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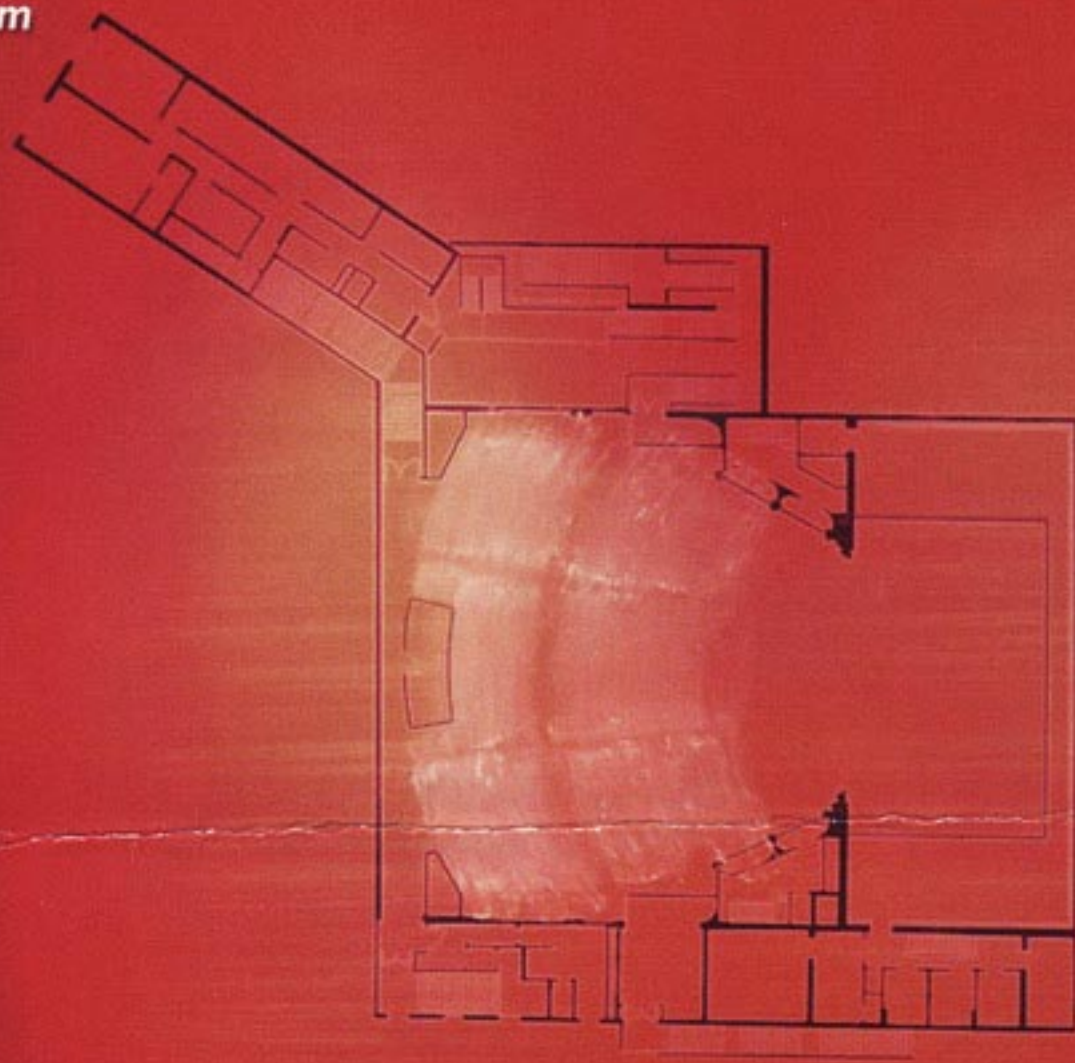
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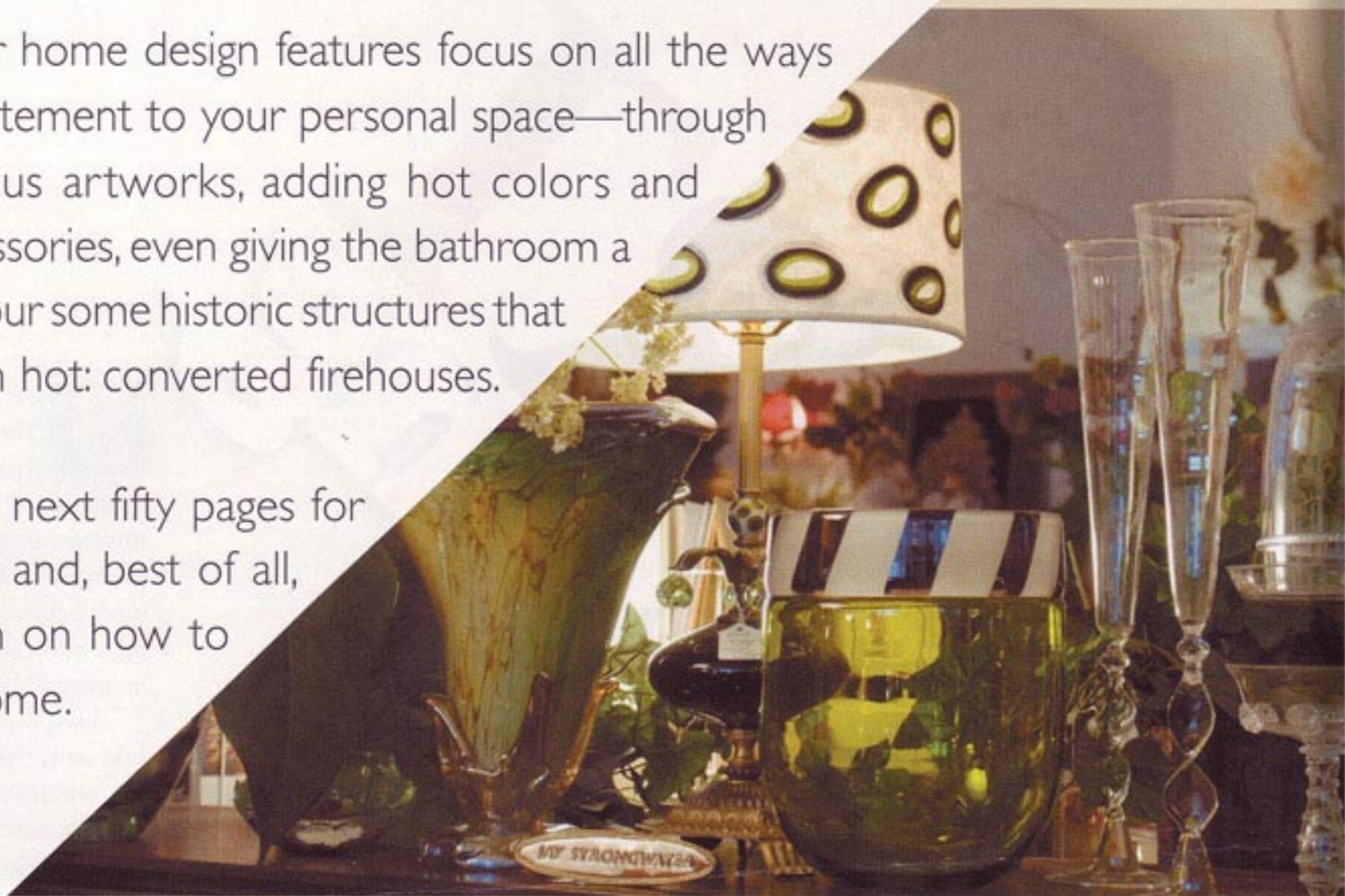
WANT TO BE A COLLECTOR?

