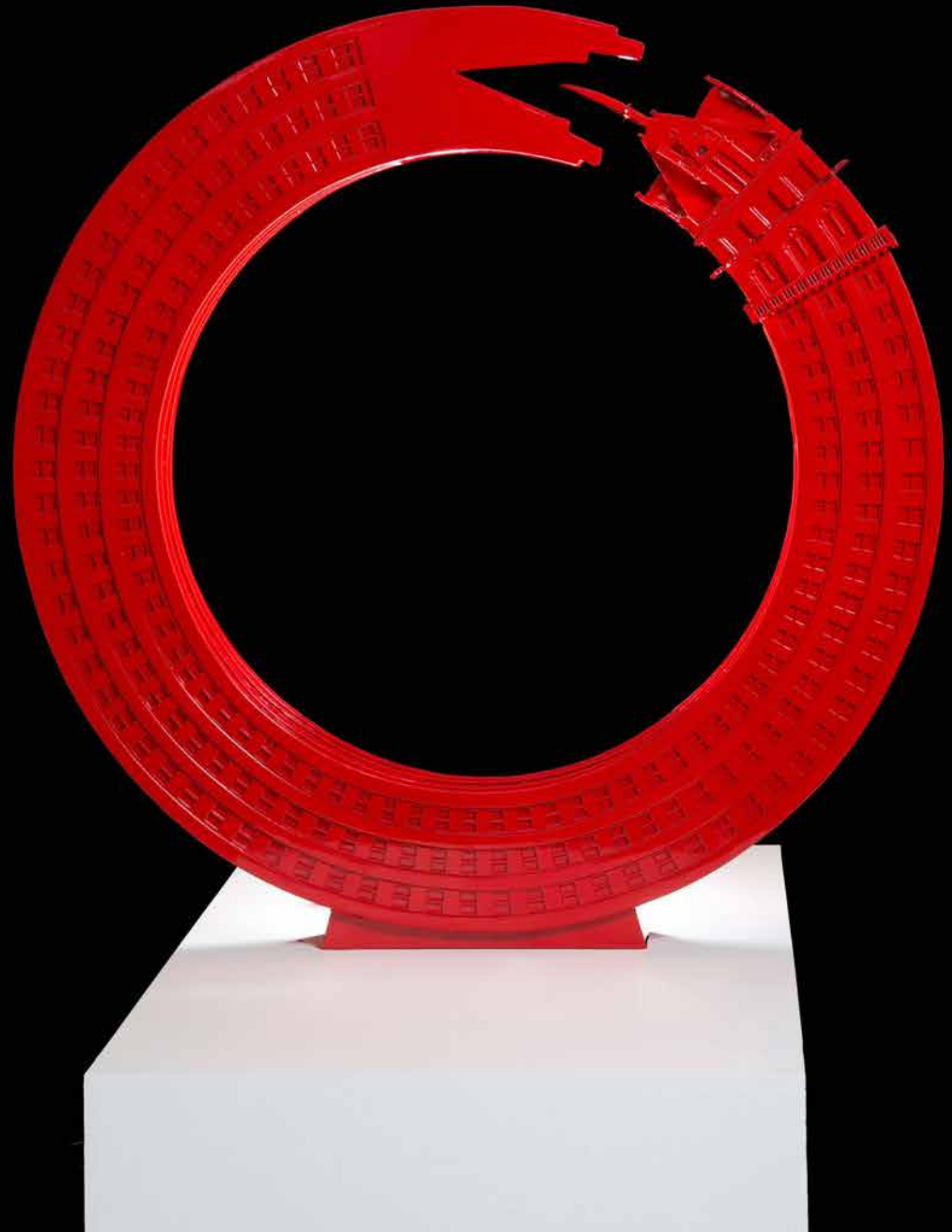


WELL COLLECTED

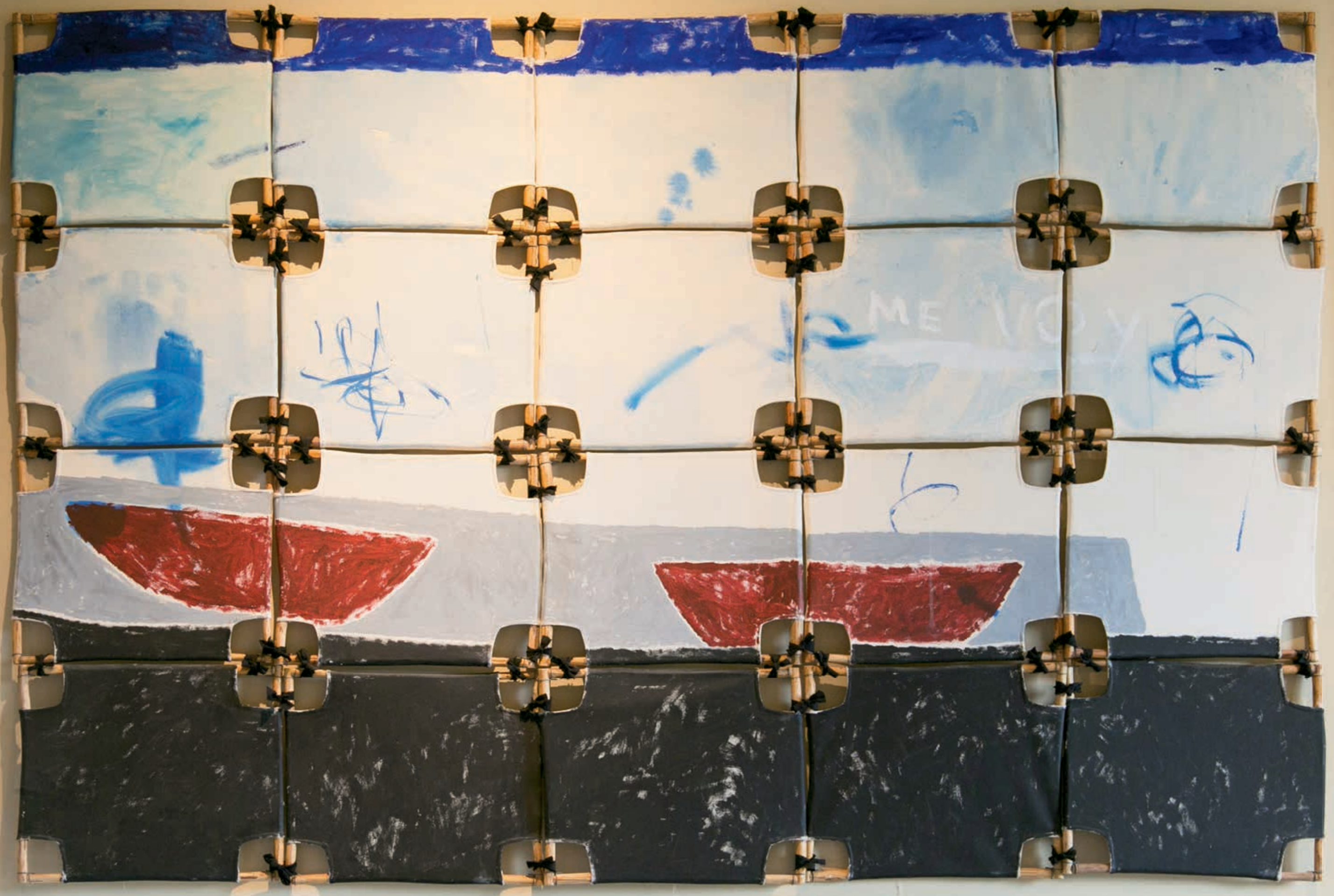
Alexandre Arrechea (Cuban, 1970-)
Sherry, Netherland 2012-2013

