

Magnificent Obsessions:
The Artist as Collector

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BARBICAN ART GALLERY

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6 Foreword and Acknowledgements

9 The Artist as Collector
Lydia Yee



17 Arman

21 Interview with Arman
Alain Nicolas



37 Peter Blake

41 Interview with Peter Blake
Lydia Yee



59 Hanne Darboven

63 Hanne Darboven's Objects
Miriam Schoofs

75 Edmund de Waal

79 Extract from *The Hare with Amber Eyes*
Edmund de Waal



87 Damien Hirst

91 Wunderkammer
Damien Hirst

103 Howard Hodgkin

107 On Collecting Indian Paintings
Howard Hodgkin



123 Dr Lakra

127 Interview with Dr Lakra
Lydia Yee



137 Sol LeWitt

143 Interview with Carol LeWitt
Lydia Yee



157 Martin Parr

161 Interview with Martin Parr
Lydia Yee

173 Jim Shaw

177 Interview with Jim Shaw
Lydia Yee



191 Hiroshi Sugimoto

195 Interview with Hiroshi Sugimoto
Lydia Yee



207 Andy Warhol

211 Possession Obsession
Steven M. L. Aronson



223 Pae White

229 What appearstobeajapanesefanandaglobelight...
Pae White



239 Martin Wong / Danh Vo

243 Interview with Danh Vo
Lydia Yee

254 Selected Bibliography

255 Credits

Foreword and Acknowledgements

Collecting is a universal activity that is at the same time deeply personal and revealing. Brought together for both private and public enjoyment, collections seem to inspire a fascination that knows no bounds.

Over the past 250 years, museums have existed to conserve, display and interpret collections and make them accessible to the public. The majority of these stem from the collections of single visionaries. The British Museum, which opened to the public in 1759, was based on the personal collection of the physician and scientist Sir Hans Sloane, which contained more than 70,000 artefacts, books and specimens. Today, Sloane's original collection and his story have been subsumed among more than eight million objects arranged and contextualised to tell the story of the world's cultures and history. By contrast, the architect Sir John Soane's idiosyncratic collections of art, artefacts, antiquities and personal effects have been kept intact since his death in 1837 and are now available for public viewing in his house on Lincoln's Inn Fields. The Sir John Soane's Museum tells the story of one collector, and the objects and the way they are displayed illuminate Soane as a person and his practice as an architect.

In this same spirit of making accessible the private collections of creative practitioners, Barbican Art Gallery presents 'Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector'. This exhibition and its accompanying book is the first to look at collections of objects brought together by artists to explore the meaning and influence of those collections on the artists' work.

In the past decade, Barbican Art Gallery has mounted a number of group exhibitions that have in some way touched on this most fertile area of investigation. 'Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art' (2008) imagined what a museum might look like if brought together by aliens grappling with the meaning of contemporary art. Similarly cross-generational and much concerned with the significance of accumulation and display, 'The Surreal House' (2010) came out of a desire to explore the significance of domestic space for the surrealist imagination, bringing together works from across the 20th and 21st centuries.

As is the case with all our major exhibitions, 'Magnificent Obsessions' would still be just a great

idea waiting to happen were it not for the generosity of participating artists and lenders. First and foremost we would like to thank the following artists for opening up their homes and studios, making the private public by sharing cherished objects from their collections: Peter Blake, Edmund de Waal, Damien Hirst, Howard Hodgkin, Dr Lakra, Martin Parr, Jim Shaw, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Pae White and Danh Vo. We are most grateful to the public and private collections who have entrusted us with important loans. Our sincere thanks are due to Corice Arman, Tara Strongosky and Margaret Weber at the Arman Marital Trust; Mitchell and Emily Rales, Gaby Mizes and Nora Severson at Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland; Oliver Fairclough, Andrew Renton and Clare Smith at the National Museum Wales, Cardiff; Jörg Plickat, Nicole Krapat and Miriam Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven Foundation, Hamburg; Penny Johnson, Adrian George and Andrew Basham at the Government Art Collection, London; Kate Davies at the Murderme Collection, London; Christopher Brown, Andrew Topsfield, Aisha Burtenshaw and Hannah Mason at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Carol LeWitt and Janet Passehl at the LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut; Eric Shiner, Matt Wrbican, John Jacobs, Heather Kowalski, Jesse Kowalski and Cindy Lisica at the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Olga Viso, Bartholomew Ryan, Loren Smith and Bryan Stusse at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Efraim Grinberg, Mary Leach and Kathleen Bicksler at the Movado Group, Paramus, New Jersey; Eric Decelle; Hari Kunzru; and Robert Devereux. We are grateful to the galleries that facilitated loans: Kate MacGarry and Lizzy McGregor at Kate MacGarry, London; Nick Baker and Róisín McQueirns at Simon Lee Gallery, London; Cornelia Grassi and Edwige Cochois at greengrassi, London; Susannah Hyman, Katrina Crear and Lucy May at White Cube, London; and Amelia Hinojosa and Martha Reta at kurimanzutto, Mexico City. We also owe thanks to the studio managers and artists' assistants who have provided support in a number of ways: Jenni Smith, Michael Fraser, Nerissa Taysom, Stephanie Forrest, Jessica Mastro, Gen Aihara and Amy Zion.