We'll tell you what you need to know and introduce you to WNY's most interesting art collectors. **PG.58**



This year, our home design features focus on all the ways you can add excitement to your personal space—through collecting fabulous artworks, adding hot colors and exceptional accessories, even giving the bathroom a facelift. We also tour some historic structures that have always been hot: converted firehouses.

Leaf through the next fifty pages for inspiration, ideas, and, best of all, solid information on how to revitalize your home.



home
DESIGN

ART COLLECTING

Buffalo and Western New York are renowned arts destinations. But according to many local collectors, it is not just our museums and architecture that should make us a visual art magnet: a largely under-recognized wealth of historically important individual artists should also be part of the draw.

Early in the last century, when Buffalo and the entire region were growing wealthy and industrialized, many artists came here. Institutions that arose during the boom times, like the Buffalo Art Institute and the Albright Art School, helped to create a supportive atmosphere for them.

As the area declined economically, however, fewer working artists could survive here, and people forgot about those who had lived and thrived in the area. That benefited collectors, who could buy at low prices, but it also attracted out-of-town dealers who bought up the good stuff and took it out of the area.

Many Buffalo collectors have amassed works by their favorite notable artists. For various reasons, they fell in love with and continue to search for vintage works. Their methods vary greatly. But almost all collectors agree that collecting is an emotional process, and say that it can become a passion, an obsession ... even an addiction.

