

# **What I Buy and Why: Art Dealer Edward Tyler Nahem on His Many Collecting Regrets, and the Painting He'd Nab from MoMA**

The veteran art dealer also tells us about the Titus Kaphar diptych over his couch.

[Katie White](#), January 25, 2021



Edward Tyler Nahem.

Edward Tyler Nahem is a fixture of the New York gallery scene. The dealer, who established his eponymous gallery in 1985, has since been showing works by a litany of the biggest names of the 20th-century art: Pablo Picasso, Helen Frankenthaler, Ed Ruscha, Basquiat... you get the point.

The gallery is likewise acclaimed for its scholarly catalogues with meticulous research. But what does the dealer have in his own home? A mix of contemporary and modern art that would impress any curator. As for his collecting philosophy, Nahem says he tries not to focus too much on past collecting missteps or missed opportunities—though there have been many— and instead centers himself on the joy of being with the artworks around him now.

We caught up with the dealer, who shared insights into his collecting philosophy.

### **What was your first purchase?**

In 1976, I bought a Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock print by the artist Hiroshige from 1855. It depicts a village in snow along the Tokaido road and is from of his most prominent series.

### **What was your most recent purchase?**

A stunning hyperrealist portrait in charcoal and pastel by self-taught Nigerian artist Babajide Olatunji, from the "Tribal Marks" series on facial scarifications.

### **Which works or artists are you hoping to add to your collection this year?**

That is a hard question to answer. It is more of what crosses my eye than shooting for something specific. Besides, if I

said what I was hankering for, it would only increase the competition.

### **What is the most expensive work of art that you own?**

I do not like to think about my most expensive purchase. I simply enjoy being able to collect works that resonate with me the most.

### **Where do you buy art most frequently?**

Mainly from colleagues, with the occasional auction purchase.

### **Is there a work you regret purchasing?**

Many. The list is long, and it would only frustrate me even more going into detail and being reminded of the ones that got away.



Titus Kaphar's Diptych *This Place Never Felt Like Home As if I Were Her Own*.  
Collection of Edward Tyler Nahem.

**What work do you have hanging above your sofa? What about in your bathroom?**

Above our living room sofa in New York, we have a large and poignant diptych by American Painter Titus Kaphar, *This Place Never Felt Like Home / As if I Were Her Own*, made in 2011. Then, behind the sofa in the study is a mystical landscape painting on wood by French conceptual artist Laurent Grasso.

**What is the most impractical work of art you own?**

A large-scale work by UK-based artist David Errser

called *The Ideal Home Show*. It's a life-scale installation of a playroom in a house, with all the various furniture and fixtures carved from balsa wood. It is terrific!

## **What work do you wish you had bought when you had the chance?**

A large-scale painting by Kerry James Marshall.

## **If you could steal one work of art without getting caught, what would it be?**

Picasso's *Night Fishing in Antibes*. I had the privilege of seeing the painting in a small exhibition, "Picasso and the War Years," many years ago at the California Palace Legion of Honor in San Francisco. I arranged for a loan of another painting in the show and was there for the small dinner and opening. What a sheer thrill to wander through this show at night, with not another soul in the place. I later plotted to steal the painting from MoMA, but it wouldn't fit under my shirt.

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