'Magnificent Obsessions' has been curated by Lydia Yee, who has realised a thoughtful and engaging exhibition, a fitting conclusion to her tenure at the Barbican. She has worked closely with Associate Curator Sophie Persson and Exhibitions Assistant Luke Naessens to bring this ambitious project to fruition. Former Exhibitions

Assistant Lauren Barnes and former Research Assistant Anna Ferrari were instrumental during the research and planning phases of the exhibition. Former curatorial interns Kate Devine and Emily Purser also contributed to the exhibition at an early stage, and curatorial placement Franka Blok assisted at a later point. Exhibition logistics have been very ably handled by Exhibition Coordinator Alice Lobb and Associate Exhibitions Coordinator Ulrika Danielsson. Production Manager Peter Sutton has overseen the build and installation of the exhibition. Senior Manager Katrina Crookall provided advice and guidance throughout the project.

Colleagues across the Barbican have also made important contributions to this project. We thank Media Relations Manager Ann Berni, Media Relations Officer Ariane Oiticica, Senior Marketing Manager Kate Davis, Marketing Campaigns Executive Siobhan Ion, Marketing Campaigns Assistant Áine McGuinness, Online and Digital Marketing Manager Ryan Nelson and Digital Content Producer Sidd Khajuria.

This publication, with illuminating contributions by the artists, Steven M. L. Aronson, Carol LeWitt, Luke Naessens, Alain Nicolas, Sophie Persson, Miriam Schoofs and Lydia Yee, is produced in collaboration with Prestel. We appreciate the contributions of Lincoln Dexter and Andrew Hansen in bringing the book to fruition. This publication, marketing campaign and exhibition graphics have been very thoughtfully designed by Fraser Muggeridge, Luke Hall and Jules Estèves at Fraser Muggeridge studio. Max Kahlen and Christopher Dyvik of Dyvik Kahlen Architects have complemented the exhibition with their sensitive design.

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We are delighted to be working with the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts in Norwich, where a version of this exhibition will be presented. Government indemnity cover for the exhibition has been provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and administered by the Arts Council England. Finally, we have been fortunate to have Time Out as our media sponsor.

Jane Alison
Head of Visual Arts, Barbican Centre

The Artist as Collector

Throughout history artists have collected objects for professional and private reasons – as studio props, sources of inspiration, references for their work, personal mementos and, even, investment. The 17th century Dutch painter Rembrandt, for example, was a compulsive collector of *naturalia* (such as exotic shells, coral, animal specimens and other natural objects) and *artificialia* (such as plaster busts, musical instruments, paintings, prints, weapons and other man-made objects). Many of these objects were used for study or as props, but Rembrandt's collecting habit also drained his resources, and he was eventually forced to sell off his collection in the face of bankruptcy. In the late 19th century, artists including the French Impressionist painters Edgar Degas and Claude Monet began collecting Japanese prints because they offered an alternative aesthetic model to the Western conventions of realism. Monet explained that they 'taught us to compose differently'.¹ Similarly, the African masks and sculptures in Picasso's collection, with their simplified and stylised features, aided his search for radical new forms. Commercial printing and other mass-production techniques have made whole new categories of objects available to artist-collectors in the past century. Walker Evans collected picture postcards from an early age, and their everyday style and subjects came to influence his own approach to photographing the American scene.

For some artists, the passion for collecting has complemented and informed their artistic interests, and for others it has impeded their ability to work. Why do artists collect? How do they live and work with their collections? What is the relationship between the objects artists collect and the works they make? Do artists bestow a special significance on their possessions? Can we view an artist's collection as a self-portrait or a work of art?