Photography by Robert Burge
Written by Steve Kaufman





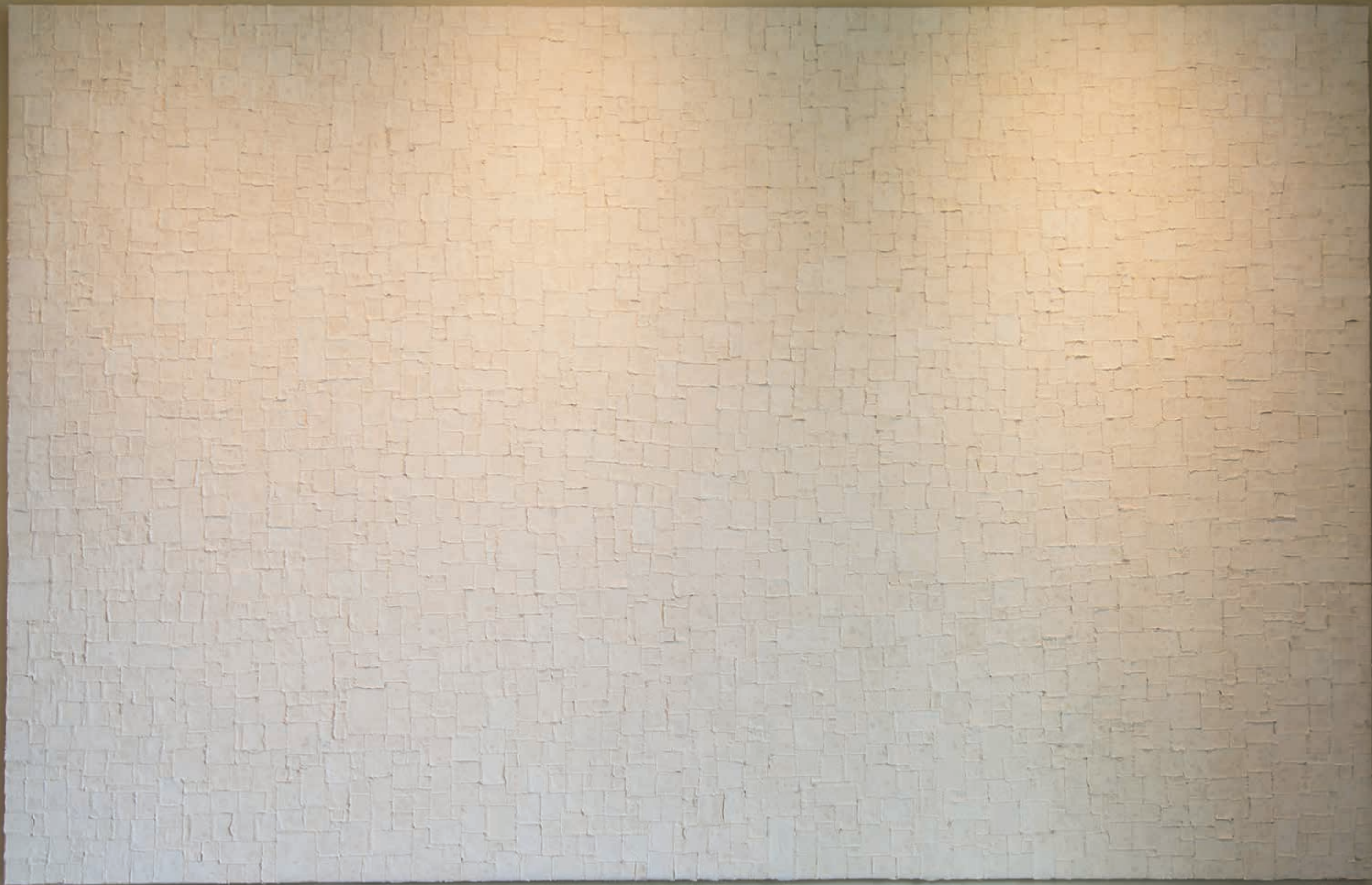
Keith Haring (American, 1958-1990)
Four Jumping Men, Two Dogs, Green Snake



Alexandre Arrechea (Cuban, 1970-)
Me Voy



Keith Haring (American, 1958-1990)
Mickey Mouse



Roberto Diago (Cuban, 1971-)
Untitled

Ars Gratia Artis

Many homeowners, when moving into a new house, express their love of art by first placing all the furniture, and then finding a space on the wall or somewhere in the room for the important pieces of treasured artwork.

Then there are those who place the artwork first and create interior design concepts around the homeowner's collection of wall hangings, sculptures, antiques, period furniture and accessories, as well as various collectibles.

You know that the homeowners featured in this article are serious, art-minded collector types as demonstrated by the original Keith Haring painting on display in the large entry foyer.

Not that Haring's style – surreal, almost stick-like figures, bold lines and bright paint – is anyone's idea of serious. Haring was an important artist and social activist who died in 1990 and while alive became an activist with an increasingly consequential political message to convey.

Apart from his activist messages, Haring's large canvases and sculptures also bring color, life and whimsy into the home or environment. Art can do that as well.

