



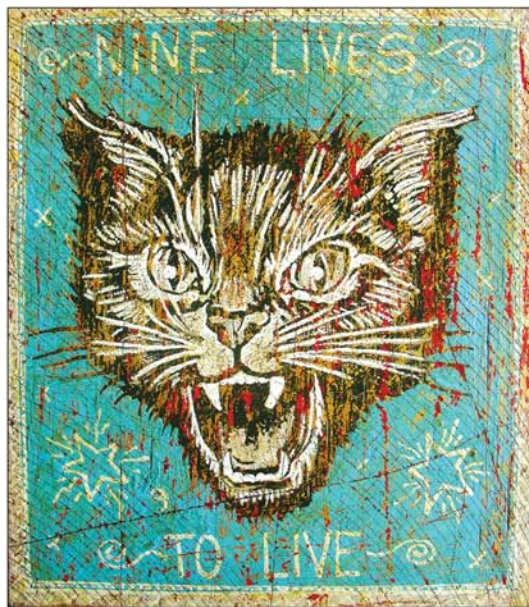
Get Arted Up

Move beyond Monet prints and family pics

Every time David Rowland, 42, visited the Corcoran Gallery of Art, he was drawn to Evan Summer's prints of imaginary landscapes. "They evoked a feeling of being lost and insignificant to the size and scale of the images," he said. Eventually, his passion for Summer's stark, Escheresque works led Rowland to purchase three of his lithographs, which he hung in his North Bethesda split-level. "They make a big impression on people," he said.

Like many younger art buyers, Rowland realized that a grown-up living space calls for embellishments beyond "Animal House" posters from dorm days. An original painting, photo or sculpture not only elevates your decor, but it can also serve as a conversation piece or investment. And with so many galleries in the area and on the Internet, it isn't difficult to find a piece you love — and it doesn't have to cost zillions.

But before snapping up an Old Master oil or mod Cibachrome, get to know the local art scene by visiting museums and galleries. That's



Jim Steele sells black-and-white photos, like this one of birches, above, (\$500), in Studio 38 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center. Alt-country musician and graphic artist Jon Langford's "Nine Lives" painting (\$1,200), left, is offered by yarddog.com.

what D.C. art consultant Allison Cohen of Sightline (202-465-4229; sightline.biz) does with clients. "The more you look at art, the more you hone in on what you really dig," said Cohen. One place to begin an art attack: Dupont Circle First Fridays, an open house for 25 galleries held the first Friday of every month.

Some experts caution against buying on the Internet, but it has become a popular place to virtually gallery hop. "People who are inclined to buy art are confident enough to trust their eye," said

Randy Franklin, owner of Austin, Texas' Yard Dog, which hawks works online and off-line.

What will graduating from Ikea prints to real art cost? And why do some works sell for \$100, while that Klimt just went for \$105 million? Call it the fame factor. "People look at art and think that there's no reason for a price to be \$2,000 vs. \$5,000," said Annie Gawlak of Logan Circle's G Fine Art. "There's a progression in prices from someone who has just graduated from school to someone midcareer."

This means a work by "name" painter like John Currin could set you back hundreds of thousands, but photos, works by artists just out of (or still in) school and folk art often run far less. "People buy my pieces because they can afford them," said Franklin, who traffics in outsider or folk art. "You're not likely to see great explosions in value."

Even if you buy a work by a well-known artist, "you can never tell if it will appreciate," said Elizabeth Punselan, director of the Smithsonian Resident Associates' collectors' program. "A filmmaker

MASTERPIECE MARTS

Art is where you find it. These galleries and Web sites are good places to start a hunt.

- G Fine Art. Up-and-coming artists like Linn Meyers and Lane Twitchell sell via this Logan Circle gallery. 1515 14th St. NW; 202-462-1601; gfineartdc.com
- Torpedo Factory Art Center. Catch painters, potters and jewelers in action at this ex-munitions plant. 105 N. Union St.; Alexandria; 703-838-4565; torpedofactory.org
- Yard Dog. Howard Finster assemblages, Jenny Hart's embroidery portraits and circus sideshow banners star here. 512-912-1613; yarddog.com

makes a movie — sometimes it's a hit, sometimes it flops." Her program sells prints by names like Sol LeWitt for \$200 to \$2,500.

Prints cost less than paintings because they're produced in multiples. The same principle applies to photographs. One place that'll put you in pictures: Alexandria's Torpedo Factory, where there are 17 photographers among the 160 artists showing and selling their work.

One shutterbug, Jim Steele, said being at the Torpedo Factory means he can sell directly to customers. "It's better than selling in a gallery, which typically takes 50 percent," he said. Artists and galleries (including Yard Dog) often let buyers pay in installments, making art-snagging more affordable.

And, no, your new masterpiece doesn't need to match the furniture. "Art should be more important than the sofa," said Cohen. "Instead, ask yourself does it make me happy? Does it make me think?"