

# The Know-It-All Guide to Buying Art in Philadelphia

By Sarah Jordan



An exhibition of David Byrd's paintings at Fleisher/Ollman gallery. Photograph by Will Figg

- ***Buying 101[1]: Five things every budding Philly collector should know***
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## Buying 101

*Five things every budding Philly collector should know*

### 1. Get out there.

There's no rush to buy, so get to know the scene at your own pace. Find out what's going on by getting on mailing lists for InLiquid, Philly Stewards and the Art Blog. Go to artist talks, studio visits and First Fridays.





Dennis Beach's *POP*, acrylic on plywood. Courtesy of Daniel Jackson

**2. Figure out what you like.**

Cultivate your eye by seeing more art. Resist pressure to buy until you're sure it's right. (All collectors confess to having bought something they regret. Learn from it, then sell it back to the dealer or hide it under the bed.)



Becky Suss's *Wharton Esherick Bedroom*, oil on canvas. Courtesy of Claire Ilitis

**3. Don't haggle.**

It doesn't hurt to ask for a discount, but don't assume you'll get it. (Once you become a gallery regular, that's another thing.) If you're strapped for cash, request a payment plan. And don't forget the price of framing, which can be more than the cost of the artwork.

**4. Don't be intimidated.**

"We're small businesses, not pretentious art gatekeepers. We want to sell art, but we're enthusiastic about it whether you buy or not," says Alex Baker, director of Fleisher/Ollman Gallery. Art dealers should be helpful. If they're not, walk out.



Enzhao Liu's *Nocturne No.3*, oil and oil pastels on wood panels. Courtesy of Enzhao Studio

**5. Don't expect an ROI.**

You shouldn't purchase art thinking it's an investment. Get what you love.

**Strokes of Genius**

*Buyers, take note: local stars who are about to make it big*



Clockwise from left: Aubrey Levinthal; Jonathan Lyndon Chase; Becky Suss; Enzhao Liu; Dennis Beach; and Michelle Angela Ortiz. Chase courtesy of Constance Mensh; Suss and Liu courtesy of Enzhao Studio; Beach courtesy of Daniel Jackson; Ortiz courtesy of Neal Santos.

### ***Aubrey Levinthal***

**Style:** Post-abstract still lifes and figurative paintings.

**Breakout moment:** In 2017, Levinthal had a show at Nancy Margolis Gallery in Chelsea and was awarded an artist's residency in Europe.

### ***Jonathan Lyndon Chase***

**Style:** Chase — a Philly native — uses erotic mixed-media paintings to examine race, gender and sexuality.

**Breakout moment:** Two sold-out gallery shows in New York and L.A. this year.

### ***Becky Suss***

**Style:** Suss explores nostalgia and reality with paintings of domestic interiors.

**Breakout moment:** Her first solo museum exhibition was at Philly's Institute of Contemporary Art in 2015.

### ***Enzhao Liu***

**Style:** This PAFA grad's colorful paintings weave together influences from both Western culture and his Chinese heritage.

**Breakout moment:** Bryn Mawr's Avery Galleries picked Liu for a "5 to Watch" PAFA-grad show last spring.

### ***Dennis Beach***

**Style:** This Delaware minimalist takes inspiration from shapes found in nature for his geometric wooden works.

**Breakout moment:** Comcast and the Delaware Art Museum recently acquired pieces for their collections.

### ***Michelle Angela Ortiz***

**Style:** Large-scale public works explore issues like immigration and human rights.

**Breakout moment:** Ortiz won accolades for her 2015 *Familias Separadas* art projects. She's since become a 2018 PEW Fellow.

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## **Gallery Hopping**

*Where to uncover the avant-garde or that mantel-perfect showpiece*



First Friday at Gravy Studio & Gallery. Photograph courtesy of Albert Yee

***For art on the cheap (and a good time):***

**RAIR**[4], a recycled-art residency program housed in a construction and demo company in the Northeast, holds a **Trash Bash and Silent Auction**[5] on November 14th at the **Icebox**[6] (1400 North American Street, Kensington). On December 14th, **Space 1026**[7] (1026 Arch Street, Chinatown) holds its annual art auction, at which emerging artists sell their goods; go and score a treasure.

***For unconventional finds:***

At artist collectives, the talent (not dealers) makes decisions about the gallery. **Vox Populi**[8] (319 North 11th Street, Callowhill) is a well-loved example where you'll find clay, photography and more, all brimming with youthful energy. Or wander the numerous galleries at **Crane Arts**[9] (1400 North American Street, Kensington), where artists and curators bring in local talent. **Little Berlin Gallery**[10] (2430 Coral Street, Kensington) has nine members who pepper the exhibition space with art and live programming, while **Gravy Studio & Gallery**[11] (910 North 2nd Street, Northern Liberties) has wonderful photography.

***For finding rising stars:***

Both the **Center for Emerging Visual Artists** [12](237 South 18th Street, number 3A, Rittenhouse) and **Paradigm Gallery**[13] (746 South 4th Street, Queen Village) showcase emerging artists, many local, in a variety of media. The talent is young and fresh but vetted by curators.

***For something minimalist:***

**Larry Becker Contemporary Art**[14] (43 North 2nd Street, Old City) has been the local go-to for abstract and conceptual art since 1988 thanks to Becker and Heidi Nivling, the husband-and-wife owners who have a gift for explaining the beauty, allure, and intellectual context of the work they show.

***For refined acquisitions:***

Chris Schmidt carries a mix of polished work in his **Schmidt Dean Gallery**[15] (1881 Old Cuthbert Road, Cherry Hill), including highly rendered realism, cool minimalism, cutting-edge photography and sculpture, by nationally recognized artists working at the top of their game.

***For American paintings:***

**Avery Galleries**[16] (100 Chetwynd Drive, Bryn Mawr) specializes in historical paintings from 1850 to 1930 but has recently expanded to include strong contemporary work by the current generation of artists, like Laura Adams, Emily Brown and Adam Vinson.

**For big-ticket items:**

National and international collectors flock to blue-chip **Locks Gallery**[17] (600 Washington Square, Washington Square West) and **Fleisher/Ollman**[18] (1216 Arch Street, Market East). The former carries work by big names in contemporary art, such as Willem de Kooning, Alice Neel and Frank Stella; the latter specializes in self-taught talent.

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**Endnotes:**

1. Buying 101: #part1
2. Strokes of Genius: #part2
3. Gallery Hopping: #part3
4. **RAIR**: <http://rairphilly.org/>
5. **Trash Bash and Silent Auction**: <http://rairphilly.org/2018trashbash>
6. **Icebox**: <http://iceboxprojectspace.com/>
7. **Space 1026**: <https://space1026.com/>
8. **Vox Populi**: <http://voxpathuligallery.org/>
9. **Crane Arts**: <http://www.cranearts.com/>
10. **Little Berlin Gallery**: <http://www.littleberlin.org/>
11. **Gravy Studio & Gallery**: <https://www.gravy-studio.com/>
12. **Center for Emerging Visual Artists** : <https://www.cfeva.org/>
13. **Paradigm Gallery**: <https://www.paradigmarts.org/>
14. **Larry Becker Contemporary Art**: <http://www.artnet.com/galleries/larry-becker-contemporary-art/>
15. **Schmidt Dean Gallery**: <http://schmidtdean.com/>
16. **Avery Galleries**: <https://averygalleries.com/>
17. **Locks Gallery**: <http://www.locksgallery.com/>
18. **Fleisher/Ollman**: <https://fleisher-ollmangallery.com/>

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