



Miriam Sheill Fine Art - Fournier - *Interlude to Spring*, 2013

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Know what you like. Go for it.

ART

Summer 2013

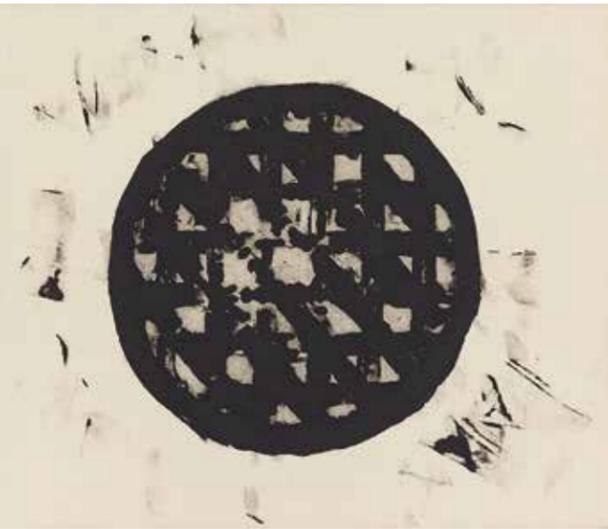
BY DEE GIBNEY

MANHOLE COVERS ADORN a prominent wall in Scott Mullin's city centre loft. Well, not exactly the cast-iron 50-kilogram covers themselves but a large frottage, or rubbing, of nine actual grates in three rows of three. The piece is by the late Gerald Ferguson, a renowned Canadian conceptual artist and the driving force who transformed the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design into an internationally famous school where he taught for 41 years. The piece cost \$18,000. 

“What makes it art?” one might well ask. “How would a piece like that enhance my home?”

“It's less about decorating and more about the art standing on its own,” according to gallery owner Daniel Faria, a leading light on the Toronto art scene and dubbed a “Toronto taste-maker” by The New York Times. “You want to buy because it relates to other works you have or because you love it so much.”

“I want art that pops,” explained Mullin, who oversees the curators who select the 7,000 works of art the Toronto Dominion Bank features in its offices across Canada and the U.S. For his personal collection he leans towards strong geometric lines and bold imagery, choosing minimalist furnishings to showcase art that runs from primitive to ultramodern. 



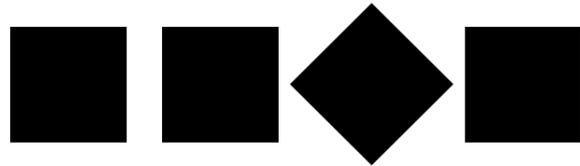
Ferguson - Three Drain Covers, 2006



Ferguson - Drain Covers, 2006



Olga Korper Gallery



"I don't want massive uniformity because then it starts to look like a hotel lobby," he said. "I can walk into someone's home and know whether it's an art collection they have personally assembled or whether it has been picked by an interior designer to match the pillows on the sofa," said Mullin.

So is tying art into the décor of the home a collecting faux pas? Perhaps you're just starting out, making tentative steps towards developing your own personal style, and you're not sure about what works and what doesn't. Or you've just purchased a new home and find yourself surrounded by a lot of blank wall space staring back at you.

"The greatest thing is that there is no right or wrong," according to architect Shari Orenstein, who teaches Conversations From the Toronto Art World, a continuing studies course at the University of Toronto that's designed to demystify the art world. Her sold-out class hosts a roster

"Buying art is an addiction."

of 24 speakers drawn from the top gallery owners and artists in the city, attracting everyone from connoisseurs to people who have never set foot in a gallery.

"I have young dot-com or banker or lawyer couples who have finally bought a home and have some money and now want to buy art. It's the hottest luxury item anywhere in the world.

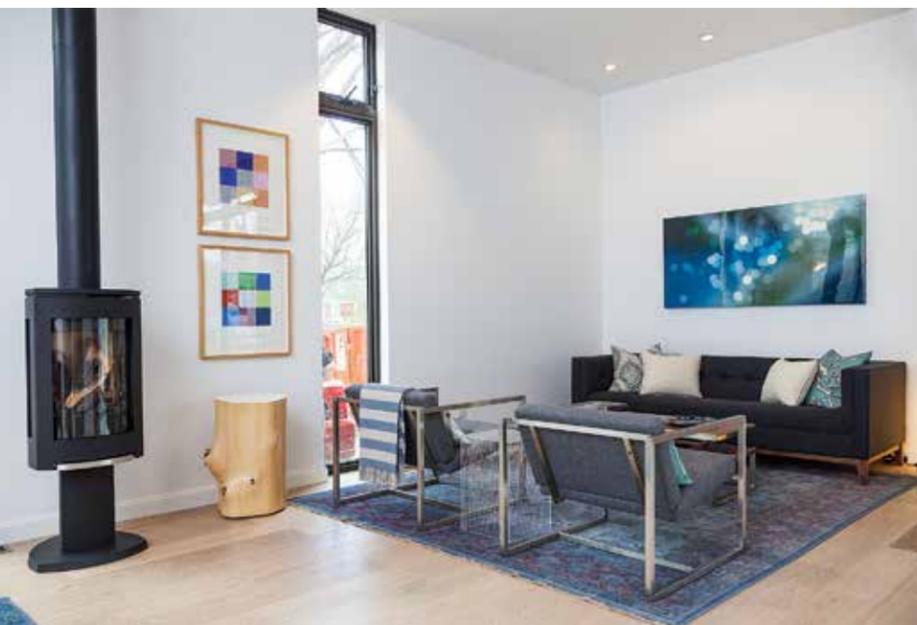
"If I could have nothing in my home, no furniture, I would choose art. I would never look at art as decoration for the home. It's about filling your home with pieces you love and that you want to live with for a long time. Art gives a certain energy to the space. It really adds something to the experience of the room. The minute you take it off the wall, that house seems so empty. It's like removing personalities."



