

ART PREVIEW

By Elizabeth Licata

Art collecting 101: start with the best benefit auction in town



Almost every local art aficionado I know has a great piece she got for a relative steal at a benefit auction. This might not be the first thing the artists want to hear and probably not what the organizations like to stress either, but benefit auctions are by far the best, most affordable way for the novice buyer to dip a toe into serious art collecting. The fact is you are buying art for—in general—considerably less than it would cost in a traditional gallery show. Artists often value this art at lesser amounts than they would in a commercial show because they want to help the organization, or they donate smaller or older pieces that will not require as high a sticker value.

Keep in mind, though: not all benefit auctions are created equal. The best, by far, are those organized by arts-related organizations, like the ones that accompanied recent galas at the Castellani Art Museum and Burchfield-Penney Art Center last fall, and a recent themed auction held as part of Squeaky Wheel's Peepshow in February. The best of the best? Most art lovers in Buffalo would agree that CEPA's biennial auction is where you'll find not just local, but nationally and internationally known artists. But it's not only the art. Somehow, the organizers have figured out how to make this one of the biggest see-and-be-seen happenings in town. First, there's the preview party, then you can look at the art on the website, and then there's the very festive auction itself, accompanied by cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, and held in the Market Arcade atrium. It's almost as much of a good time just to hang and not buy anything as it is to come home with a good haul of photographic art.

But this year, you'll want to buy. For example:

There are four works by renowned *Magnum/Life* magazine photographer Ken Heyman, who had simultaneous shows at the Albright-Knox and CEPA last year.

Cindy Sherman and William Wegman, who have headlined



this auction since its beginnings over ten years ago, are once again represented. The Wegman photo is of four similarly posed weimaraners in shallow water, one of the most beautiful photographs that the artist has donated so far. Milton Rogovin has given an image from a 1953 Mexico series, while John Pfahl has contributed a luminous work from his scroll landscapes.

There are also strong works by Hans Grindlesberger, Simen Johan, Dennis DeHart, Julian Montague, and Tatana Kellner. There is no way to jointly categorize the more than fifty artworks offered here (with more not yet finalized). But if there is one thing nearly all have in common, it's their power as contemporary images. These are not pretty pictures, though some are beautiful. They are also not just for amateur collectors; area museum curators regularly show up here to consider the offerings for the collections they represent. At a lesser auction recently, one potential buyer commented that she would rather buy a more important work from one of the artists. At CEPA's auction, that would not be an issue. ☺

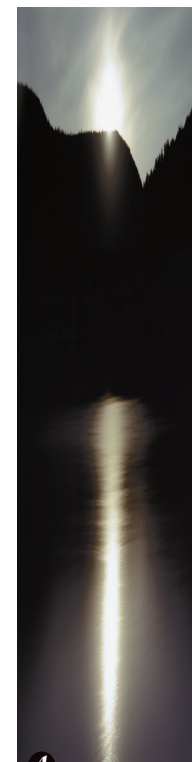


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Works by:

1 BRENDAN BANNON,
2. WILLIAM WEGMAN.
3. MILTON ROGOVIN, AND
4. JOHN PFAHL
ARE ALL FEATURED AT CEPA.



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