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THE NEW YORK T

INSIDE ART

Carol Vogel

Douglas Cramer -  
Bd member

A Plum  
To Sotheby's

Summer may be a relaxing time for most of the art world, but it is a time of high stress for auction house experts. In these critical months Sotheby's, Christie's and Phillips push to obtain property for their important fall auctions.

Right now the biggest collection is still up for grabs: more than \$125 million worth of 19th- and 20th-century art from the estate of the Los Angeles collectors Nathan and Marion Smooke. But another major collection has gone to Sotheby's.

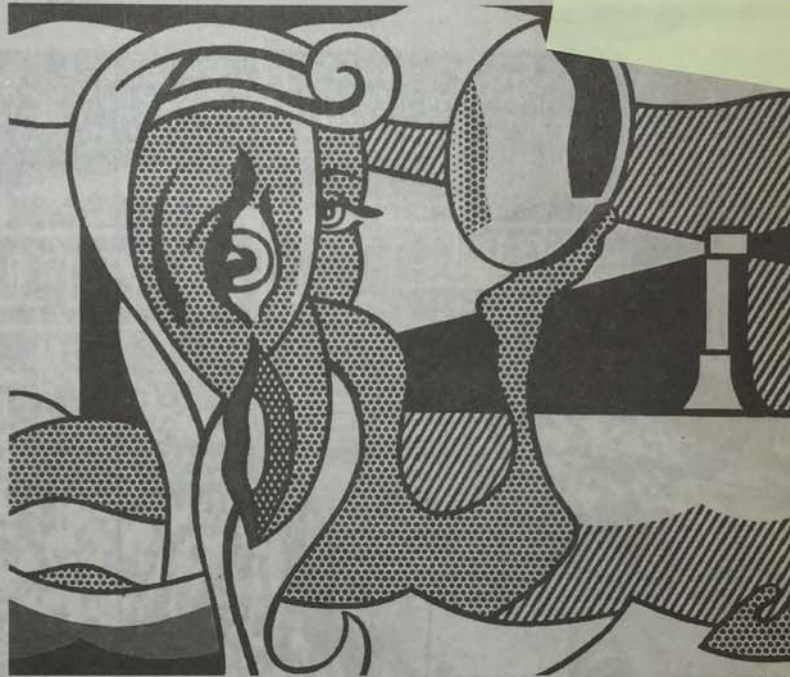
On Nov. 14 it will auction 31 works from the collection of Douglas S. Cramer, a producer of such long-running television hits as "The Love Boat" and "Dynasty." Up for sale will be works by artists including Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Brice Marden and Joel Shapiro. Sotheby's estimates the sale will total \$15 million to \$22 million.

Mr. Cramer has been buying art for 40 years and has come to know many of this country's most important artists. He is also a board member of the Museum of Modern Art and former chairman of its paintings and sculpture committee.

Over the years he has moved from California, where he had a house in Bel Air and a 400-acre vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley, to an apartment in Manhattan and country houses in Connecticut and on Martha's Vineyard. When he moved east in 1997, he sold a group of sculptures at Christie's and donated more than 100 works to museums.

"But there was still a lot in storage," Mr. Cramer said. About six months ago he began thinking about selling part of his collection. "When word got out, the calls starting coming in," he said. The top guns at Phillips, Christie's and Sotheby's were after him for the business. "It was one of the hardest decisions," he said.

One factor was Sotheby's inventive marketing strategy, Mr. Cramer said. Besides publishing a special catalog and showing the collection in art-buying capitals like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Paris and Zurich,



Roy Lichtenstein's "Swimming Figure With Mirror," to be auctioned by Sotheby's.

Sotheby's decided to market it with a focus on the artists.

"This collection is about a single generation of artists in their early and late development," said Laura Paulson, director of contemporary art for Sotheby's in America. "These are artists who came of age in the 1950's and 1960's that Doug followed throughout their careers. It's a very American collection."

The catalog will not only include photographs of all the artists, but also have essays about the art and about Mr. Cramer's involvement in building the collection. Sotheby's is also planning a dinner to honor the artists and their dealers.

Highlights of the collection include Mr. Johns's "Montez Singing" a 1987 painting of a view in the Caribbean, where both Mr. Johns and Mr. Cramer had houses at one point. It is estimated at \$4 million to \$6 million. An untitled 1986 charcoal drawing by Mr. Johns will also be auctioned. His largest since "Diver," it measures 47 by 89 1/4 inches and relates to his 1984 painting "Untitled (Red Yellow Blue)." It is estimated at \$1.2 million to \$1.8 million.