Collections have traditionally been amassed with the objective of building and transmitting knowledge. Artists too share this aim, but towards more subjective ends. Unlike museums, artists do not typically take a scholarly approach to collecting, nor do they seek to assemble comprehensive or representative collections. Reflecting personal obsessions, their acquisitions are often made in tandem with their own work

and on a visual basis. Many artists live with and make use of their collections, while others keep them under wraps or in storage. Some artists are connoisseurs, carefully shaping their collections, and others accumulate hoards of objects, never letting anything go.

This publication and the exhibition it accompanies focus on the personal collections of more than a dozen contemporary artists, whose holdings range from mass-produced memorabilia and popular collectibles to one-of-a-kind curiosities, rarefied artefacts and specimens. Some of these artists collect in a variety of different categories, while others have a specific nucleus to their collecting. Several also collect contemporary artworks, but this is not the focus of this essay, as they most frequently result from trades between artists and involve very different dynamics.

Almost everyone has, at some point in life, collected something. Collecting often begins in childhood with the encouragement of a parent, grandparent or older sibling. Artists are no different, and early support and role models can help sow the seeds for a lifetime of collecting. Andy Warhol, for example, was born into a working-class immigrant family in Pittsburgh with few possessions and where toys were considered a luxury, but his mother, Julia Warhola, doted on her youngest son and nurtured his artistic interests. Warhol's early penchant for collecting is evidenced by a scrapbook he assembled with the help of his older brother Paul, who wrote to Hollywood stars, such as Shirley Temple, Mae West and Henry Fonda, for photos and autographs.² When Warhol became a successful illustrator in the 1950s, he started collecting folk art and later Art Deco furniture, jewellery, 19th century American furniture, modern and contemporary art, Native American textiles and sculpture, cookie jars, 1939 World's Fair souvenirs and more, often choosing objects that were associated with childhood. Some would argue that not only does collecting compensate for a lack of material goods in early life, but it is also a coping mechanism, dispelling childhood anxieties and difficult memories.³

In some cases, the acquisitive habits of a relative or neighbour can stimulate the curiosity of a child, initiating them into the world of collecting. Just before the end of the Second World War, Peter Blake was evacuated with his younger sister to Worcester, where they lived for a year with their eccentric grandmother, who filled her tiny home with mincing machines

and cocktail cabinets. Assembled without rhyme or reason, this collection of objects made an impression on Blake, who had endured deprivation in wartime Britain. After the war ended, Blake started collecting, making his first purchases in a junk shop near Gravesend Technical College School of Art, where he was a student in the Junior Art Department.⁴ A reclusive neighbour captured the imagination of a young Damien Hirst just after he had finished school and moved to London. The sudden disappearance of the man, a collector and hoarder of objects, led Hirst to explore his abandoned house, which he described as ‘sixty years of existence in one room’, and to take and use objects from the property for his work as an art student at Goldsmiths College.⁵

Simple childhood activities can lead to collecting and eventually to artistic endeavours. Trainspotting was, for both Martin Parr and Hiroshi Sugimoto, a boyhood hobby that combined studying, collecting and recording information about particular types of trains. ‘I was interested in trains, steam trains in particular’, recalls Parr. ‘I was interested in collecting and numbers, and the romance of steam ... And all these elements came together in trainspotting.’⁶ As an extension of his enthusiasm for trains, Sugimoto taught himself to use a camera at the age of 12 so he could photograph locomotives.⁷ Edmund de Waal recalls a ‘feral childhood’, playing on the grounds of Lincoln Cathedral, where his father was a chancellor, and digging up archaeological fragments, coins, shells and bones that would fill his private *Wunderkammer*.⁸ De Waal organised the objects in an old vitrine, grouping and spacing them in a manner that anticipated the arrangements he employs in his work today.

Rewarding the curiosity and enthusiasm of a young collector can serve to feed their passion. When he was young, Martin Wong went regularly with his mother, Florence Wong Fie, to the Asian antique and gift shops in San Francisco’s Chinatown. ‘He read up on everything’, writes Julie Ault. ‘Impressed with so much knowledge in a young boy, the shopkeepers gave him generous discounts, thereby arousing his appetite for bargains.’⁹ The son’s zeal for collecting would in turn influence his mother, and together over several decades the two built a collection of thousands of objects, ranging from Disney figurines and ceramic fruits and vegetables to Chinese porcelains, scrolls and graffiti art.

Aspiring collectors learn from mentors, but also by looking, studying and making mistakes.

