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THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

by Nancy Cohen Israel and Terri Provencal

Collecting comes naturally to Claire Dewar. She grew up surrounded by art in her family home as well as at her grandparents' house. While still in her 20s, she began her own collection, starting with a work by Ted Larsen that she discovered on a trip to Santa Fe; she confesses that she went to see it several times before finally deciding to bring it home. Soon after, she found herself drawn to another medium. "I began with photography. I was often intrigued by the narrative, as if there was a short story to tell," she explains. She was especially taken by the work of Shirin Neshat, whose exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Art in 2000 inspired her to acquire one of Neshat's photographs. In the two decades since, Dewar's collection has grown exponentially and now tilts mostly towards paintings.

Dewar acquires work from a multitude of sources, from auction houses to nationally and internationally renowned galleries. Having the Dallas Art Fair in her hometown, however, makes it easier for her to shop locally while thinking globally. Over the course of the fair's existence, she has added over a dozen Dallas Art Fair-acquired works to her collection. They span the geographic, gender, and material gamut and include works by Seth Cameron, Tomo Campbell, Steve Dennie, Josh Faught, Nick Goss, Jay Heikes, Merlin James, Maja Ruznic, Rebecca Salter, Maximilian Schubert, Claire Sherman, Howard Tangye, Summer Wheat, and Matthew Wong.

Dewar navigates the fair collaboratively with Cesar Fuentes, her art advisor of 20 years. "He likes to get to the fair early and will give suggestions. But I stop in each gallery personally," she explains, adding that she remains vigilant for work that is "originally expressed and well-crafted." Multiple visits throughout the weekend help her focus on work that fully captures her attention. Return trips also allow her to remain in touch with the myriad gallerists with whom she has become friendly. She says, "I love to meet the dealers who come in from out of town, and to meet fellow collectors. I also enjoy the socialization that the Dallas Art Fair provides." When asked which galleries she looks most forward to visiting at the fair, Dewar enthuses, "Oh, I don't want to miss any! I love seeing each one."

Dewar has a special connection to each piece in her art-filled homes in Dallas and Aspen. She is especially delighted, though, to have acquired a work by Matthew Wong from the New York-based gallery, Karma. "I feel grateful that I was able to buy something before he died," she says of the recently deceased 35-year old artist.

On the international art market, Michael Raedecker and Chris Ofili are among the artists whose work she ultimately hopes to add to her collection. "I have tried to acquire Raedecker's work twice at auction but haven't won the bidding," she shares. An Ofili exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum a few years ago drew her to this British painter's work. Despite her global connections, however, Dewar also supports the local art community. One of her favorite art fair acquisitions, from Conduit Gallery, is an ethereal painting by the Bosnian-born, California-based artist, Maja Ruznic; Conduit will open an exhibition of her work this month. Ruznic's painting is one of several works in the collection that come from

this Design District stalwart. In addition to Ruznic's work, Dewar also acquired a pair of Sarah Ball's diminutive portraits from the gallery. And Ted Larsen, whom Dewar first acquired, is another artist currently represented by Conduit. In addition to being drawn to this well-established space, Dewar also welcomes the arrival of Gallery 12.26. "I just love the Fagadau sisters," she says of owners Hannah and Hilary Fagadau.

Dewar continues to be inspired by many in the local contemporary-art ecosystem. Specifically, she credits Howard Rachofsky for opening the door to those interested in starting their own collections and cites his generosity of spirit in educating younger collectors. As a result, she says, "There are a lot of people in town now who are interested in buying contemporary art." The Dallas Art Fair provides the ideal venue for them to start.