



COLLECTOR  
PROFILE



# JORDAN D. SCHNITZER



Jordan D. Schnitzer

**JORDAN D. SCHNITZER** muses that, for him, “waking up without art would be like waking up without the sun. When you live with art around you, your mind and soul are filled with the beauty of life and the creativity of the human spirit.” Schnitzer’s passion for art came from his mother, Arlene, who in 1961 opened the first gallery of contemporary art in Portland, Oregon. Among her achievements was mounting the first show devoted to the now-renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly, and turning her son on to modern art. When he was in the third grade, Jordan admired a “funny-looking” box with drawers containing prints. In one of those drawers, he saw a print by the boundary-pushing British modernist Stanley William Hayter. Jordan’s mother asked him if he liked it. He said yes, so she purchased it for her son. At 14, he acquired his first painting by the revered Portland artist Louis Bunce; his mother discounted the \$75 list price to \$60, and she collected a monthly payment of \$5 until it was fully paid for. Since then, Schnitzer has sustained his family’s legacy of supporting Pacific Northwest artists, and he encourages his friends and neighbors to do the same.

After earning an undergraduate degree in literature and then a law degree, Schnitzer became president of Harsch Investment Properties, his fam-

ily’s real estate investment and development company, which is active in six Western states. Over time, he had acquired one of the largest collections of contemporary Pacific Northwest artists, and in 1988 he began buying prints in earnest. Today his collection — and that of the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation — constitute the largest private holding of prints and multiples made in America after 1945. They number 8,000 strong, and are complemented by a further 2,000 works *not* on paper: the latter include paintings, sculptures, glass, and other items, especially from the Northwest. In total, approximately 250 artists are represented, including such icons as Andy Warhol, Richard Diebenkorn, and Jasper Johns. Readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur* are more likely to admire such talents as Robert Bechtle, Larry Bell, Vija Celmins, Chuck Close, John Currin, Peter Doig, Richard Estes, Eric Fischl, April Gornik, Red Grooms, David Hockney, Julia Jacquette, Yvonne Jacquette, Alex Katz, Kerry James Marshall, Elizabeth Peyton, Wayne Thiebaud, Mickalene Thomas, and Sherrie Wolf. This trove is supervised by a professional staff of four who work with Schnitzer to facilitate the exhibitions he organizes.

Owning such a large and important collection only to keep it in storage would be a shame: Schnitzer asks rhe-

torically, “What could be worse than writing and publishing a book and then having one person purchase all of the copies and store them in a basement somewhere, unread?” His solution was to create what is essentially a lending library; his team allows museum professionals to pull from his collection to create exhibitions that travel to regional museums and university galleries. Since the late 1990s, more than 100 such shows have appeared at 100 venues nationwide, highlighting individual artists and an array of themes. Many have appeared at institutions in the heartland that could not otherwise afford or access such high quality. Schnitzer’s family foundation also underwrites these venues’ distribution of free brochures, transportation of schoolchildren for field trips, lectures by artists or scholars, and other community events.

Through these offerings, Schnitzer has seen how powerfully the art of our time resonates. Viewers are intrigued by the currency of its themes, and also by the excitingly innovative techniques that arise when artists and printmakers collaborate. Schnitzer himself admires how such leading-edge workshops as Tamarind, Gemini GEL, and Crown Point Press continue to push the envelope, helping artists make prints that hardly resemble those Rembrandt or

(THIS PAGE) ALEX KATZ (b. 1927), *Orange Hat*, 1990, screenprint in 24 colors on paper, 18 1/4 x 36 1/8 in. © Alex Katz, 1990 ■ (OPPOSITE PAGE) SHERRIE WOLF (b. 1952), *Self-Portrait with My Museum*, 2014, oil on linen, 90 x 60 in., © Sherrie Wolf, 2014

Dürer created. He adds that the relative accessibility of prints (compared with unique paintings) has made it possible for him to offer large retrospectives of modern masters; just for example, he could not afford more than a few original paintings by Chuck Close, yet he now owns virtually every print from every phase of that artist's career.

Schnitzer has been a generous donor and trustee across the Pacific Northwest, and especially in Oregon, which is thriving thanks to its many charms, and because young transplants from such states as California and Washington find Oregon more affordable. He notes, "Every person, but especially young people, must have the opportunity to experience the arts. What better place to further that goal than our college campuses?" That's why Schnitzer has made major naming contributions to the art museums at the University of Oregon (his alma mater) and Washington State University, and why he underwrites activities at Pacific Northwest College of Art and Oregon College of Art and Craft.

Within the relatively small field of American printmaking, Schnitzer is much admired for the activities described above, and also for underwriting the publication of artists' catalogue raisonnés and other volumes devoted to such bold-faced names as Warhol, Stella, Kelly, and Baldessari. Though he buys regularly from galleries, auctions, and artists, he is particularly fond of the superb fair organized in New York City every November by the International Fine Print Dealers of America. There he underwrites its annual lecture by a leading artist, and he can usually be found wandering its stands exercising his eye. When he spies something new, he asks exhibitors what drew them to that work, and he encourages all collectors — regardless of their budget — to dig deeper, too.

Engaging in such conversations is the part of the journey Schnitzer most relishes: he is passionate about art and about sharing it. One easy way to share the joy of your collecting journey, he suggests, is to stop giving your colleagues pens and watches for their milestones (like anniversaries): instead, commission a local artist (as Schnitzer did recently with Tom Cramer) to create unique works that the recipients will cherish forever. ●