Daniel Faria Gallery



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AGO Art Rental + Sales Gallery images

“Fall in love, but you have to purchase intelligently as well.”

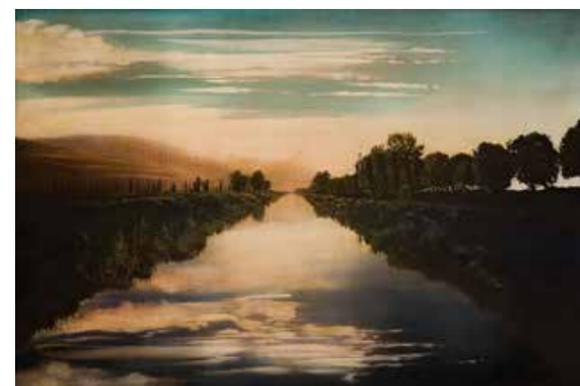
Ask any gallery owner, employee or art consultant how to discover these “personalities” and they will invariably tell you to buy what you love, something that you feel a connection with, that “speaks” to you. And to begin by looking.

“It’s very important to just look and look and look for as long as it takes,” Orenstein advised. “Go to galleries and educate yourself. Ask yourself, ‘What is my taste? What do I like? What kind of art do I want to live with?’ It’s a process. Developing a taste for something takes time and effort. You could hire an interior designer to buy you five paintings but you would miss all the joy in discovering them yourself, which would be a shame.”

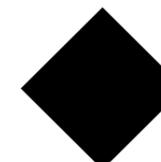
“Fall in love, but you have to purchase intelligently as well,” advised Elizabeth Petrova, coordinator of the Art Gallery of Ontario Art Rental and Sales Gallery. The gallery is a great place to start, she advised, because it’s like a miniature art fair where you’ll find the best of the city’s art galleries as well as the work of independent artists all in one place.

“Go to museums, see shows, visit galleries, read about art on the Internet. Our art consultants can take you to different galleries, all of which have different personalities and areas of specialization. We even do home consultations. And there is no cost. We look at your décor, talk about your preferences and actually put together a personalized proposal of art work for you.

“Definitely fine art is an integral aspect of interior design, and no home is complete without original work,” Petrova emphasized. “It’s one of the greatest sources of enjoyment for people. It’s something that can grow with you and that you can pass on to your family. I think art work is the first thing you should purchase, because it can dictate the feel of a whole home.”



Mira Godard Gallery - Stephen Hutchings paintings





Artta Gallery. Photography by Misha Masek

“Elements of surprise are amazing – like an old home with modern art.”

Choosing art can be so overwhelming for some people that they either do nothing or make a bad decision, according to Erin Perri, an interior designer who visits galleries to source art for her clients.

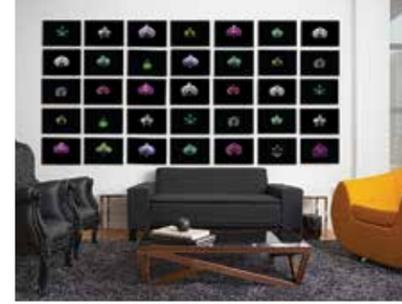
“As a designer you do some of the leg work. You read the client and get a sense of their aesthetic. You collect information and narrow it down. But they still need to be a part of the process. People who are avid art collectors want the art to speak, so they want a toned-down space. But for others the art may not be their focus; they may simply want it to finish a space. Still, I think they should try to make it something they love, otherwise they’ll tire of it quickly.”

“Art, furniture and architecture all need to work together to create a unified space,” according to gallery owner and art consultant Manny Neubacher. “Art is an important part of design in curating your space,” he said. “But art also needs to be elevated to its own space. The art piece should transcend trends.”

“Elements of surprise are amazing—like an old home with modern art. It’s a wonderful collision. Old and new in design makes sense – a modern house with a traditional painting, for example. It adds a certain amount of sophistication. It’s the future and the past. And it can all work together if done properly.”

If budget is a concern, many galleries offer payment plans. “You can always hone your search to something you can afford,” Neubacher added. “Artists who do large expensive canvases also do sketches. There are works on paper, etchings and pieces that are not extremely expensive. I think once you are out of university you should move past having posters on your wall—unless it’s a collection, like old movie posters.”

Toronto, Mullin said, is a major city with a major art scene so the challenge, as well as the opportunity, is that there is so much to choose from. And once you start collecting, it seems, there is no turning back. “Be warned,” Orenstein said with a laugh. “Buying art is an addiction.”



Neubacher Shor Contemporary Gallery

