

Guest Edit: Charles Riva

Art Collector Charles Riva @charlesriva spoke with us about the most treasured artworks in his collection, what advice to give to young collectors starting out – and his top artwork picks from AucArt.

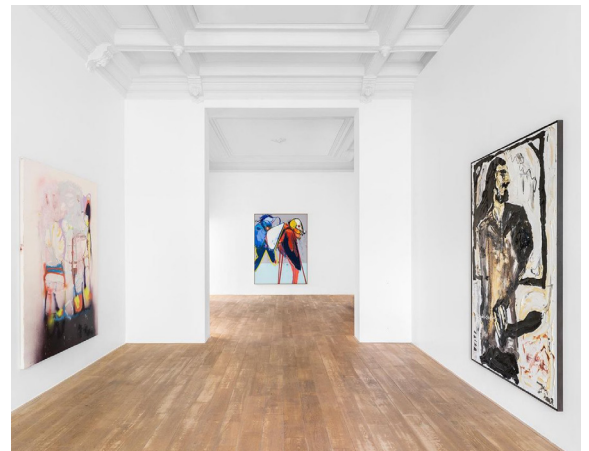


Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you started your journey in the art world?

Currently I'm based in New York, however I started my art collection journey in Belgium 15 years ago. Back in 1998, I opened a gallery in New York called Riva Gallery. Then from 2001-2008, I opened Sutton Lane Gallery between London and Paris. However, I realized that in today's landscape it's almost impossible to sustain a gallery given the bigger galleries, such as Gagosian, Hauser & Wirth, and David Zwirner in the market. Between the art fairs and everything else, it's almost not possible to survive. I do believe that at one point those big galleries will start to buy back some smaller galleries so they can do the research of finding good artists. But that's why instead, I decided to focus on starting my own collection in 2008. As a dealer, I collected many artists that I used to include in my shows and many other emerging talents.

What got you started collecting art?

I grew up in a very creative environment, my father was an architect and my mother is a painter, which I think prompted me very early on. When I was around 16, I started selling paintings from my mother's studio that were sold at different shows. At this point, I realized that I was very good at sharing the passion of art with people who are looking at it. This evolved as I started to focus on art more professionally, on the commercial side. I began to work with a second-hand market dealer in Paris where we were selling Chagall, Warhol and Dali. But you have to keep in mind at the time, around 1992, people weren't really as interested in these artworks as the process of collecting was more time consuming.



Installation View: Intersection featuring works by Marco Pariani, Daniel Richter, and Jonathan Reese. Courtesy of the @charles_riva_collection

After a few years of doing this, I moved to New York and created The RIVA Gallery. Despite being only 23, I decided to make my own mistakes in the art world and learn that way rather than working for another gallery under someone else. First of all, you understand the business model much better and when you sell a painting, you make a lot more commission. It's of course a lot more stress, but it's outweighed by the results. I also saw it as a fast track to success. I was able to see firsthand these incredibly successful Directors, with over ten years in the industry, who went on to open their own galleries not realizing that their clients and artists wouldn't follow them.

They ended up having exactly the same problem that I had when I was 23. But the difference is that those people are much older. If you want to open your own gallery, I believe that you have to start very early on with the mindset that it's a learning process but with a big reward if you succeed.



Charles Riva with Olivier Jean-Daniel Souffrant. Courtesy of @charlesriva.



Ed Ruscha, Texas, 1962. Courtesy of the @charles_riva_collection

Do you have a favorite artwork in your collection, if that's possible, or do you have a most treasured piece?

It's very hard to say because I have so many pieces. I really like Roy Lichtenstein. Actually, that was one of the first pieces that I purchased. It ended up becoming the cover of a catalog raisonné. Some pieces from this year however, perhaps Daniel Richter. I really like how he used to do psychedelic paintings and how he recreated the new writing on his paintings. Then I also bought this Ed Ruscha from 1962. My dream however would be to buy a Francis Bacon or De Kooning. But before you arrive at that stage, you have many different levels of collecting, so I'm getting there.

What advice would you give to a young collector, sort of like how you were when you first started?

Honestly, go out into the art world yourself. Go to art fairs, look more precisely at what catches your eye. When you look there is always the avant-garde, the artist who did this technique first. So, if you like something try to understand its origins, who made it first. I'd also recommend going to auctions- that's the best thing, they usually have the best deals. When a dealer offers you a piece, check the auction result and see what's going on in the market for yourself. That's the best way to get out there and really learn how the market operates.