Before visitors even enter the rest of the residence, there is more color and whimsy: an eye-catching red sculpture on a foyer table. It's a miniaturized version of a massive steel sculpture done depicting New York's Sherry Netherland Apartment Hotel (sort of) by increasingly known Cuban artist Alexandre Arrechea.

One of the full-sized sculptures, in which the artist made a detailed replica of the apartment-hotel building and then bent it into a circle 15 feet in diameter, was displayed during the Summer of 2013 on Park Avenue and 59th Street on the East Side of Manhattan.

The smaller, foyer version of Arrechea's sculpture is pretty quirky. (So is a replica of the artist's beautiful yet distorted version of the Chrysler Building, compressed and twisted into a serpentine shape, out by the pool.)

But the uniqueness doesn't stop there. A display of digital video art – a real-life image in motion of a man swinging on a swing that seems to continue forever as the man changes expressions and positions on the swing hangs on the wall as one enters the foyer.

Of course, it's the Harings – and there are several in the house – that establish the appreciation of fantasy. One of his bright, stylized, pop art-influenced works is entitled simply "Mickey Mouse." Haring did several works with various Mickey Mouse themes. Another is entitled, far less simply, "Four Jumping Men, Two Dogs, Green Snake."

Because so many of the pieces throughout the house are antiques and/or museum quality collectibles, a walk-through is an instructional tour in art and furniture history.

"The house is about the art collection," said Douglas Riddle, president of Bittners. Riddle has played a part in the procurement of some of the furniture and artwork. "As you walk through the house, what you really notice is the artwork. That's what's memorable. And everything is arranged to support the collections." He states that the homeowners' tastes



American Art Deco
Etched Glass and Bronze





Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987)

run to period collections, such as Art Deco and Pre-Mid-Century Modern. Everything works in harmony.

Reinforcing the Art Deco sensibility, for example, is a 39-inch-high crystal chandelier hanging in the large, high-ceilinged foyer. On the wall to the left of the foyer, along the staircase, is an “Untitled” by Haring and “Dorothy” by contemporary Spanish artist Manolo Valdes who now lives in New York City – a portrait of a woman’s face in the Spanish asymmetrical tradition that runs from El Greco to Picasso.

The diversity of the collection is exhibited on the opposite entry wall where two very large pieces, roughly seven feet high, are displayed. These were done by emerging Cuban artist Roberto Diago – “Untitled,” a large white textured canvas; and “Me Voy,” another mixed media work on a series of canvas panels, framed on thin wood-bamboo and tied together with strips of cloth.

And in one corner of the foyer, sitting next to the door, is a 22-inch-high patinated bronze sculpture on a wooden base by British artist Dan McDermott, called “Rejoice.”

All in all, it’s a very international art collection, and we haven’t moved much past the front door.

“These clients buy their art all over the world,” said Riddle, “working with dealers, galleries and auction houses, traveling to openings and shows. And they have a strong and consistent point of view, knowing what they want and what they like.”

ECLECTIC POWER

To the right of the entryway is the living room, a mix of traditional, contemporary and Art Deco themes.

At one end of the room is a French Art Deco sideboard in highly polished, deep-grained East Indian rosewood with the period’s characteristic curvilinear ends and stylish metal hardware. “Deco was assertively bold and lavish,” Riddle said of the elegant style that dominated the 1920s and 30s. “Rosewood was a particularly popular material of the Deco school because of its rich color and deep, intricate grain.”

Sitting atop the sideboard is a unique white marble

sculpture called “Reclining Woman,” by Colombian artist Fernando Botero.

Bolstering the Art Deco look and feel of the room are French etched glass sconces on the wall and French commercial posters from the 1920s and 30s for Dubonnet and Bonal, the French aperitifs.

“The right posters, selectively used, can be consistent with the finest art collection,” Riddle said.

On the wall above the sideboard is an eye-catching painted mirror of the French eglomise process, in which panels of glass are backed with a silver or gold leaf and painted decoratively or ornately.

The furniture in the room may be eclectic, but it is all rich, elegant and authentic to its historical period.

“Bittners, too, has connections throughout the furniture world,” Riddle said, “and dealers frequently call us when period pieces are available, whether they’re Art Deco or Biedermeier or Mid-Century Modern. We’ll buy the pieces and do the refinishing, reupholstering and touching up in our custom shop.