Introduced to Indian paintings by his art teacher, Wilfred Blunt, Howard Hodgkin bought his first painting when he was around the age of 14, a ‘hybrid, seventeenth-century “Indo-Persian” picture from Aurangabad, India – very brightly coloured, very pretty, of people sitting around in a garden’.¹⁰ Under the influence of Blunt’s impassioned but limited knowledge of Indian painting, Hodgkin bought a few other works of poor quality and soon outgrew his teacher’s knowledge of the subject. Eventually he met two scholars and curators of Indian art – Robert Skelton and Cary Welch – who would serve as important mentors, giving him the opportunity to see excellent examples of Indian painting first-hand. As a result, Hodgkin began re-evaluating the quality of his collection, selling off lesser works to buy better ones: ‘I’ve kept nothing back from my early purchases. Nothing survived the weeding out process. But that was probably necessary: owning teaches you to discriminate.’¹¹

When Arman began collecting African art and later Japanese armour, he initially bought from antique shops, before getting to know respectable dealers. He has acknowledged making mistakes – being duped by African sculptures that had been ‘improved’ or by outright fakes – but this for him was a valuable part of the learning process. Arman remembers his early experience with Japanese armour: ‘I started collecting swords, helmets and tsuba, or sword guards. The things I bought were what you could find in antique shops in southern France. I was very annoyed later when I discovered all were bad.’ After visiting Japan for the first time in 1970, he ‘saw the difference between good and beautiful and the rest’. ‘I wanted to know more about Japanese culture and strategy of war’, he said.¹²

As a young photographer, Sugimoto earned a living as a dealer, which enabled him to cultivate knowledge of Japanese art. He opened a gallery called Mingei in the late 1970s in the Soho neighbourhood of New York, initially selling clay vessels, bamboo baskets, textiles and furniture. After making regular trips to Japan to buy items for his gallery and visiting temples to educate himself about religious objects, he shifted his focus to Japanese antiquities, changing the name of his business to Sugimoto Works of Art. Sugimoto also learned from the dealers in Japan, particularly Mitsuru Tajima, whose private collection of ancient terracotta figures, gilded bronze pieces from temples, lacquered boxes, ceramic vessels, calligraphy and paintings he presented at his gallery.¹³ This exhibition marked

a turning point in Sugimoto's connoisseurship of Japanese art.

Although the passion for collecting may develop early in their careers, artists are not often in the position to make important acquisitions or amass a substantial collection when they are young, as this typically requires significant financial resources as well as time. Sugimoto was able to acquire museum-quality works of Buddhist art for himself when the sales of his photographs increased as a result of his solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1995.¹⁴ Those who collect rare and valuable objects may have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire a special piece. In order to get hold of a picture from the *Hamzanama*, originally from a group of paintings commissioned by Emperor Akbar in the 16th century to illustrate the adventures of Hamza, Hodgkin enlisted the art expert Charles Ratton to facilitate a purchase on his behalf. Only later did he fully appreciate his good fortune in being about to acquire a masterpiece of Mughal painting.

Other artists are less discriminating with their acquisitions, preferring to buy lesser-quality items in large quantities. Warhol was not particularly concerned about the condition of potential purchases and in fact preferred a bit of patina. When he curated the exhibition 'Raid the Icebox' (1969-70), for which he selected objects from the storage of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Warhol often chose items of secondary quality with visible wear and tear, such as cabinets filled with nearly 200 pairs of old shoes, hat boxes, parasols, paintings, Native American blankets and even a group of Windsor chairs which were kept 'for use as spare parts'.¹⁵ He took a similar approach when making purchases for his own collection. According to the antiques dealer Vito Giallo, who was once the artist's assistant on commercial projects in the 1950s, Warhol would come to his Upper East Side shop and 'buy rows and rows of mercury glass vases, copper luster pitchers, Victorian card cases'.¹⁶ Always in search of a bargain or a new, previously overlooked and therefore reasonably priced category in which to collect, Warhol had a daily routine that involved several hours of shopping, as Pat Hackett describes in her foreword to *The Andy Warhol Diaries*:

Keeping to his beloved weekday 'rut' was so important to Andy that he veered from it only when he was forced to. After 'doing the Diary' with me on the phone, he'd make or take a few

more phone calls, shower, get dressed, take his cherished dachshunds Archie and Amos into the elevator with him and go from the third floor of his house, where his bedroom was, to the basement kitchen where he'd have breakfast with his two Filipino housekeepers, sisters Nena and Aurora Bugarin. Then he'd tuck some copies of *Interview* under his arm and go out shopping for a few hours, usually along Madison Avenue, then in the auction houses, the jewelry district around 47th Street, and the village antique shops.¹⁷