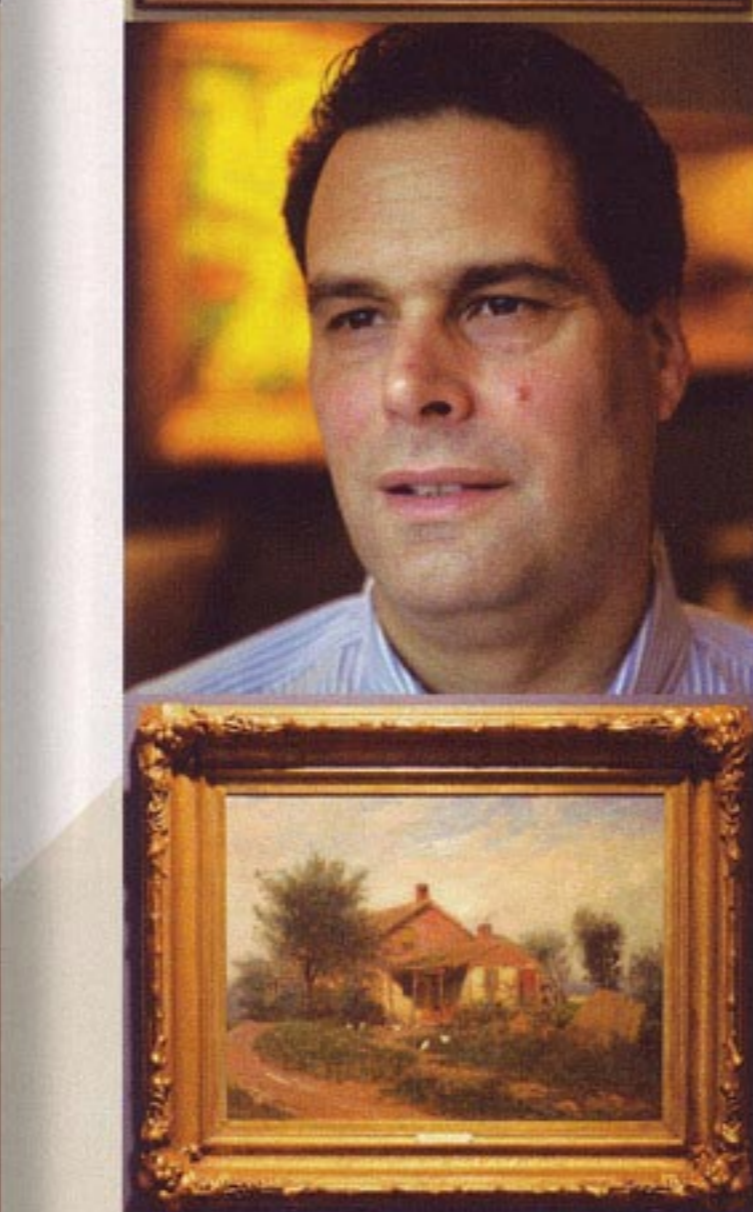
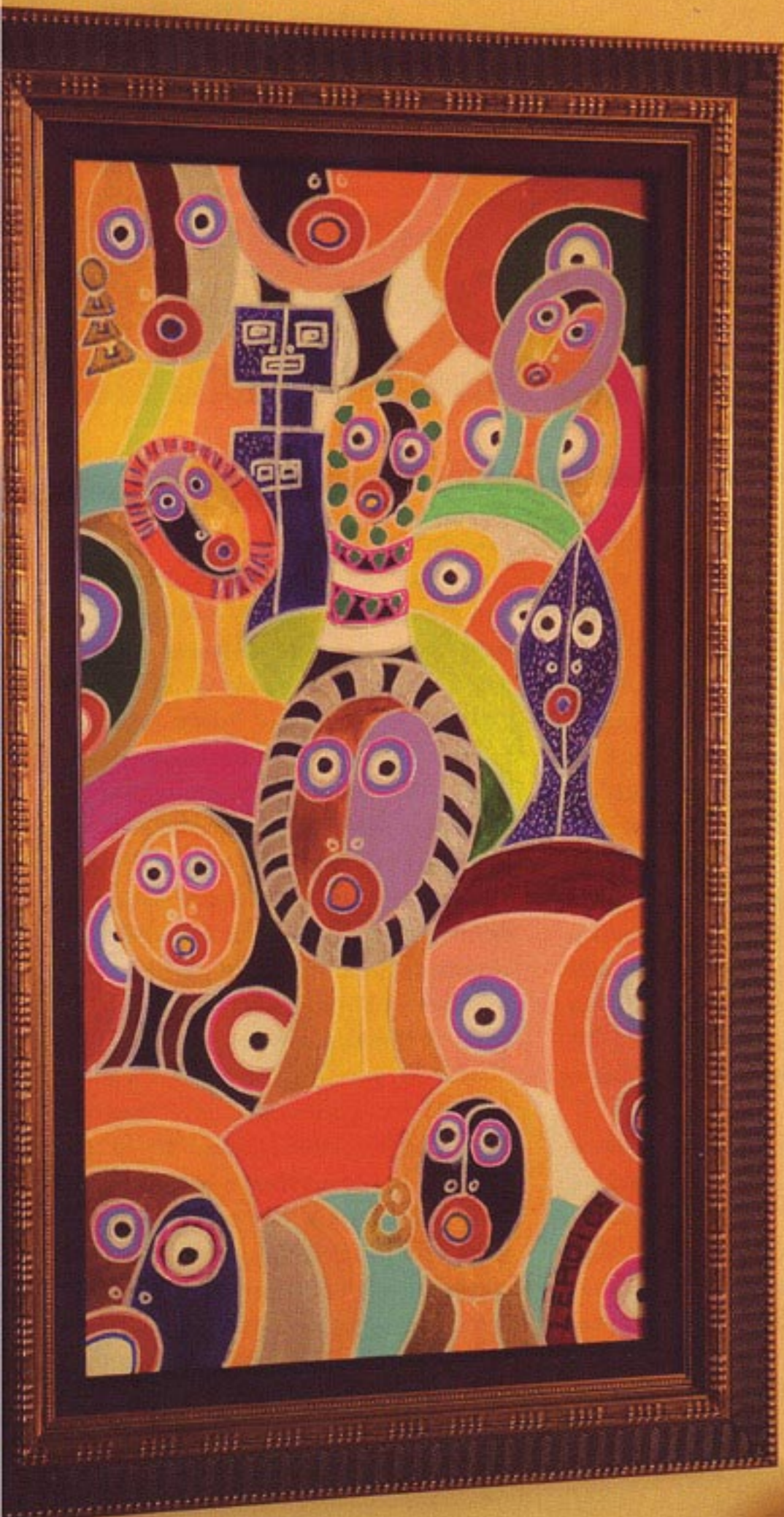
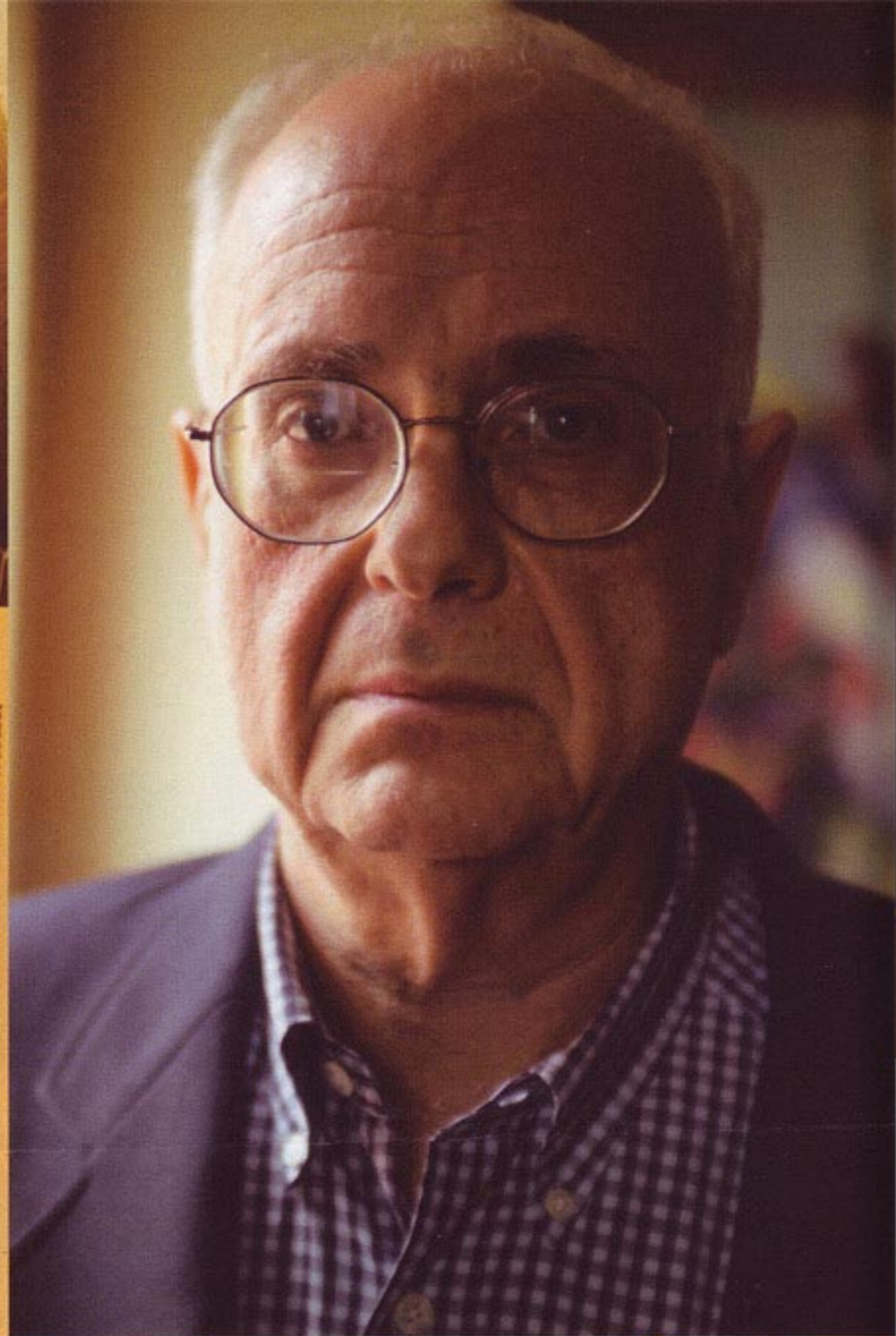
Albert Michaels's passion is for post-1920s art. Michaels now owns works by Virginia Cuthbert, Alexis Fournier, Alexander Levy, and Martha Visser't Hooft, some of whom he knew personally. "I fell in love with Cuthbert's work when I got to know her and some of her fellow artists, including her husband Phil Elliott and Seymour Drumlevitch," he says.

