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"In anticipation of "Art Geneve 2020" Art fair, art-decision's Irina Vernichenko offers an interview with David Brolliet, an art collector from Geneva. David Brolliet talks about art collector's role in contemporary society, feminist art and Biennale de Lyon 2019-2020.

Irina: When you collect art do you attribute meanings to these pieces?

DB: When I buy an art piece, I buy it only after I have met with the artist and talked to him for quite a bit of time, after I have understood what is the political and social meaning of this piece of art. That's how I function.

Irina: Are you concerned with the meaning that the artist attributes to his works?

DB: Of course, it is very important to me. I never buy a piece from an artist that I have never met and I have been collecting for over 40 years. The only exception was **Cindy Sherman**; I bought a piece from her without meeting her beforehand. It was in the 80s and it was still very affordable. Since then I went to New York, where I personally met Cindy Sherman.

I do not want to collect art pieces only because they are well-known; like a blue chip in the stock exchange. I do not care. For me, **Cindy Sherman** is as equally important as **Dubossarsky, Vinogradov, Koshyakov, Oleg Kulik, and Goshia Ostretsov**, Russian artists even though their prices differ markedly. I do not buy with the market, I buy with my heart, what my heart tells to do it is just: "un coup de coeur".

It is very important to talk, chat with the artist in order to understand where the artist came from. Did he go to art school or is he independent, and one day deciding that he becomes an artist? I am interested in the human being. I am interested in Art, and art is done by people; all people do things that express Art. I am not an artist, I just collect art, but I do things that are art: I collect, I share, I support – that is my share in Art.



Pascale Marthine Tayou, "Poupée Pascale", 2014, crystal, mixed media © Pascale Marthine Tayou, Collection David H. Brolliet, Geneva

Irina: Can you tell our readers about the works of Cindy Sherman that you have in your collection?

DB: My collection has 800 art pieces, Cindy Sherman is from the early part of the collection. I had many works by Cindy, but I sold some of them in order to keep collecting and enriching the collection with different artists. I kept only one. At that time I didn't collect in depth but usually one by one.

Irina: Do you regret selling Cindy Sherman's art works?

DB: I never regretted selling works of art. I discover new artists, help these artists build their career as a partner. I kept on discovering new artists.

Cindy Sherman's piece from my collection is from 1994, it is the fifth edition out of six in total. It is big: 172 x 109 cm, from her series "The Witch". Cindy wears an ugly mask and is shown to have three identities. I like it; it represents the human life, when we have double or triple identities.

It is not an easy piece to appreciate, it is not still, nor is it black and white, she is also not shown to be beautiful with makeup. I collect art because art talks to me, art has to mean something to me, and usually I do not collect easy works.

Irina: Do you collect punk art?

DB: I am not going that far. I like political art, I like women expressing their feelings about their life, if they are happy or unhappy. Inequality between men and women around the world, unfairness between men and women, sociologically, the women's place in society acting as a mother .. – I did not say punk.

I have **Nan Goldin, Larry Clark**, because their works represent certain periods. I am not into provocation.

Irina: You said that this work expresses certain periods, what do you think about history?

DB: I give you an example **Mounir Fatmi's** "NADA", it's going to Dakar (to an exhibition at Musée des Civilisations Noires in Dakar) and **Kader Attia** – their art has references to history. The basis of their work lies in history. They take some parts of history and try to criticize, correct them. They start with the war, when Africa was colonized, they say it is not fair. They sublime it in their work. They want to say that contemporary African art is very important because it has its own roots.

When I started collecting I didn't pay too much attention to this, although I am fascinated by history, my major at university was political science and diplomacy. You need to know history to see the world as it is, to understand the population and the different religions.

Mounir Fatmi is an Arab artist, I have wonderful pieces, visible now at the Collection Lambert in Avignon ; two skateboards with a praying carpet, it is fantastic, it means that religion is free: you can be religious, but you do not have to go to extremes.

Artists play a very important role in the world today, they can say things and address sociological issues that are not supposed to be politically correct. There is no political correctness today, there is no tolerance. Many people today have radical, even extreme views.



Grayson Perry, "Contemporary Art for the Traditional Interior"1995 image © collection David H. Brolliet, Geneva

Irina: What is the most dynamic art work in your collection?

DB: The gesture of art for me is very dynamic, it's an expression. Dynamism and humor, humor and message, for me it is art.

For me creation is dynamism, not static, though there is minimal art, which can be static. But I am not interested anymore in minimal art, this new decade I am interested in dynamic art that questions me. Sculptures for instance, and some videos as well.



Tunga "Heralds", 2004, image © collection David H. Brolliet, Geneva

EXHIBITIONS

What are your plans? Show your collection to the public again or is it now private?

DB: For me, it is not a private collection. I share and I lend my pieces as much and as often as I can: my pieces are going all around the world. Works are going on now: at the Collection Lambert in Avignon, there is the Triennale of collectors (ADIAF), where four of my works are exhibited: **Barthelemy Toguo, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Mounir Fatmi**, all African artists !

To share my collection there is no restrictions. In 2018, we showed about 150 pieces at the Fondation Fernet-Branca near Basel, we did the exhibition in only four months, usually it takes a year to prepare, organize, to do museography, to decide which piece goes where. Two curators picked their favorites and made the show ! An amazing achievement that you can see on the link : https://www.teapot-creation.com/360/Fernet-Branca/David_Brolliet/Index.html

I collect everything, all media: installations, sculpture, painting, I have more than one hundred videos in my collection.



