

10 TIPS FOR PRINT COLLECTORS

Sebastian Burdon

Prints are becoming an increasingly popular choice for art enthusiasts looking to start or expand their collection. It's not surprising after all, as they allow both young and seasoned collectors to buy art by famous artists at affordable prices. If you are thinking about buying prints for your collection make sure to read the following few tips that will ensure that you make the most of your print collecting efforts.



1. Artist's reputation vastly affects the price

Just like with any other type of art, the artist's reputation is one of the key factors determining the print's price. Prints made by prominent figures like Andy Warhol, Salvador Dali or Henri e Toulouse-Lautrec are priced higher than the works by lesser-known artists. A print by a prominent figure might reach a price of several million dollars, like Picasso's *La Minotaure* that was sold for almost \$2 million (\$1.98 million to be precise) in 2010. But even when priced this high, prints will usually cost less than the artist's other works. For instance, even the 2 million price tag looks like a bargain

compared to Picasso's paintings that are known to reach the price of \$179.4 million. If you are not sure what status an artist enjoys in the world of contemporary art, you can always ask the seller about the artist's sales history, exhibition history, career level and other questions that could help you understand the price a bit better. The few basic tests which you can do almost immediately is to check, who is the artist selling their work with, how does the price compare to the other prints by the same artist, have the previously released prints sold out or are they available, what shows

or art fairs have the artist participated in. I work with variety of art galleries and art dealers worldwide from London's TAG Fine Arts who take my work around the world to art fairs in Singapore, Hong Kong or even Miami. This vast number of different countries has been generous to me not only in terms of sold out prints but also balloon dog sculptures. At the same time I have my work displayed in fine art such as LA's Art Angels or Addicted art Gallery in Singapore often accompanied by the greatest giants of art such as Banksy, Andy Warhol or Schoony.



2. Opt for a signed print if you have the choice

Artists usually sign prints with a pencil on a bottom right corner of the piece and put edition number on the left bottom corner. Some artists place their full name on the print while others use initials. Others stamp their signature on the artwork or carve their signature directly on the printing plate to avoid signing it manually. These prints are called stamp signed prints and plate signed prints. Signed prints are usually more valuable than the unsigned ones, as they are rarer and easier to authenticate (though signatures can also be forged). Plus, many collectors want a print that's been touched by the artist's hand and a handwritten signature is a proof of that connection between the artist and the work of art. So if you have an opportunity to choose between two identical signed and unsigned prints go for a signed version even if it costs a bit extra. Keep in mind, however, that signing print is a relatively new practice that originated in the 20th century, which means you can find a lot of highly valuable unsigned historical prints on the market. Sometimes the printer also signs the print which is why some prints have 2 or more signatures, depending on the number of printers. Personally, I prefer to sign all my prints as I feel that the collectors will appreciate them more. As of today, I have not released any unsigned print, so if you find any unsigned editions, please remember that they are not legitimate.

3. The importance of printers and publishers

Printing is a collaborative effort that involves the artist and the printer. Many artists rely heavily on expert printmakers to turn their vision into a final work of art. Certain printers and printing companies are known for producing prints in innovative techniques and of high quality, which is why artworks they publish can have additional value. Many fine art printers are artisans

themselves and their expertise in colours, paper, technique, can be invaluable for the artist. Pace Prints, Tamarind Institute and Paulson Fontaine Press are just a few renowned printing companies whose prints are in high demand. Sometimes to discover which printer produced an artwork, look for a mark on the print that signifies where it was printed. These marks also known as chop marks, blindstamps or chop symbols can later be used to authenticate the print.



4. Understand the numbers on the print

Prints are made in series called editions. Editions can contain a limited number of prints (limited editions) or can be made in unlimited numbers (unlimited editions). Limited editions retain a higher exclusivity and can contain anywhere between 2 and several thousand prints. The fraction on the bottom right of the print shows the size of the edition and the number of a print within that edition. So if you have, let's say a print that's marked with 37/100 it means that that is the 37th print from the edition of 100 prints. Smaller editions usually cost more than the bigger ones due to scarcity. A print made in 25 copies will probably cost more than the one from the edition of 500. In the past when artists used copper plates to print the artwork, the plates would compress a little bit during printing, which meant that the pieces made later in the edition would lack some of the details of the first few editions. That's why the first few prints were considered more valuable as they were "closer to the artist's vision".

However, today artists use printing plates that can make almost an unlimited number of copies, of the same appearance and quality. Every print in the edition is identical and has an equal value. A print marked as 1/100 has the same value as the one with 100 /100 mark. Additionally, the number 1 doesn't necessarily mean that this is the first print that got off the plate. Many artists take all prints of the press, go over them

to make sure they are all good, and then sign and number them in random order.