“We then may keep it in our showroom because it’s

so beautiful, or we may obtain it for a particular client in mind, like these clients, because we know what they like or need.”

THE ART OF DINING

Directly across the foyer is the dining room. While many owners of large homes these days maintain a formal dining room only out of habit, this one feels used and appreciated, especially as a setting for some more of the homeowners’ fine artwork.

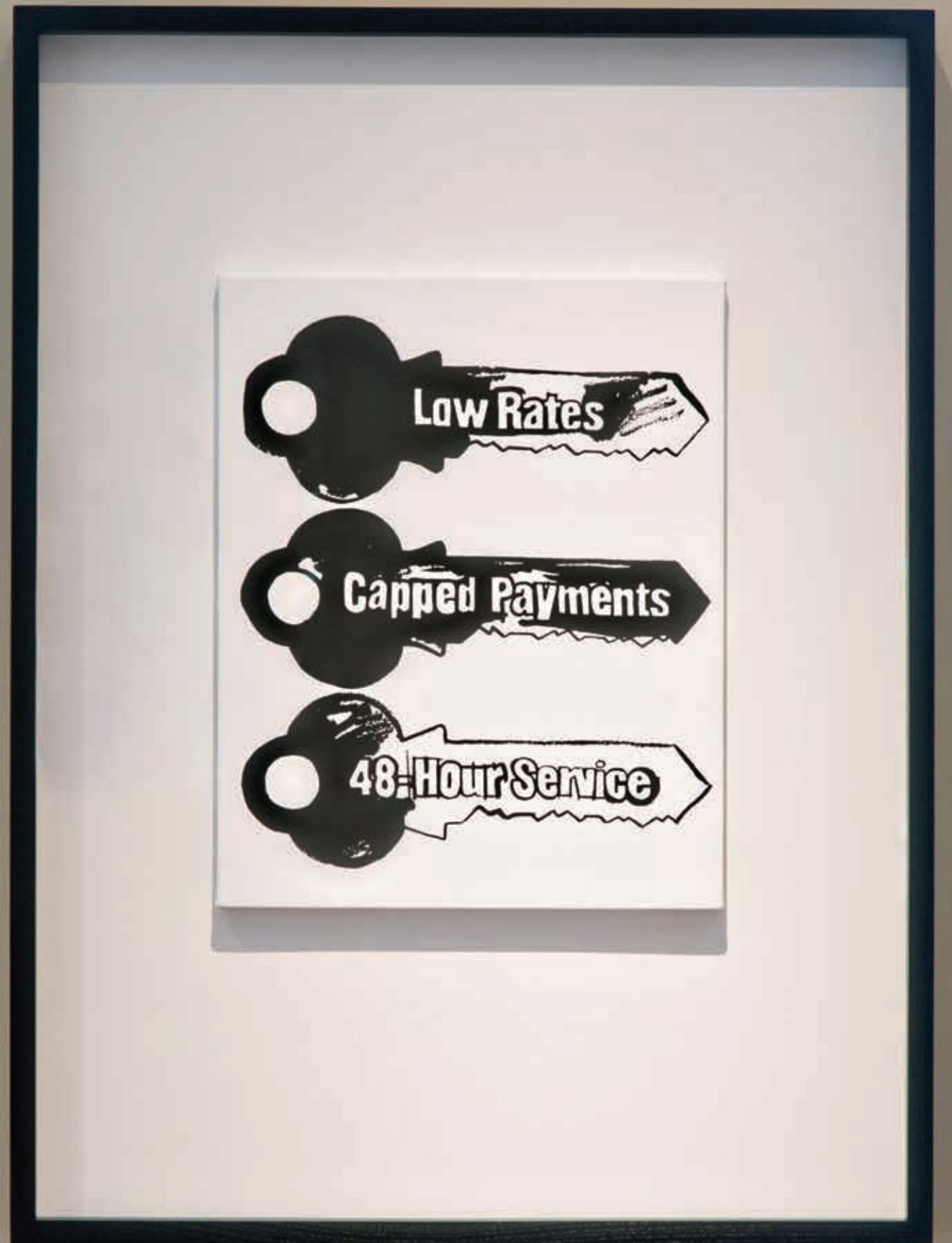
Dominating one large wall is another of the Keith Harings, his mischievous “Mickey Mouse.”