Whereas Warhol tended to collect in a wide range of categories, mixing high and low, some artists prefer to trawl through the low end of culture. Jim Shaw rummages through flea markets, second-hand stores and charity and junk shops for what he calls the 'garbage of American culture'.¹⁸ He is interested in items that reflect the strange and dark side of society, and has collected comics, thrift store paintings, publications and ephemera from religious groups and secret societies, political propaganda and educational material. Dr Lakra also favours inexpensive things. Many items from his collection of toys, pin-up magazines, records and scrapbooks are from flea markets in Mexico City. Some of this material is likely to have been scavenged from local dumps by trash pickers and junk dealers who in turn sell their finds in the flea market. Lakra himself has elevated some of his scrapbooks to works of art by putting them on display shelves, also sourced from flea markets or junk shops.

Analogies are often made between collecting and illness. A new collector is said to have 'caught the collecting bug', while an inveterate collector may be described as having an 'obsessive-compulsive disorder' or an 'addiction'. Although some artists may explain their habits in these terms, Hodgkin describes being in thrall to his collection in a more poetic manner:

But once the wanting stage has passed, usually when large amounts of money are to be spent on serious acquisitions, and the need for them distorts your life, then you make a horrible discovery that a collection has a life of its own: it makes its own demands. Once its design begins to form in your mind, things have to be acquired out of necessity, as well as passion. And that perhaps is the most dangerous part of making a collection, because it's no longer obeying the dictates of the heart, or lower organs: the head intervenes



ANDY WARHOL, *Flea Market*, c.1976–87

as well. You can argue yourself into almost anything, when it's a question of buying a beautiful object.¹⁹

The fervour of one collector can affect others, and Hodgkin's passion for Indian pictures of elephants rubbed off on his friend Peter Blake, who began collecting small elephant figurines. Blake has, at times, limited himself to buying miniature elephants at the Portobello Road market in order to curb his habit and prevent himself from buying costly and unnecessary items.

Collectors with a very specific focus come to rely on a few key contacts for acquisitions, particularly when their favoured objects are in scarce supply in the wider market. Dealers will often set aside particular items of interest for regular buyers. Parr, a voracious collector of mass culture souvenirs, avidly bids on eBay for various categories of objects, including postcards, political memorabilia, tourist souvenirs and

commemorative items from the space race. Once he has exhausted online sources, Parr relies on specialists to ferret out new items, such as a private dealer in Moscow who is able to find rare Soviet space dog collectibles for him.

The act of acquiring is at the heart of collecting, but other considerations come to the fore once a new acquisition arrives at home. Will it be displayed or be put away for safekeeping? Will it fit into or change the existing order? Artists live with their collections in different ways and have various strategies for classifying and organising objects. Blake maintains a myriad of collections under the roof of his west London studio. While objects fill the space floor to ceiling, everything has its place: 200 small elephant figurines are carefully herded into a teeming display on wood shelves near the entrance; a section of the studio is devoted to curiosities and stuffed animals from the Victorian taxidermist Walter Potter and the

circus performer known as the Great Stromboli; more than 30 masks hang on a wall at the top of the stairs. Hanne Darboven's family home and studio on the outskirts of Hamburg is also bursting at the seams with objects. She kept groups of like objects together – framed postcards from artist friends on her large desk, musical instruments in the family room, landscape paintings on the wall adjoining the staircase – among a dizzying, heterogeneous array of other things that she liked: animals (in the form of sculptures, figurines, toys, taxidermy and photographs of her pet goats), pictures (works by other artists as well as paintings that are likely to have been purchased in second-hand shops), souvenirs (from her family's coffee business and from travels and friends). After filling the walls and horizontal surfaces, Darboven devised a system to suspend objects from the ceiling. Some of Darboven's works, such as *Mitarbeiter und Freunde* (1990), feature photographs of objects in her home and studio. In this work, 90 images of a festive holiday gathering reveal the desk cleared of its clutter and surrounding objects rearranged to accommodate her guests.

In marked contrast to Blake and Darboven, some artists keep their collections in storage. Pae White stores her collection of more than 3,000 scarves and other textiles by the American designer Vera Neumann in boxes in her studio, which minimises light exposure and protects them from fading. White purchased the Vera textiles – characterised by simple graphic motifs and bold combinations of colour – from flea markets, from second-hand shops and online with the aim of using them as a reference tool for her own work. When she opens the boxes various odours escape – perfumes, laundry detergent and the smell of thrift stores, perhaps triggering memories of where and when she purchased the items.