HOME IS WHERE
THE ART IS:

Collecting locally

BY JANA EISENBERG

home DESIGN



Above, l-r: Alexander Levy, *Daydreaming*, c. 1920; Howard Beach, *Hollyhocks*, c. 1920; Right, t-b: Ernest Pernelle, *Chion in the Morning*, 1920; John J. Inglis, *A Quiet Morning*, c. 1920s.

Cuthbert, who amongst her many fans commands an almost mythical reverence, worked here until her death in 2001. Cuthbert's best friend was artist Martha Visser't Hooft, who was born into Buffalo's wealthy Hamlin family. Visser't Hooft (1906-1994) forged a unique body of work, examples of which were eventually included in the Albright-Knox and Whitney collections. Along with Cuthbert and Charles Burchfield, she is a respected regional modernist with national recognition. "I got to know Martha Visser't Hooft and her work through her daughter, Martje Moore," explains Michaels. "I ended up collecting a lot of Visser't Hooft's work, and writing a book about her."

He does admit to an urge to possess. "I've gotten used to being surrounded by beautiful things," Michaels says. "It has become an addiction, one that has spread to my children." Another of Michaels's motivations is the preservation of the area's unique history. "The times that produced these artists and their paintings are part of our heri-

tage," the collector states. "If the work is not collected locally, we will literally lose that heritage."

Dealer and collector Vincent Croglia specializes in early-twentieth-century Impressionists. One aspect of his work as an art dealer is, obviously, valuing it. "Locally made paintings can be a good value; for example, if a local artist had a national reputation, instead of paying \$2,000 or \$3,000 for a piece, you would have to pay \$10,000. On the other hand, regional art can be difficult to value, because there aren't extensive auction records. That is why I've been able to buy a Cuthbert or a Visser't Hooft elsewhere ..."