While Haring is still über-contemporary 24 years after his very public death from AIDS-related complications, he shares this room with more period pieces, like a significant collection of Royal Copenhagen glazed and gilded porcelain in a large glass cabinet; a tall, two-handled, tapered vase of cameo glass from the Le Verre Francais collection by the eminent French furniture and glassworks company, Charles Schneider; and the Dominique-style furniture of luxurious wood-





Manalo Valdez (Spanish, 1942-)
Dorthy



Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987)
Key Service





Leoneotto Cappiello
Montre Election



Keith Haring (American, 1958-1990)
Big Dog







work and delicate inlays, as well as a faceted silver glass coffee and tea service with ivory handles from the 1920s.

More contemporary to Haring is a canvas hanging on an adjacent dining room wall called “Key Service.” The playful silkscreen from the mid-1980s says, from top to bottom, “Low Rates. Capped Payments. 24-Hour Service.” It looks like a replica of someone’s early business marketing and promotional materials (the way people keep and frame their companies’ first print ads or first dollar bills earned). But this was actually done by Haring’s mentor and friend, Andy Warhol, who started as an advertisement illustrator in the 1950’s, so it carries a great deal of heft in the art world.

LAST DAYS OF DECO

The big open room toward the rear of the main floor contains the home’s third Haring, his big canvas “Four Jumping Men, Two Dogs, Green Snake” above the fireplace.

On the mantle is a rare silvered bronze sculpture, “Three Panthers,” by prominent mid-century artist Georges Lavroff. Most deco sculpture scenes such as this were produced in single or two animal versions making a three panther version in one sculpture something special.

In front of the fireplace sits a very Deco bench that was part of “Top Drawer,” Bittners’ 150-year retrospective at The Frazier History Museum in 2012.

In fact, Deco dominates this large room, from two mahogany chairs alongside the fireplace to light sconces on the wall, to three stylized posters from the 1939 New York World’s Fair in the distinct Art Deco sensibility that dominated that event.

Some art historians say that the huge industrial fair, with its pavilion architecture and sculptures by artist Waylande Gregory, represented the last gasp of Deco’s art and architecture style before a world war, holocaust and nuclear devastation reduced our enchantment with stylized technological progress.

OFFICE SPACE

An elegant French Art Deco desk from the 1930s – dark rich mahogany and soft vellum with round, curving lines – is gorgeous on its own. But it has to share top billing in this room.

On the wall is an eerily famous photograph of Warhol and fellow downtown New York artist Jean-Michel Basquiat taken in about 1986 by Michael Halsband. This photo is one of a series of black and white Halsband shots used for posters advertising the Warhol-Basquiat collaboration showing the two artists in boxing gloves and trunks, squaring off against one another, flexing their “muscles” or glaring menacingly at the camera.

Warhol had a well-known affection for boxing. He was friendly with Muhammad Ali. (In fact, his famous 1978 etched screen prints of Ali, numbered and signed in felt pen by both the artist and the athlete, hang in the basement gym with the homeowner’s extensive workout equipment.) Warhol also was part of an amusing print and TV commercial campaign in the late 1960s for Braniff Airways with towering, menacing ex-champ Sonny Liston.

In the case of the Halsband photos, however, the amusement was short-lived. About a year after the shoot, Warhol died suddenly from a post-operative cardiac arrhythmia following routine gallbladder surgery. He was just 58, and Basquiat, bereft at the loss of his mentor, supporter, good friend and sometimes collaborator, died soon afterwards of a heroin overdose. He was 27.

The point being that most great art has a real-life context and backstory, and the context is often unexpectedly grim. But it is context, and therefore important. Similarly, some of Keith Haring’s late work post-1988 (though none in this house) took on an obsessive tone around the theme of sex as a killing instrument, after he was diagnosed with AIDS.

“Which is why art shouldn’t be purchased just because the colors match the carpeting,” Riddle said. “Art should be celebrated for the joy it gives as much as for the thought and pain it sometimes causes.”

This is an open, sun-filled house, and much natural light rambles through and across the space, bouncing off the artwork on the wall. In the case of colorful cartoon-like Haring whimsy or Warhol’s playful silkscreen evocations of American commercialism, the art brings joy and visual satisfaction into the home.

Riddle says these clients, in particular, recognize a high-end, international style, and they want craftsmanship and value, beauty as well as function. “They want to know the history, the story of the piece, the historical period in which it was created.” 