Warhol stored his collection in his five-storey, twelve-room townhouse at 57 East 66th Street, where he lived from 1974 to 1987. Warhol often kept his bounty in the very shopping bags and packaging in which it arrived, never bothering to unpack let alone display his things. 'Not only is every closet in Andy's house filled', assert Sandra Brant and Elissa Cullman, 'but entire rooms have become closets.'²⁰ This was not always the case, as Fred Hughes, Warhol's friend and business manager, explains:

Andy was not one to enjoy the display of his collection. Rather, he felt comfortable in the

knowledge that it was safely put away in storerooms, and in this very Byzantine way, he enjoyed it immensely. Nevertheless, he appreciated those who assisted him in displaying the collection, and Jed Johnson was a great help in this respect when he moved to the big house on 66th Street in 1974. But here was a conflict: Andy was horrified at the prospect of appearing conventional or grand, yet at the same time he loved the luxury of those surroundings. When Jed moved from that house, Andy kept only two or three rooms properly furnished and clear of clutter, using all the others for storage.²¹

Even before he was a fervent collector of folk art and Americana, Warhol accumulated a small hoard of furnishings and objects while living in an apartment on Lexington Avenue. His eclectic taste reflected his commercial design work in the 1950s, particular his window displays for Bonwit Teller and I. Miller department stores. David Bourdon's description of Warhol's apartment conjures up a mad window dresser let loose in the backroom of a junk shop:

Clutter was an indispensable element of Warhol's habitats, and his parlour-floor apartment came to resemble a window trimmer's pleasure palace with an overall style that someone characterized as 'Victorian Surrealist.' He amassed antique furniture, including a canopied brass bed with cupids, and decorative objects, as well as some pretty flamboyant curios, such as penny arcade machines, handpainted store signs, folk sculptures, carousel horses, a chair made out of animal horns, and even a stuffed peacock. The front room contained a table set for a children's birthday party that Warhol had created for one of Tiffany's periodic displays of designer table settings. It consisted of a bentwood table and high-back chairs, the latter slipcovered in a festive cabbage-rose chintz. Plates of fancifully iced cookies alternated with Coca-Cola bottles sprayed an iridescent golden-orange.²²

Other artists take great care with the way in which they display their collections. A narrow wall in the Arman residence in New York features an accretion of Kota figures not unlike one of the artist's own accumulation sculptures. In another room, a Songye *kifwebe* mask from what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo is flanked by

two Corinthian helmets from ancient Greece, offering a striking morphological comparison. Sugimoto has built a Japanese teahouse in his New York loft, where he occasionally hosts tea ceremonies and displays items from his collection, such as a Rembrandt print mounted on a traditional Japanese scroll. This space, according to Elisa Lipsky-Karasz, 'functions as a kind of personal laboratory for historical hypotheses that happen in [the artist's] imagination'.²³

Artists have numerous reasons for building and maintaining collections, which are similar to those in society at large. Collecting enables people to reconnect with their childhood, to preserve, study and invest in material from another historical period and to keep the past alive. 'To renew the old world', for Walter Benjamin, 'is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things.'²⁴ For most artists, collecting also has a close relationship to their own work. Warhol, who was typically evasive about his motivations for collecting, made practical claims for his acquisitions: 'Things I buy we can use in so many different ways. First we use it as a prop in a movie, then we use it as "Factory" furniture, then we give it away as a present'.²⁵

From the 1950s until his death in 2007, Sol LeWitt amassed a collection of work by artists from different periods, from Japanese prints and modernist photography to contemporary art and music, creating an ongoing dialogue with other artists across time and place. LeWitt first collected woodblock prints when he was a soldier stationed in Japan during the Korean War. He already had an affinity for prints, having made them as a student at Syracuse University and designed posters for the Special Services. His wife Carol LeWitt has observed, 'Sol seems to experience things through collecting them [...] He's the kind of person who needs a lot of information around him all the time.'²⁶ Study is one of the key reasons why artists collect. The common term for an artist's workplace, the studio, derives from the Latin *studium*, meaning study, pursuit or zeal. It is also related to the *studiolo*, Italian for small studio, a private room furnished with objects and books for study, which first appeared among wealthy and learned Italian men in the 14th century.²⁷ Hodgkin asserts that 'Artists have always collected art. Perhaps because it's something from elsewhere. A professional artist sells what he makes. Buying art fills the void that comes as each work leaves the studio.'²⁸