His personal favorite, and a mainstay of his collection, is Alexander Levy (1881-1947), who lived and worked here, leaving a body of work that is becoming increasingly sought after. Croglia gains much aesthetic and personal pleasure from a good Levy. "His paintings can take you away to another world," the collector enthuses. "His figurative paintings have a delightful green cast to them."

From top: Alexander Levy, *Along the Lehigh Canal*, c. 1930; Vincent Croglia (photo by Jim Bush); Alexis Fornier, *On the Old Farm*, c. 1905. All works on this page from the collection of Vincent Croglia.

Clockwise, from top left: Virginia Cuthbert, *Archie in a Victorian Setting*, c. 1944; collector Albert Michaels, the owner of the works (photo by Jim Bush); Martha Visser't Hooft, *Medium's Table*, 1946; Le Roi Johnson, *Curiosity*, 2005.



"I got a little art background in my early twenties when I worked for [local artist] Tony Sisti," Croglia remembers. "Regional art fascinates me because of the tons of talent that came out of here; Buffalo was the place to be. Lots of big artists left work here." However, Croglia comes to the same conclusion that many others have reached: "The problem with Western New York is that there's not a lot of awareness for local art."

Ted Pietrzak, executive director of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, feels that those who do have an awareness of the arts use them as a way to connect with each other and their sense of place. "People in Buffalo have a passion for the region; it is a touchstone," Pietrzak says. "In acquiring art of the place, they get help in defining what is different about themselves."

Collector Joe Gerace demonstrates this urge to connect with the area through his collection's specific focus on Buffalo buildings. While he inherited the collecting gene from his mother, Gerace came to his fascination with his surroundings independently. "I bought a great view of Buffalo's East Side by Joe Eger," Gerace says. "It suddenly

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"I bought a great view of Buffalo's East Side by Joe Eger," Gerace says. "It suddenly clicked that I wanted to collect regional art depicting Buffalo architecture."

GREAT PLACES TO BUY WORK BY WNY ARTISTS

Art Dialogue/WNY Artists Group
1 Linwood Avenue, 885-2251
A terrific source for area artists. Shows change frequently.

Buffalo Arts Studio
2495 Main, 833-4450
There are 45 artist studios here as well as changing shows. The motherlode.

Dana Tillou
417 Franklin Street, 854-5285
Antiques and choice, historic art.

Fineline Gallery
118 Sterling (near Hertel), 838-4411
Excellent print selection and more.

Insite Gallery/Bryant Studios/Neighborhood Collective
810 Elmwood, 884-9410
These new additions to the local gallery scene regularly show interesting artists in their handsome, centrally located spaces.

Meibohm Fine Arts
478 Main, East Aurora, 652-0940
Always interesting, eclectic shows; a good selection of older works.

This is a selective list. You can buy work by WNY artists at almost any gallery or museum (from special exhibitions, not the collection) in the area: check the Spree art listings. Antique shops can also be a good source for older pieces, but buy carefully.
—Elizabeth Licata.



Collector Joe Gerace with two paintings of St. Michael's by Joseph Eger, 1947 (top) and 1945.

clicked that I wanted to collect regional art depicting Buffalo architecture.

"Once I had one painting, I wanted more," he continues. "At first it was just houses. I love the vast array of styles. If you look at a grouping of houses built in, say 1885, each of them is different. Modern subdivisions are not as interesting or unique." For Gerace, layered over his respect for the architecture is his admiration for the artists' portrayals. "I like the WPA era, 1930s and 1940s, on," he said. "The buildings are painted somewhat realistically, but have an artistic flair or interpretation. For example, Burchfield would do a stylized version of a chimney, or show just two-thirds of a window."

James Vullo (1915-1999) is an artist whom collector David Fedak is convinced deserves a larger reputation. He now sees his responsibility to Vullo in both historic and value-oriented terms. "I stumbled onto my first Vullo shopping for a gift for my wife," Fedak says. Since then, Fedak's growing passion for Vullo has motivated him not only to amass a large collection, but to begin work on a book about the artist. Part of the goal for the book, in creating wider awareness, is by definition to help create a wider market.

"To become established nationally, a regional artist needs a champion with a vested interest," said Fedak. "In the same way that Charles Rand Penney wanted to raise public awareness of Charles