Also up for sale are several Lichtensteins. One is "Mirror No. 1"

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While most contemporary-art collections come to auctions because of death, divorce or debt, this one has landed at Sotheby's for different reasons.

"For Doug this is just a beginning," Ms. Paulson said. "He's still buying art and has started collecting younger artists as well as works by some of the artists in the sale. He's a committed collector."

Douglas S. Cramer ARTICLES

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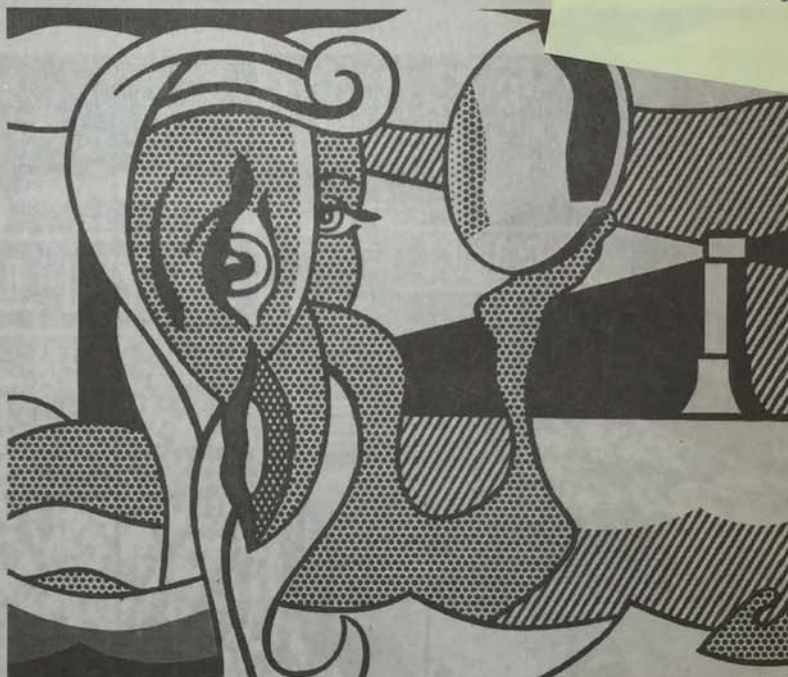
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FEBRUARY 1999/ARTNEWS

### Cramer's Choice

NEW YORK—For 30 years, Los Angeles had been very good to Douglas Cramer. Arriving in 1966 to make his way in the television industry, Cramer became one of the country's most successful producers, gaining fame for shows like *Dynasty* and *Love Boat*, as well as a number of other projects. At the same time, he established himself as a major art collector and benefactor, acquiring over 500 first-rate works by such artists as Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, and Frank Stella. The collector's key purchases within the last year include an untitled Picasso drawing bought at Christie's in November; a Warhol *Jackie*, a Richard Serra sculpture from the late 1970s, and a Cy Twombly sculpture, all purchased from the Gagolian Gallery; an untitled Joel Shapiro wall sculpture bought from PaceWildenstein; a Richard Prince drawing from the Barbara Gladstone Gallery; and Robert Gober's life-size sculpture *Butter Churn*, purchased from the Paula Cooper Gallery. (Cramer declines to discuss the prices he paid for the works.) He is currently making room at his new Roxbury, Connecticut, residence for his recent acquisitions by building a "barn gallery" and clearing outdoor space for large sculptures.

"I knew I wasn't going to have as much space out east," he says, "but I was determined not to end up with lots of things in storage." He donated 34 works by Lichtenstein, Kelly, Stella, Serra, Julian Schnabel, and Eric Fischl, among others, to various museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Tate Gallery in London. His consignment of 22 works—15 from his personal collection and 7 from the Douglas S. Cramer Foundation, including a group of 12 large-scale contemporary sculptures—to Christie's in May

1997 brought in a total of \$2.91 million. "I had so much art, and I hated not to be able to see it," says Cramer. "It was a way of making the art available to people."

Cramer was a cofounding director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and served on the museum's board until 1996. He currently serves as a member of the board of trustees at the Museum of Modern Art and is the chairman of its committee on painting and sculpture, which, among other activities, facilitates new acquisitions for the museum.

—Peter Catapano

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THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

FEBRUARY 15, 1999

JEFFREY HOGREFE

## For \$15,000, Collectors Line Up To Meet Damian Loeb

*Love Boat* producer Douglas Cramer has placed an order to buy the next thing that 28-year-old painter Damian Loeb does.

