards to protect it, it won’t need much maintenance. The experts advise:

- Hang it in a well-ventilated space at a consistent temperature
- Don’t let it get damp
- Don’t let it come into contact with ultra-violet light
- Give it an occasional dusting