An interesting tension exists, for artists, in the studio between collecting and using, creating and destroying. At some point they acquire objects for their collection, but, at another point, the same objects may end up as material for their art. This may be a simple case of appropriation, as when Darboven has inserted objects from her collection into her installations. If the installation is purchased, the artist must cede the object along with the rest of the installation to a new owner.²⁹ It becomes more complicated in cases where the artist irreparably alters and sacrifices an irreplaceable object for their own art. Arman has also used African sculpture in his accumulations – not masterpieces that he keeps for his own collection, but lesser-quality pieces – even slicing open masks and fragmenting them: 'I've cut poor Makonde masks in half (I only do this with poor objects), and by revealing their interior, they become quite beautiful.'³⁰

What happens to an artist's collection after his or her death? There are several common scenarios: the collection is divided between heirs, maintained by an estate or foundation, or sold off, but it is not always something for which the artist has planned. When Warhol unexpectedly died in 1987, his will dictated that his estate be used to create a foundation dedicated to the 'advancement of the visual arts', but plans for his personal possessions were less clear. Pamela Allara writes, 'According to his fellow shopper Stuart Pivar, Warhol had a vague plan for his collection's divestiture, code named Warhol Hall, "having to do with a gallery, gift shop, or a flea market stand. He had designed a collection label."³¹ Sotheby's auctioned off more than 10,000 lots from Warhol's collection in a ten-day sale in 1988, raising more than \$25 million to benefit the nascent foundation. De Waal, whose collection of Japanese netsuke was a family inheritance that passed through several generations of Jewish ancestors during the turbulent years of the first half of the 20th century, plans to keep the collection within the family. Some artists would like to see their collections remain intact for public study and as testament to their collecting legacy. Hodgkin has put his collection of Mughal Indian painting on long-term loan to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, while Hirst is in the process of creating his own gallery in London. The collection of Martin Wong has fortuitously found a home in a major American art institution. A decade after Wong's death due to AIDS-related complications

in 1999, the Vietnamese-born Danish artist Danh Vo learned of the collection and approached several museums about acquiring the nearly 4,000 objects, but they all declined. Following the advice of a curator, Vo acquired the objects from Wong's elderly mother and turned them into an artwork titled *IM UUR 2* (2013). As a single entity with a recognised author, the work was subsequently purchased by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, fulfilling Vo's desire for someone to take care of the collection in perpetuity.

Whereas most people are content to build, organise and display their collections, artists often exceed or disregard the parameters of conventional collecting practice. They frequently treat collecting as an extension of their artistic work – not only as research and source of inspiration, but also as experiment or material to be used, appropriated or even

transformed. Their ownership of a particular object can increase its value and lend an added presence or aura. Collections also help to further the understanding of the artist and his or her work. The art dealer Ivan Karp described Warhol's habit thus: 'a creative kind of collecting; his collecting is as much an invention as his art is'.³² These intertwined notions of 'creative collecting' and 'collecting as invention' broadly distinguish the contemporary artist's approach to acquiring and using their collections.

1. Claude Monet cited in David Bromfield, 'Japanese Art, Monet, and the Formation of Impressionism: Cultural Exchange and Appropriation in Later Nineteenth Century European Art', in Andrew Gerstle and Anthony Crothers Milner, eds, *Recovering the Orient: Artists, Scholars, Appropriations* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), p.7.

2. The scrapbook is in the collection of the Andy Warhol Museum. For more on Warhol's early years, see Tony Scherman and David Dalton, 'Beginnings', in *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol* (New York: Harper, 2009), pp.1–45.

3. See, for example, Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

4. See my interview with Peter Blake in this book, pp.41–4.

5. Damien Hirst cited in Damien Hirst and Gordon Burn, *On the Way to Work* (Faber and Faber, 2001), p.51. See also Damien Hirst, 'Wunderkammer', in this book, pp.91–2.

6. Quoted in Val Williams, *Martin Parr* (London: Phaidon, 2002), p.23.

7. See my interview with Hiroshi Sugimoto in this book, pp.195–7.

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Arman



Born Armand Fernandez in Nice, ARMAN (1928–2005) acquired his artistic interests from his father, Antonio Fernandez, who was a dealer of furniture and antiques as well as an amateur painter. As a young man, he worked in his father's shop and began collecting antiques in the 1950s. Arman would eventually collect in more than a dozen different categories, including African masks and sculptures, Japanese armour, European pistols, radios, jukeboxes, watches, Tiffany lamps, cars and contemporary art.