Mr. Cramer, a board member of the Museum of Modern Art, would have liked to have bought one of the paintings in Mr. Loeb's current show at the Mary Boone Gallery on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, but the eight works—priced at \$15,000 apiece—were snatched up before the show even opened on Jan. 7. Michael Lynne, president of New Line Cinema, and Jerry Speyer, a co-owner of Rockefeller Center and a Museum of Modern Art trustee, were two of the buyers.

Mr. Loeb's work was doled out very carefully by Ms. Boone to collectors hungry for the creations of a new breed of young painters—a sign that she is grooming him to be her next Jean-Michel Basquiat, "without the drugs," she said. She began introducing him to some of her regular clients in November at a din-

ner party she gave for Ross Bleckner. There, Mr. Loeb was seated next to Mr. Cramer.

"I found him charming and lively and asked if I could go to the studio and see the work, and it was just that simple," said Mr. Cramer, who over the years has collected works by Julian Schnabel, David Salle and Eric Fischl, artists whom Ms. Boone helped make famous and rich.

Like Basquiat, Mr. Loeb is a rangy, self-taught artist. He dropped out of high school, became a fixture in downtown clubs and learned to paint by reading a book called *Techniques of the Great Masters of Art* and going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at the real thing. His work borrows the techniques of certain acknowledged masters—and images he finds in popular culture—and turns them into his own golden currency that infuriates critics and excites collectors.

Reviews of the Boone show have tended to compare Mr. Loeb's work to recent Benetton ads and 1940's magazine illustration. The show has been summarily dismissed by *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times* and *The Village Voice*. The

two works Mr. Cramer was interested in have especially bothered critics. *Love Story* depicts a group of voyeuristic Santa Clauses on a bench in the Broadway-Lafayette Street subway station looking at a mangled young woman who is lying in a pool of her own blood, and *Fair Market*, a disquieting painting of a shirtless black man with a gun in his hand standing in front of a supermarket and behind a pickup truck with a snarling dog hanging out the window.

"To me, he is at his best when you have that urban violence," said Mr. Cramer. "I think that Damian is one of the three or

laid giving him a solo show. The problem was copyright issues, considering that many of his images are taken from television, films or published photographs.



"I looked around and I saw other people doing that," Mr. Loeb said. "And I said, 'I don't understand what's different about mine.' All they could come up with was I'm a much better

painter than most of the people and therefore it is a very accurate representation. I said, 'That's the whole point. If you are going to use a vocabulary, it is best to pronounce the words correctly.'"

Said Mr. Deitch: "I wanted him to keep working until we got a group of works that I thought were appropriate to the show."

Now Ms. Boone's fast track is the right place for him. "Mary placed things as she saw was most advantageous," he said of the sellout. "Which was the

kind of thing that made me interested in her, her ability to get these heavy hitters.... I am going to have some dinners soon so I can get to know some of the collectors better." Mr. Loeb has been living in a loft on Lespinard Street in TriBeCa.

"He's a young artist. I don't think one makes any claims beyond that," said Ms. Boone. "Even when there is big interest, there is risk. That's part of the excitement."



Damian Loeb's *Fair Market* is one of the paintings in his sold-out show at the Mary Boone Gallery, which closes Feb. 13. Mr. Loeb, right.

four particularly exciting young artists who are working now out of the 10 or 20 who are in his area whose work I have seen."

Mr. Loeb's career is not without the risk-taking element of a star like Basquiat. There was a swirl of rumors about his defection from Deitch Projects to Mary Boone last December. He told *The Observer* that Jeffrey Deitch had de-



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W NOVEMBER 2000

# THE PRO

Douglas Cramer, one of TV's most successful executives, has moved East. At his new farm,

**T**here are times in life when you need to turn the page. Television producer Douglas Cramer has gone that old adage one better by writing a whole new book for himself. A few years ago, Cramer abruptly said so long to the small screen and the West Coast, his home for 35 years. Replacing his Bel Air mansion and 400-acre Santa Ynez ranch with an Upper East Side apartment and a 120-acre farm in Connecticut, he took up the chairmanship of the painting and sculpture committee at the Museum of Modern Art, where he is a trustee. This month, his reincarnation continues with his debut as a Broadway producer, when *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* opens at the Barrymore Theater. Just to wipe the slate completely clean, he is about to sell his longtime beach house on St. Martin and buy a new place on Martha's Vineyard.