Sometimes instead of numbers, you will see letters on the print. Prints marked with AP are artist's proofs, prints that the artist keeps for his or her use. Prints that are given to printers as a gift are called printer's proofs and are commonly marked with PP. Pieces created during different working stages are dubbed trial proofs and are usually marked with letters TP. When the artist is happy with the final result he or she creates a "bon à tirer" proof (marked with B.A.T.) as an example of how the final product should look. B.A.T and TP prints are on-of-a-kind while there are usually just a handful of AP and PP prints. Due to their scarcity, these proofs are usually more valuable than the regular numbered prints.



5. The difference between original prints and reproductions

Prints can be original works of art or reproductions of another artwork made in another medium. Original prints transfer the idea and the artistic vision that cannot be found in any other form. Picasso, for instance, could have easily painted each one of his prints, yet he decided to use printmaking as the best way to convey his message. Reproductions replicate another work of art most commonly a drawing, a painting or a photograph. But even if a piece is a reproduction of another artwork, prints always demand a certain creative effort from the artist.

A print is not just a scan of a painting or a photograph, that's been printed out. Artists put in a lot of effort to print their work which contributes to their overall value. Depending on the method, the artist needs to draw, cut or carve the mirror image of the piece he or she is trying to reproduce. During the printing process, the image will reverse. Black and white prints are often easier to produce, while multicolour woodcuts composed from several hand-carved woodblocks, are a

much more complicated endeavor. Keep in mind that the printmaking technique and materials affects the print's price. The more labour intensive the printmaking process, the higher the value of the print. Some of my prints are released as special editions and are hand embellished with gold leaf, or diamond dust. Those are often available in smaller editions and at the higher price point than regular non-embellished editions as they involve more work and premium quality materials.



6. Importance of the print's condition

If you are buying a print directly from the artist, you should expect the print to be in pristine (or mint) condition, without any damage whatsoever. Occasionally, prints might have minor flaws formed in the artist studio. These prints are sold as studio-quality prints. Buying a print on the secondary market means that you might encounter a certain degree of damage as most prints are made on paper and if they are not stored correctly they can be negatively affected by water, sunlight, heat, dust, smoke...

Prints that have minor damages that can be noticed under close inspection in specular or raking light are labelled as excellent. If a print has minor damage visible under standard gallery light the prints is deemed as very good. Very good prints can have one or two minor flaws in the image area, and a few more in the margin area, but the paper must be fresh and crisp and the colours bright. Prints in good condition can have slight fading of the colour, finger smudges, age-toning, light soiling but they must be in a good enough condition to be exhibited without a restoration.

The prints that are damaged but handled with care and require restoration to be presentable to the public are deemed as fair. Finally, prints that have damages that cannot be repaired are prints in poor condition. Needless to say, the prices change depending on the condition of the

print. If you have a choice always go for a print in better condition. Try to avoid buying prints in poor condition that are often considered uncollectable. If your print is of high value and has any damage on it, consider asking for a condition report from the seller. The condition report documents in great detail the level and the type of damage (oil, dirt, shrinkage, colour fading, stains, yellowing etc.) on the print. The print condition highly affects the value of the print. One of the best ways to ensure that the print is in mint condition is to purchase it as soon as it is released. Luckily, all of my newly released prints are freshly printed and are in guaranteed mint condition. During the printing process, there is a certain amount of rejects, which are prints that are of lesser quality or might have a minor flaw. Those are always taken out and destroyed. Storage of prints is also important to make sure it is always protected from dust and accidental damage. For safety, in my studio, prints which await shipping are covered with a sheet tissue paper



7. How to store your prints?

Most prints are made on paper which means that they require a certain degree of care to avoid damage. For starters, they should be kept in a frame. When you are framing a print, make sure to reach out to a professional, who will ensure that the print is properly framed with archival PH neutral materials to avoid damage. When your print is framed, always clean it with acrylic or ammonia-free glass cleaner and a soft non-abrasive cloth or microfiber towel, that won't damage the glass that protects the print. The quality of the glass can affect the condition of the print over time. If possible opt-in for a museum grade glass which protects your artwork from harmful UV light. Alternatively make sure to keep your print away from direct sunlight, as it might drain the colours on the print. A non-reflective ArtGlass is a good option to make sure the print is clearly visible, especially in bright areas. Please have a

look at the below photo which I took at my local framers (Fielders Ltd) at Wimbledon in London. Can you see the difference ArtGlass can make in viewing the artwork?



High humidity can also damage your work, so maintain around 55% humidity in your home or storage. When handling prints avoid touching it with your hands. Your hands contain natural oils that can stain or damage the artwork, so it's best to use cotton gloves. If your art is conserved in storage, make sure to keep it in a cool and dry, dark place. You might also want to consider purchasing a solander box made from acid-free material, specially designed for conservation.

8. Where to buy prints

Prints can be bought everywhere where art is sold - galleries, auction houses, art fairs etc. Also, there are numerous art fairs around the world devoted to prints only, a good example is my local London Original Print Fair at Royal Academy of Arts where Tag Fine Arts exhibits and sells my prints. Art fairs present a great opportunity to see thousands of high-quality prints in one place since galleries bring their best works to these events. Additionally, if the art fair happens to be close to home you can save on the shipping costs because in most cases prints can be purchased and collected directly at the art fair.