A founder of the 1960s French art movement Nouveau Realisme, Arman was inspired by the act of collecting to make his accumulation sculptures, consisting of numerous examples of one type of object, typically old, mass-produced items, such as tools or domestic goods. In *Home Sweet Home II* (1960), for example, dozens of gas masks tightly contained within a frame evoke the threat of a chemical attack. The uncanny quality of the protective military equipment, with which Arman would have been familiar as an adolescent during the Second World War, resonated with his nascent collection of African masks. His accumulations and voracious collecting habit were in part a response to the deprivations of war.

From the mid-1950s Arman collected African masks and figures, initially from flea markets and antique shops. Like Picasso, Braque, Matisse and other major artists in the early 20th century who assembled collections of African art, Arman was drawn to the sculptural qualities and latent power of the objects. Over the course of three decades, he built a museum-quality collection, primarily from West Africa, and had important holdings in other areas, most notably Japanese armour. His expertise and opinion were frequently sought after by museum directors, collectors and dealers to such an extent that during the 1980s he had to withdraw from collecting in order to focus anew on his own work. A major exhibition of his African collection opened in Marseille in 1996 and travelled to museums in Paris, Cologne and New York. In his New York loft, Arman installed his collection in small, carefully considered groups based on formal relationships or larger accumulations that resemble his own work. Since the artist's death in 2005, the collection has been maintained by his wife, Corice Arman.



Interview with Arman

ALAIN NICOLAS: In 1993 we had a long interview in Marseille concerning the exhibition 'Batcham: sculptures du Cameroun', during which you talked mainly about Bamileke sculpture. I would like to centre this interview more on your collection and your manner of collecting. My first question is very simple: how many objects do you have today?

ARMAN: Don't know exactly, I haven't counted the objects – 300, 400? It depends if one also counts the small objects. Because my collection is composed of several parts: those I just fell for, that's to say the pieces that interested me aesthetically, ones I desired; but also the sorts of systematic gestures, of accumulations. With the idea of putting things of the same type together, always following this design, which is mine in many of my works, that of the accumulation. What's more, because I'm a little bit ... ambitious by nature, I've always tried to do things which aren't easy, to collect objects that are difficult to acquire, or of high quality. Not possessing the fortune that I merit – that's a phrase I like, because no one ever has the fortune he deserves – I find a way, I retrade things, I resell, I rebuy, wheeling and dealing until I get the piece that I want. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

AN: Can you envision that one day your collection will be finished?

A: No, not really. I will always have longings, like to buy back an object that I used to have and now miss, or something like that. I can't really say. I've the impression that this sort of collection and this sort of collector, will only be finished when I'm finished.

AN: Don't you think that if you could answer this question about the end of your collection, you would be able to answer the question of why you collect?

A: I collect because collecting is a part of my make-up. I've always done it. I've always accumulated, much more than I've collected. And by accumulating, I've always been surrounded by objects. I've collected African art for such a long time now, at a really heavy tempo, and with such study, that I've become

my own expert advisor! In general, I rarely consult someone when buying an object. But for this collection, I had my encounter with African art at a time when there were few collectors around. Gradually, in a few years, we'll perhaps come to see fewer and fewer masterpieces on the market. Everything always ends up in museums. And that's all right.

AN: You started your collection in the 1950s?

A: Yes. I'd seen an exhibition in Paris (I think it was in a large hotel), and then two or three years later, another one in Cannes. These two exhibitions made a big impression on me: I didn't know anything, I had no notion of the quality to be seen in African art or Oceanic art – the so-called primitive arts. And it reinforced a very important idea in me: the realisation that every culture, that every ethnic group can produce masterpieces. This reinforced the idea that I already held, that man is the same all over. And the discovery of this idea was a great source of pleasure to me, while I was still quite young.

AN: So, in the 1950s you went and saw these two exhibitions. You were already starting to buy your first objects around this time?

A: At the flea market in Nice, I think in '55. A Dan mask.

AN: Do you recall the exact circumstances of this purchase?

A: I'd often go to the flea market, on the Paillon. There were a lot of boutiques there, with objects from all over. One of these was the shop of Bertrand Bottet, himself a collector. Primarily, he was the buyer in the South of France for Charles Ratton. He kept him informed about everything that was going on. One day, walking around the market, I saw this Dan mask that I thought was quite beautiful. I bought it. At that time, we're talking about really ridiculous amounts. Small sums – minuscule!

AN: Have you kept all the objects you've bought in this period?

A: Only from after 1959. I hadn't come across, or couldn't acquire, quality objects before then.

AN: What is the oldest object in your collection today?

UNVERKÄUFLICHE LESEPROBE



Lydia Yee

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