Shiraz Bayjoo, "Untitled#7" 2014, image © collection David H. Brolliet, Geneva

What do you think of feminist art?

DB: Women had to address and fight in the 20th century to be seen, now we have more women artists. I collect many women artists like **Ghada Amer, Morgane Tschimmer, Vanessa Bécroft, Iris Lvasseur, Prune Nourry, Sylvie Fleury, Erika Verzutti and Yoko Ono**. I also had a chance to meet her family. I do not pay attention, whether the artist is male or female. I go to see the show, I meet the artist, I discuss, I talk, my heart beats strongly and then I buy if the work is available and affordable.

What are your impressions of Biennale de Lyon 2019?

DB: I went to previews, I loved it, I think it was a very good biennale as there was a lot of international artists, not only French. Lyon has an important role to play in the French contemporary art because of the Biennale. I loved this choice of venue – "Fagor", the former washing machine company (that went bankrupt). The show was very good, the pieces were very good quality in a very special way; the architecture of the building was unusual, but for me it was fantastic to see the art pieces being in fusion in this space. There were no white walls, no separation, there was no way to follow the Biennale, there were no arrows, no set order: it was not clear which room to see first; room number one or room three, etc. You had to imagine, and feel Biennale, which I really loved. Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon (MAC) always does interesting things.

There were also French artists **Dewar et Gicquel** that are in my collection, they are both in the Prix Marcel Duchamp, that I support as a member of ADIAF.

Did you lose any pieces from your collection?

DB: Unfortunately, I did: we conducted deals with dealers by shaking hands. It was trust. But one of those deals fell through, the head of one gallery in New York died, and when I came back to New York, I couldn't find receipts and I lost pieces. It's a good lesson for me.

The question from "Flynn & Giovanni" London art agency that do provenance research: "Is it "easier" to collect contemporary art as compared with old master's art in terms of provenance research, etc?"

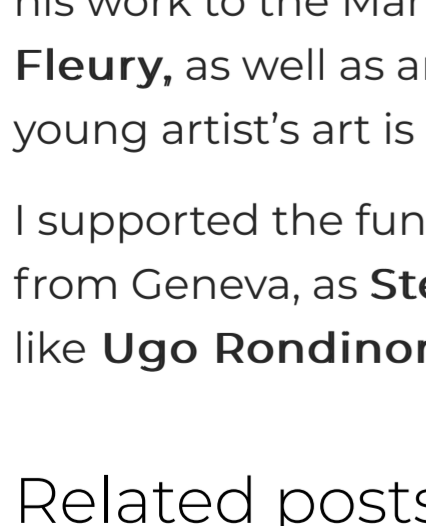
DB: It is easier, because we have access to artists through the internet, you can always ask the artist for the work's certificate. I do not buy today without the artist's certificate.

Do you have any Geneva artists in your collection?

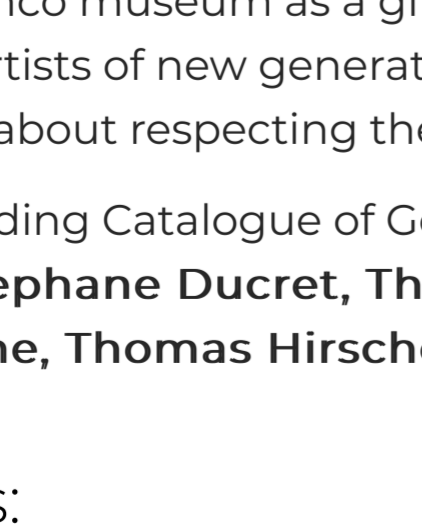
DB: Yes, of course: **John Armleder**, he is not just an artist in my collection, he is a friend, I gave his work to the **Mamco** museum as a gift. Other Geneva artists are: **Olivier Mosset, Sylvie Fleury**, as well as artists of new generation: **Denis Savary, Maya Rochat** from Lausanne, the young artist's art is about respecting the planet.

I supported the funding Catalogue of Geneva artists. I have been collecting mid career artists from Geneva, as **Stephane Ducret, Thierry Feuz**. I also collect Swiss artists from elsewhere like **Ugo Rondinone, Thomas Hirschhorn** and **Urs Luthi**.

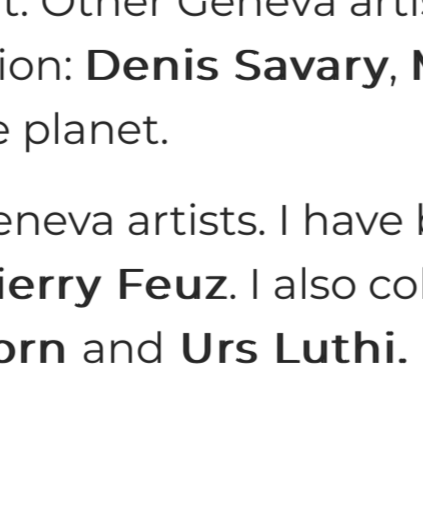
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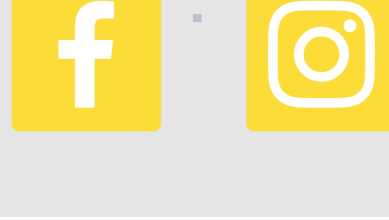
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