

Thinking of buying art through a consultant? Here are a few considered tips from London-based art consultant Nick Campbell.

CULTURE  
*Artistic Medium*

by Daniel Hilarion Lim



**BUYING ART IS A VERY PERSONAL PROCESS.**

Whether they're just looking at something to fill a space on a wall or simply to add to their collection, art buyers can be rather selective about the pieces they eventually choose, often citing emotional appeal, composition and value.

Enter the art consultant. This group of people was trained to consider everything you'd normally think of when selecting a piece. They have an insider's feel as to what is on the market and are uniquely suited to getting you a piece that you'll love. But why should you trust this middleman or woman to buy something as deeply personal as art?

We speak with one of the most prominent young art consultants on the market about his work and get some of the tips every art buyer should know.

**Daniel Hilarion Lim: What is your consultation process like with a new client?**

Nick Campbell: From the start it is very important for me to speak to the client, rather than over email, so we can have a conversation and I can get a sense of who they are and what they have in mind.

There are then three points that I need to discuss with every client to enable me to find the right works. First, what is their price bracket? Second, what visually appeals to them and what art works would they ideally want on their wall. For instance, if they have always loved the work of Warhol and always wanted to own one; or perhaps they are more interested in finding large abstract paintings by young emerging talents. Third, what do they eventually want to get out of the artwork(s)? Some clients want to purchase a few works to fill walls. Others want a large one-off piece that could be an investment opportunity. Similarly, some might want to start building a private collection for themselves over the years so the one-off piece is important and will be the basis of what they purchase next.

After I have ascertained all of this, I can then start sourcing artworks. I source and produce a list of no less than 20 artworks that fit the criteria given by the client.

**What challenges do you face with a new client?**

I think the biggest challenge I find with some new clients is when they are purely buying artworks in order to make a profit. I come across many people worldwide who read about works going for huge sums and they want a part of the action.

The reality is only a tiny percentage of artists actually end up making people money and finding that 'investment' artist or artwork is near impossible. Of course, I advise some clients on what I think would be sensible purchases.

At the end of the day, nothing is ever certain. The most important rule for any new person buying art is that if you love it, buy it! It is as simple as that because, in reality, you are going to have to live with the work. If it goes up in value then that is an added bonus.

**What do you look out for when you evaluate a piece of art?**

There are three rules I have when considering a piece of art. First: aesthetics. At the end of the day you have to live with it so if the work is visually stunning then you are going to enjoy looking at it every day. Second: originality. There are many artists who copy old artists' theories or are visually very similar. This is not interesting to me. What you ideally want to find is an artwork that looks fresh and original while also having an interesting and unique thought process behind it, and theory attached to it. Third: past and future. For me, when possible, it is important to learn where the artist studied, what exhibitions they have been in and who has bought their work. If big, respected, collectors have bought the work then that is important. Similarly, I need to find out what shows they have lined up for the coming months/years.

All these help contribute to my decision when buying a new artwork.

**What is art to you?**

For me, art is to see something that when looked at has an immediate affect. It needs to visually appeal to me but also demonstrate the artist's skill and talent whether that be through an 18th century carved ivory puzzle ball or a beautifully painted oil-on-canvas portrait. ◇

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