



Artist as Collector Framework

By Yvonne Shortt

Traditionally, an art collection was formed by royalty, the aristocracy, or the wealthy. Today, it is typically formed by institutions, corporations, hedge funds, and wealthy individuals. Art collections have played an important role in evaluating the economic, historical, cultural, and social values of art. Because these evaluations have been made by those in power, for the most part, the history and art of those without influence have often remained voiceless.

Artist as Collector framework looks at art collecting as an empowering tool for artists, which, puts themselves in the position of making the validation, rather than being its receiving end. It also helps them connect their work to a larger context and support each other by becoming a steward, not an owner, of each other's work and the collection. **As stewards, we can never sell it because we never own it.**

Questions this framework tackles

- How can we create more models for collecting work outside of the institutional model, the corporation, the hedge fund, or the wealthy individual?
- How can we create models for collecting that pay the artist?
- How can we create models for collecting that involves empowering the artist in the collection process as a collector?
- How can we create models for collecting based on stewardship and not ownership?
- How can we create a model based on centuries of passing down important objects?
- How can we create models that traverse time and space to gift a cultural legacy?
- How can we create a model where the artwork is actually seen and experienced, and not stored away?



Implementation

1. Form *Artist as Collector* group
2. Decide group criteria
3. Start *Artist as Collector* Collection
4. Stewardship of *Artist as Collector* Collection
5. Exit Strategy
6. Insurance



1. Form Artist as Collector group

Artists create a group of 5 - 10 people and pool their money to collect work.

We call them Collectors.



2. Decide group criteria

- Solidify criteria of their collection (works by a specific community, theme, medium, etc.)
- Decide how much each Collector contributes to the collection and set a budget
- The amount of time the group will take to spend this collective budget



3. Form *Artist as Collector* Collection

Each collector seeds one piece of their work to start the collection, and begins to add artworks to the collection. Collectors purchase the work directly from artists.



4. Stewardship of *Artist as Collector* Collection

Each piece of the collection goes to one of the Collector's home for a particular time decided by the Collectors. Each piece rotates from one Collector's home to another's.

Collectors introduce the collection to their family, friends, and online. Collectors are Stewards, and no one is the owner of the collection. All pieces are always on display in the collector's home or office....



5. Exit strategy

If a Collector wants to leave the group, all artwork remains with the group and doesn't leave with the collector leaving..

They can introduce a new person to their group and this person, if voted in by the group, becomes a new steward of the collection.



6. Contracts

The group can decide to obtain insurance or have other contracts in places if they wish. This is up to each Collector group. When a collector group creates a contract they can put it in our contracts repository for other groups.

Model in Action

5 artists decide to collect work and form a collection. They call their collection The Gemini Collection. They decide they want a mixture of paintings, photography, and sculpture. Each artist seeds the collection with one work of art.

Each artist puts in \$1,000. The collection agrees to spend down the total they have, \$5,000 over 2 years. The collectors meet with artists online and in-person over the next 2 years.

Model in Action

While collecting, one collector has a gallery show and wants to show off this new model of collecting. She decides to devote a portion of the space to the Gemini Collection. When people come to the show she shows her work and works from the collection. All collectors hold the work in their home, on view to family and friends and themselves. At the end of 2 years, the collectors have spent down their money. They have a total of 10 pieces in their collection. Each member holds two pieces. The collection is put on social media under the Artist as Collector framework which showcase all the collections in the framework.

Model in Action

After 8 years, one person decides to leave. The collectorship has agreed that any new artist member must be agreed upon by majority vote. The collector leaving wants their daughter to take over for them. The collectors interview her and agree to her becoming a steward of the work the mother held. The mother goes on to start a new collection because she really loved the concept.

Other Art Collection Inspirations

Dorothy and Herbert Vogel

Dorothy Vogel and Herbert Vogel worked respectively as a librarian and postal worker in New York City. They started acquiring artwork in the early 1960s, primarily Minimalist and Conceptual art. They did not buy for investment purposes, choosing only pieces they liked and could carry home on the subway or in a taxi. They bought directly from the artists, often paying in installments.

The collection eventually came to include over 4,782 works. In 1992, the Vogels decided to transfer the entire collection to the National Gallery of Art because it charges no admission, does not sell donated works, and they wanted their art to belong to the public.

<https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/herb-and-dorothy/>

Other Art Collection Inspirations

The Collective

The Collective was founded in 2002 in London by a group of art professionals and families interested in living with the art of today. The Collective created a framework for a group of people to collectively purchase and enjoy art at an affordable cost. In their framework, a group pool resources and share the artworks they collect. Each participant commits to paying a regular sum into a buying fund to purchase new works. The works are displayed in each member's home or place of work and rotated after an agreed period. The Collective also helps people to start their own group by providing a toolkit including a model constitution, legal advice, and accounting template.

<http://www.the-collective.info/content/view/15/29/>

Other Art Collection Inspirations

Collection Collective

Collection Collective is a prototypical art collection established, owned, and managed collectively by its members, including artists, curators, architects, designers, anthropologists, producers, lawyers and economists. The project was initiated in 2017 in Bratislava, and continues in 2018 in Bucharest with the creation of a website, and with the public seminar “Collection Collective. Tools for Self-Representation.” It is an attempt to rethink the functions, roles, and purposes of collecting as a collective practice recording and shaping our contemporary condition.

<https://www.collectioncollective.art/about>

Other Art Collection Inspirations

Chuzaburo Tanaka

Born in the Northern Japan in 1933. While working in the seafood processing business, and later at a hardware shop, he taught himself archaeology and participated in excavations of remains from 1000 - 2500 BC and the indigenous people of the region. He personally collected over 20,000 pieces of Japanese antique pieces during his lifetime, including 786 items now designated as Important Tangible Cultural Properties. The most well known items in his collection are Boro, which roughly translates to “rags” or “trash”, a class of Japanese textiles that have been mended or patched together over generations.

<https://unionlosangeles.com/2017/01/04/visvim-dissertations-boro-aomori-japan/>

Other Art Collection Inspirations

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg

Arturo Alfonso Schomburg was a historian, writer, and activist born in Puerto Rico in 1874. He worked in several professions such as a Spanish teacher, a messenger and clerk in a law firm, while dedicating himself to writing and historical research of the contributions that Afro-Latin Americans and African Americans. Schomburg amassed a large collection of artifacts and art of the Harlem Renaissance. His personal collection became public patrimony in 1926 when the Carnegie Foundation purchased the collection and added it the New York Public Library.

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/schomburg-arturo-alfonso-1874-1938/>

Other Art Collection Inspirations

Yvonne Shortt

My family roots can be traced back to Africa. In my home country many families hold objects past down from generations. When my grandma passed she gave me a doll that was owned by her great grandma. This is part of my inspiration for starting this framework. It's based on love and stewardship. I am not the owner of the doll and neither will my daughter be when she receives it. I'm taking this act of stewardship and creating a model to make it public while reshaping art not as commodity but as knowledge and generosity.