If you prefer to buy art online, you can always use one of many art market platforms to acquire prints. Online marketplaces like Saatchi art or Artsy, allow you to choose from thousands of original artworks with a click of a button. A benefit of those market places is that they are often exclusive to art dealers and the customers can see the history and track record of the seller. To avoid counterfeits please avoid purchasing from online marketplaces like eBay, Craigslist or gumtree.

You can even try to find artists on social media and buy art directly from them.



Many artists, myself included, choose not to sell their work exclusively via only one art gallery, but many galleries around the world as well as their own website or social media. Personally, I enjoy the direct contact with the collectors. It allows you to create a bond with the artist that can ensure first dibs on fresh works or even a discount. I am often in contact with some of my collectors and we even met in person and visited shows and art fairs together.

9. Proof of authenticity or proof of purchase

Authenticity is an important consideration in the art world, especially when considering highly-priced artworks. Getting a certificate of authenticity for the pieces made by living artists is relatively easy, as artists can issue you a certificate themselves. A proper certificate should contain elements that describe the piece well, including - name of the artwork, medium, dimensions, the artist's hand-written signature and sometimes even the image of the artwork. I myself only issue certificates for prints priced £1000 or higher.

Getting a certificate of authenticity for a print made by a deceased artist is a bit more difficult. Certificates of authenticity for dead artists are usually issued by an artist's estate or a foundation, the printer of the print, art experts, established dealers or agents of the artist, cousins or spouses, direct descendants and heirs or artist's employees. Another way to authenticate art is by obtaining art provenance. Art provenance is a more comprehensive document that vouches for the artwork's authenticity by showing the history of ownership all the way back to the artist's studio. Provenance shows all galleries, auction houses, dealers, that have sold the piece, all owners of the print, and exhibitions where it was displayed. Apart from proving the print's authenticity, provenance can also increase the value of art by adding the story to the piece that can make it more desirable for collectors. If you are buying prints directly to from the living artist, they would have your transaction details on the record which can be helpful should you wish to obtain a prove the purchase.

10. Buying below market value

One of the fastest way to ensure the value increase is to purchase below market value. However, that might be easier said than done. Are you a first-time buyer? If so, you might be able to get a discount from a gallery or a dealer when purchasing your print. Many galleries will approve a small discount in the hope of developing a relationship with a first-time buyer, knowing that by building a relationship of trust, a new client can easily become a recurrent customer. These discounts usually range between 5% to 10% of the wall price, which can amount to a nice sum. And if you do develop a great relationship with an artist, the art gallery or a dealer you might be looking at more discounts along the way. I myself offer exclusive discounts and offers to my email list subscribers as my way of saying Thank You for the support. Typically you can get the best value for money during the artwork launch. It is when I am making a new work available to the market for the first time



Speaking about his art, Burdon says *“My work aims to show the unusual way of creative thinking by connecting the dots that already exist but have not yet been connected. The ideas that on the surface seem simple, but have never been executed before.”*

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE LET US KNOW BY EMAILING info@whatshisname.co.uk TO PURCHASE ART PLEASE VISIT www.sohoart.uk

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ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Sebastian Burdon is an innovative artist with a highly creative style that aims to challenge existing conceptions and bring joy to viewers of his art.

Known professionally as ‘What’s His Name’, Burdon’s art and sculptures are made using a variety of mediums – including ink, graphic design and 3D printing. The uniquely challenging and contemporary aesthetic of the Polish-born artist has earned him recognition, especially in London where he’s a well-known name, despite his modest moniker.

Outside the UK, Burdon’s work has gained acclaim, having been featured in major cities like New York, Hong Kong,

Singapore, Verona and Berlin. Here too, does his often playful, but surprising perspective and pop-inspired style earn him positive attention and praise.



"Our clients demand art on their walls that's frankly a bit different and generates a reaction. In a world often dominated by the mundane, the challenge for many artists is to develop their own original style. Sebastian Burdon delivers fun art that both stimulates the observer and starts a conversation which is why it's a privilege to work with him and he's certainly an artist to watch and collect!"

CHRIS EVERSFIELD
Attitude Gallery

"We absolutely love Sebastian's art. He has been a really exciting discovery. The creativity and quality of his art are exceptionally high and he manages to capture a huge spectrum of emotion and feeling through every single piece. Whether you're in the mood for something humorous, nostalgic or even mysterious, Sebastian's work can offer it all. His work certainly catches your eye and once it does, it's hard to look away!"

REBECCA COX
artepublic

"Having worked with Sebastian Burdon for a number of years we have been hugely impressed with the quality of his art. He is a very skilled and expressive sculptor, designer and printmaker. He has been incredibly reliable with artworks always arriving quickly and in perfect condition. His pieces offer creativity and variety that makes them a perfect addition to every art collection, we have found his work to be very popular with our clients, and have sent his examples to all corners of the globe."

DANIEL BILLINGS
Admire Urban Art