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Where Women and Artists of Color Set the Tone

Francie Bishop Good, an artist herself, can't resist adding to the collection she and her husband have amassed.

By Hilarie M. Sheets | April 10, 2020



Francie Bishop Good in her living room. On wall, from left, are her own piece, “Not Raining” (2020), and “Stadium” (2010), by Elisabeth Condon. On the coffee table are, from left, the orange pot by Jay Kvapil, figures by an unknown artist from the 1920s, and a houselike sculpture by Sally Saul. Credit...Winnie Au for The New York Times

“The work that I’m drawn to collecting seems to correlate to my own work as an artist,” Francie Bishop Good said of the collection in the Upper West Side apartment where she and her husband, David Horvitz, live when they aren’t at their home base in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. “It’s very intuitive.”

For the foyer of their classic prewar apartment, she said, “I wanted a powerful statement piece instead of a table that people put flowers on.” And she found one, an Alison Saar sculpture of a nude woman, coated in black coal and rising more than eight feet tall atop a giant ball of yarn. They had to rig the sculpture to the top of the elevator cab to get it into the apartment, she said during a tour of the couple’s collection last month before social distancing was instituted.

Ms. Good has traded with other artists since her years at the Philadelphia College of Art. She and her husband, who have two children each from their first marriages, began collecting art together in the early 1990s. Ms. Good was largely attracted to work by women and artists of color long before that kind of focus became popular. Mr. Horvitz, a real estate developer, followed her lead.

Throughout the apartment are bold, vibrant abstractions by artists including Beatriz Milhazes, Madeline Denaro and Elisabeth Condon. “I see something different in this Condon every day, little weird areas,” Ms. Good said. She is also drawn to work with an “outsider quality” and a sense of humor, she said, pointing out paintings by Scott Daniel Ellison and ceramics by Sally Saul and Hilary Harnischfeger.

“This artist’s taken unique materials that don’t go together — ceramic, crushed glass, paper, wood — and put them together, which has been very inspirational to me,” said Ms. Good, whose own paintings, paired with her clay sculptures, will be exhibited online May 1 to 31 at the Mindy Solomon Gallery in Miami, and this summer at Bookstein Projects in New York.

Ms. Good was recently named head of the board of the NSU Art Museum, part of Nova Southeastern University, in Fort Lauderdale. In 2017, she and her husband made a promised gift to the museum of 100 works, by artists including Teresita Fernández and Cindy Sherman from their collection of more than 800 pieces. The exhibition “Transitions and Transformations” features works they have donated to the museum (currently closed because of the coronavirus crisis) by Mickalene Thomas, Sue Williams and Cecily Brown. The exhibition closes in January 2021.

“Each year we give them more,” said Ms. Good. “It’s my backyard.”

These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

What led you to concentrate on art by women?

Women are more apt to — I don’t want to say air their dirty laundry, but show themselves and work on autobiographical themes more easily than men. Like the Louise Bourgeois and Alice Neel. They’re portraits of other people, yet you can feel their angst.

What was your first acquisition that wasn’t a trade?

A Louise Nevelson, one of the “Mirror Shadow” pieces. What I learned from that was: Don’t spend your yearly budget on one piece.

Are you still actively acquiring?

I’m such a junkie. I’m trying not to collect that much anymore because I’m so old, but it’s hard. I just bought Katie Stout’s ceramic yellow piece of a woman. You touch her nipples and the light turns on. Lots of times I’ll follow an artist and say that’s too expensive and then two years later pay double the price. This was that case.

Do you and David need to agree on things?

I’m sure I’ve bought things he’s hated. I really try not to follow trends or listen to anybody. My poor kids, after I’m gone.

Are any of your children interested in your collection?

No. I think their rebellion is being conservative. I’ve always had a lot of nudes. When my daughter Lisa brought her first boyfriend home, she was like, “Oh, geez.”

Do visitors find the work challenging?

We had a group that came to our house once in Fort Lauderdale. We have Renée Cox’s Last Supper scene [the headline-making “Yo Mama’s Last Supper,” with a nude Ms. Cox as Jesus]. They didn’t like that. But I don’t think the work’s that edgy. That’s not something I even think about.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/arts/design/francie-bishop-good-art-collection.html>