Charles Riva, director of Charles Riva Collection, in front of Richard Prince, Two Guys Twice, 2001-2002. Courtesy of the @charles_riva_collection

Do you collect thematically or is there any sort of overarching concept or theme that you look for, especially for the pieces in the Riva collection?

When I create a show, I can usually realize what's missing, so I also start to buy for the exhibitions – which makes it very interesting and makes the show more in depth. A show is like a puzzle. So at first you start with an idea. Then after you're going to want to turn it into perfection, I mean to perfection at my level. It's definitely a collection that is growing, however I am trying to scale down a bit by buying fewer works of higher value and importance.



Frank Stella and Josh Sperling. Courtesy of the @charles_riva_collection.

Do you have a favorite exhibition that you've seen this year so far?

Ed Ruscha at the MoMa is a great show because it's a retrospective from the 60s until now. It's more relevant for many people. It doesn't go too far back so people can still understand the work, and the evolution is great. It's a simple concept, but in the end there's so much depth to it that it's amazing.

How do you think that you can empower artists through your collecting or your pieces in your collection?

I think that you can empower artists when curating exhibitions, including a range of different level artists, which I aimed to do in my recent exhibition, Intersection. You have to create a group show of artists that you love. And then you include one or two younger artists that have the maturity to be in conversation with those bigger painters, those mid-level career artists. I think that's the best way to do it.

I did a show with Josh Sperling and Frank Stella. When the artist knows that he's going to show his painting right next to Frank Stella, he's going to spend a lot of time on it. *"Josh wouldn't believe it, what a great idea, he's my icon".*



Charles Riva Collection was pleased to loan this Roy Lichtenstein's artwork to Phoenix Art Museum. Courtesy of the @charles_riva_collection.

What advice can you give to young collectors starting out their personal collections?

At the end of the day, the purpose of buying a painting is to own something unique. It's not for every collector in the world to have the same painting. Ask yourself as well, is it going to remain within art history? For example, if you look at a catalog from Art Basel from the 80s, you're going to see that 85% of the artists are not part of the art market anymore.

What advice can you give to emerging artists just graduating from art school? What are one or two things you would advise them to do?

I think try to be in good group shows, that's how you can stand out. I try to find a gallery that is not too big, and so when they stage a show, it won't be you and 80 other artists.

ARTWORK PICKS FROM CHARLES

Ella Duret

Ella Duret is a visual artist whose practice approaches the nude, its curves and shadows. Ella's painting explore the sensuality of bodies intertwined in their sinuous nature. Intricate in it's refined shapes, her vision is inspired by the imperfections of nudity.

*Guys and Dolls, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

*Eden's Pursuit, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

*Le Fruit et les Lèvres, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

*La Maladie de l'Amour, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

*Blue Graces, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

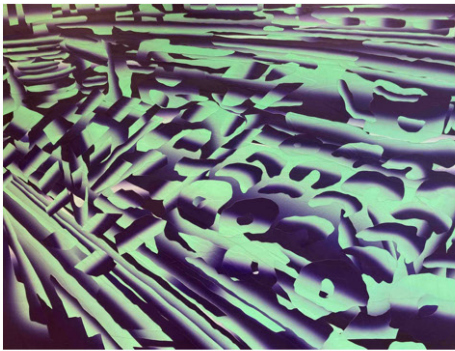
*Seven in Bed, 2021*

Acrylic on canvas

ARTWORK PICKS FROM CHARLES

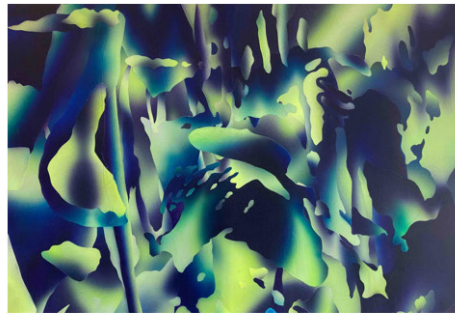
KA Bird

KA Bird is a queer, visual artist based in Newcastle, UK. Using digital media to inform her print-making and painting, her practice is about harnessing the processes and strategies of information circulation, investigating the human in technology, and the technological in the human within the all-out integration of internet and world.



*Continental breakfast at the Albergue
Inturjovent Malaga, 2023*

Acrylic on board



*Who is the gay4pay girlboss goals and who is
the computer-generated, 2023*

Acrylic on board



POV_2, 2023

Acrylic on board



VBW, 2023

Aluminium dibond digital print



VBY, 2023

Aluminium dibond digital print



VBU, 2023

Aluminium dibond digital print