



heidi erdmann

This respected Cape Town gallerist and photography curator loves the thrill of buying an artwork on impulse

TEXT LEIGH ROBERTSON PHOTOGRAPHS ADAM LETCH (PORTRAIT), SUPPLIED

With a career in the art industry spanning 20 years, Heidi Erdmann has taken on ‘an exciting challenge’ with the opening of her new premises in Kloof Street, Cape Town. ‘It’s no longer just an art gallery but a space where several disciplines intersect,’ she says of Erdmann Contemporary, which is housed in a heritage building with new city hot spot, The Blah Blah Bar.

Hailing from Namibia, Heidi started out at the South African National Gallery before establishing AREA Gallery, the first in South Africa to focus on photography. She has curated several international photography exhibitions. ‘I’m usually working on at least three or four shows at any one time. We’ve also added a project space to the gallery – here we do just what we want – so I guess I’m happy and having fun!’ erdmanncontemporary.co.za

What art would you buy with R5 000? It will be an impulsive, emotional purchase, perhaps from an auction or a graduation exhibition. I like the thrill of buying an

artwork on impulse; no deep contemplation, just a response. **R10 000?** Photographs by Gary van Wyk and Lindeka Qampi.

R50 000? A first-edition copy of Robert Frank’s book *The Americans*, which was published in the US in 1959 with 83 images and a foreword by Jack Kerouac. ‘I’ll use my gloves each time I page through this beautiful book. **R500 000?** A set of 20 photographs by Mexican photographer Jan Smith from his ‘Nouadhibou’ series.

R1 000 000? At least three photographs by either Hiroshi Sugimoto or Shōmei Tōmatsu. There’s nothing more beautiful than a well-crafted black-and-white hand print. **Which one artwork do you regret not buying?** A black-and-white hand print by David Goldblatt in 1999. It was priced at R6 000.

What one artist’s work should our readers buy right now? Marna Hattingh. **What artwork do you wish you’d bought 10 years ago?** Manfred Zylla’s ‘Even the children have guns’, made in 1987 and sold in 2004.

New artists you’ve got your eye on? Haidee Nel. **Who’s currently seriously big on the local art scene?** Young graduates – and they often disappear after a year-long storm in a tea cup. They usually return via another

discipline. It is a repeated cycle. **Which local artists are doing well on the international market?** Marna Hattingh, Barbara Wildenboer, Nomusa Makhubu. **What’s your favourite piece of art in your own home?**

A tiny little Peter Clarke print, dated 1961.

We bought it in 1992 to commemorate the birth of our son and gave it to him when he was about three to encourage a culture of collecting art. **What would you buy now for investment purposes – and because you love it?**

A photograph by In Sook Kim (who, incidentally, was a pupil of the acclaimed photographer, Thomas Ruff). **Is there a dominant theme in current local art?** Identity. **Who’s your favourite South African artist?** Walter Battiss and Freida Lock have been firm and long-standing favourites. **What’s your all-time favourite artwork and artist?** A colour photograph by Rineke Dijkstra entitled, ‘Kolobrzeg, Poland, July 26, 1992’. □

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Heidi Erdmann; ‘Saturday Night’ by In Sook Kim; Haidee Nel’s ‘The Hare II’ from the Urban Masquerade series; photographer Frank Roberts’ book *The Americans*.