

# Worth watching, worth collecting E/A

by Bill Clarke

For those of us who aren't Rockefellers, acquiring work by emerging artists is an excellent way to build art collections. Recently, I've had the pleasure of speaking to a number of audiences about how to start collecting art by these artists. I strongly believe that, for those of us who aren't artists ourselves, purchasing work produced by *living* artists, especially those at the beginning of their careers, is one of the most important things that we can do to ensure that Canada's visual arts scene remains robust, vibrant and healthy.

But what does the term "emerging artist" mean? Generally speaking, an artist is "emerging" when she or he is under 35 and producing work that has already caught the favourable attention of curators, arts writers, savvy collectors and other in-the-know observers. These artists may not have (or want) gallery representation, but they are making and showing work consistently. They are often described as "up-and-comers" who are "worth watching."

Like the rest of our society, the art world often values youth highly—"hot" young artists seem to appear on the scene all the time and generate great excitement. However, when

purchasing art as an investment, we should always remember that the emotional, intellectual and visual stimulation that a work incites should be your main criteria. In other words, only buy pieces that you absolutely love. That way, any subsequent increase in value can be viewed as a bonus.

Some easy research will help you identify which artists may have some longevity. For example, you can look at artists' CVs to learn where they have shown. It is also a good sign when they have exhibitions scheduled for the future, or when publications have reviewed their work. A quick Google search will pull up that sort of information.

A good way to discover the names of up-and-comers is to look at the work selected for events like Art with Heart, which has dedicated a section of the auction to work by emerging artists. Over the past four years, the amount of buzz generated by the emerging-artist section has increased significantly; accordingly, the curatorial committee applies extra rigour in these selections. We feel that the artists showcased as "emerging" at this event are showing extraordinary promise. Indeed, many emerging artists who donated work to Art with

Heart in the past have gone on to national and international careers.

A word of warning, though: Collecting work by emerging artists can become addictive. Surrounding yourself with art that provides you with joy and stimulation every day is one of life's most enriching pursuits—and the reason why Goethe once observed: "Collectors are happy people."

**Bill Clarke is a visual arts writer, editor, collector, speaker and board volunteer. He is a regular contributor to several publications, including *Modern Painters*, *ARTnews* and *Canadian Art*, and is the editor of the Magenta Foundation's quarterly publication, *Magenta Magazine Online*. His art collection focuses on works on paper by emerging Canadian and American artists, as well as on artist's books and multiples. He has spoken about starting an art collection at the AGO, the MoCCA and the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, and was co-chair of the Art with Heart curatorial committee in 2008 and 2009.**



*VOLVO is pleased to sponsor the 2011 Emerging Artists Collection*

*"It definitely validates emerging artists' careers to be alongside such big Canadian artists. To be an emerging artist and have your work in the same collection is quite the honour." —Kris Knight, former emerging artist, ongoing contributing artist and curatorial committee member*