Cramer, of course, wasn't just any television producer, but one of the most successful executives in the history of the medium. In addition to virtually inventing the miniseries, he created, originated or supervised some of the 20th century's most iconic series, including "Peyton Place," "Batman," "Mission: Impossible," "Star Trek," "The Odd Couple," "The Brady Bunch" and "Wonder Woman"; with Aaron Spelling, his partner from 1976 to 1989, he executive-produced "The Love Boat," "Dynasty" and other mega-hits.

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# DUCKER

WProfile

he dishes Hollywood and discusses his Broadway debut. **By James Reginato**



Douglas Cramer at Dogwood Farm, his Connecticut estate, flanked by Robert Gober's bronze and wax *Butterchurn* and an untitled bronze by Jonathan Borofsky.

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# DIRECTED

While there were certainly aspects of his work that Cramer enjoyed, it finally occurred to him that he was unhappy—miserable, even. For a long time, however, he was too busy to notice. “During the years with Aaron, there was never a day when I worked less than 14 hours,” he says. “And usually when I got home there were one to three hours of dailies. Weekends were spent reading scripts. Finally I realized how empty it was and that I was driving myself crazy.”

At the same time, the Kentucky-born Cramer figured out something else: He couldn’t stand California. “Over the years, I had houses in Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Malibu, Trancas, Santa Ynez and Palm Springs,” he says. “Wherever I went, I was never comfortable.”

A heart-bypass operation in the mid-Nineties was the proverbial wake-up call. And now, following a flurry of real-estate transactions and some major renovations, Cramer is just settling into his new East Coast life. He took occupancy of Dogwood Farm, his Connecticut property, two years ago. Minutes after the moving vans left, 70 guests showed up for a 70th-birthday lunch he threw in honor of Ellsworth Kelly. Mica Ertegun and the late Chessy Rayner pulled the house’s interiors together speedily, but the exterior was more complicated. Cramer went through five architects in the process of reshaping his rolling landscape and building his “art barn,” which displays his blue-chip works.

Of course, country life in this tony little corner of northwestern Connecticut is not exactly “Hee Haw.” “Steve [Sondheim] is right down the road,” Cramer says over lunch on a recent afternoon. “Arthur [Miller] is just over there.” Not much farther are Kissingers, de la Rentas, Von Furstenbergs and other posh names. While nobody in this group lives shabbily, it seems Cramer has raised the standard of living in the neighborhood. “Darling, nobody lives like this in Connecticut,” Diane Von Furstenberg informed him at his housewarming.

Not long after his move, Cramer began looking for a Broadway production with which to get involved. He owes his introduction to *The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife* to neighbor Sondheim, who saw it last spring during its Off-Broadway run at the Manhattan Theatre Club and reported it to be “the funniest play I ever saw.” Cramer soon became one of four outside producers and investors who teamed up with MTC to transfer the production to Broadway.

Thanks to the rave reviews from its earlier run, the play, a comedy by Charles Busch, enjoyed strong pre-opening buzz. Still, Broadway is notoriously risky. Cramer is closely supervising every aspect of the production, including its advertising and publicity. Working with the venerable MTC, however, he is not as hands-on as he would ordinarily be. “I did this as a learning experience,” he says. “Rather than starting a play on my own and falling on my butt, I thought I would work with pros.”

Not surprisingly, the worlds of Broadway and Hollywood turn out to be pretty similar, especially when it comes to ego. Cramer says the MTC’s managers initially wanted him and the other outside producers (Carole Shorenstein Hays, Daryl Roth and Stuart Thompson) to remain anonymous. “They wanted to promote themselves,” he explains.

“It was a little like when I joined Aaron Spelling,” Cramer recalls. “He said, ‘I have just ended the Spelling/Goldberg relationship’—Spelling’s previous partner was Leonard Goldberg—“and it’s never going to be Spelling/Somebody again.’ We had our only tiffs when I got mentioned in the press. And as I got more

## PHOTOS BY GRAHAM MACINDOE



Douglas Cramer at Dogwood Farm, his Connecticut estate, flanked by Robert Gober’s bronze and wax *Butterchurn* and an untitled bronze by Jonathan Borofsky.



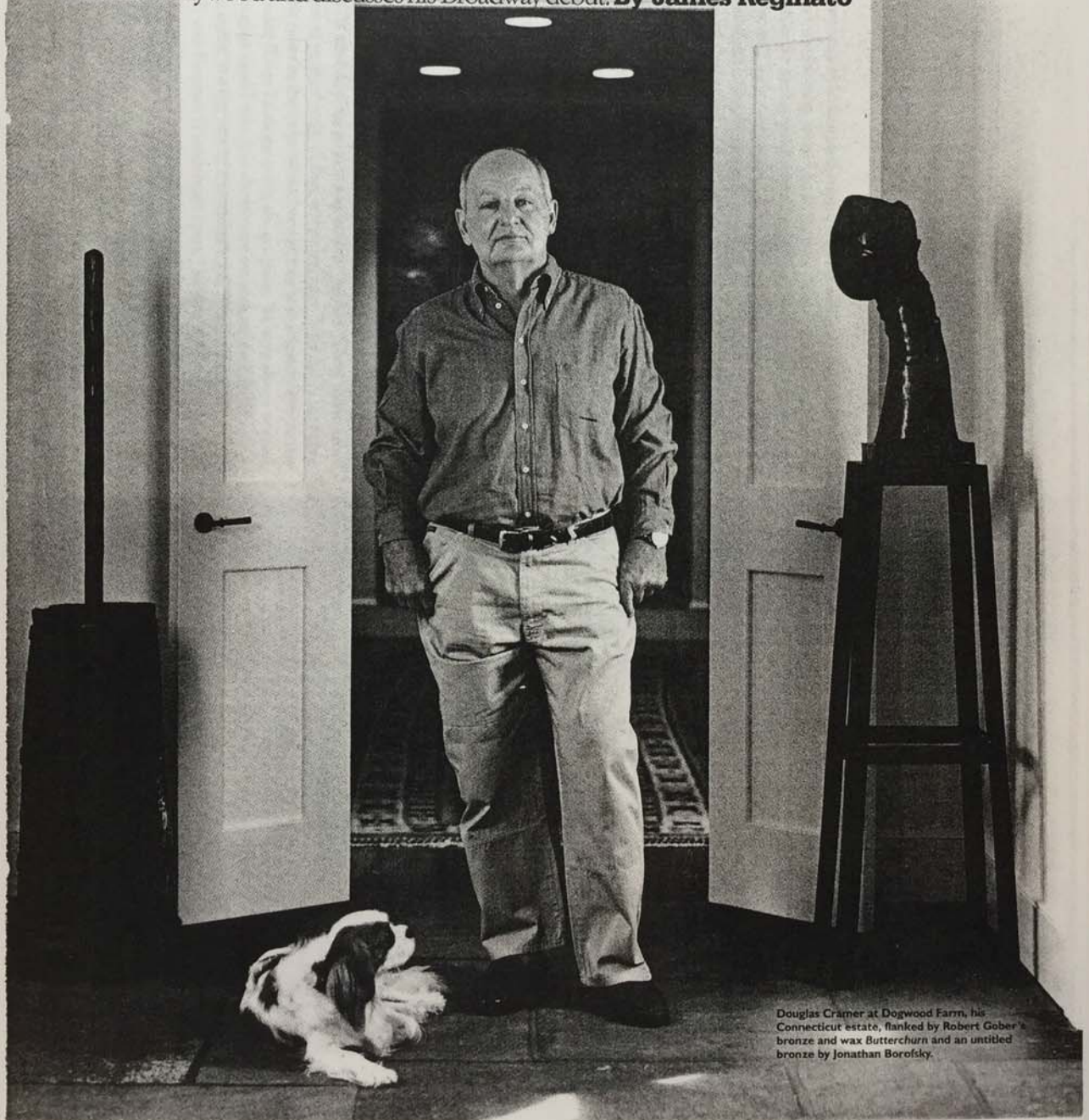
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## The Producer

prominently mentioned thanks to my art collecting, it didn't sit well in the big house."

Still, Cramer isn't complaining about his old partner. "Aaron was honest," he says. Which is not something he can say about many other people in the entertainment business. "Other than Aaron, I had to sue on everything I've ever done to get anything," he says. "Hollywood is all about hiding the money."

During their "Dynasty" glory days, cash was rolling in. "At our peak, we had eight hours of shows a week," Cramer says. "We were always on the list of the highest-paid people in California. Aaron was usually number four; I was six. We were making \$15 million a year and, thanks to the investment tax credit, paying virtually no taxes."

Still, when Spelling took his company public in 1986, with the aid of Michael Milken and Michael Ovitz, Cramer came close to suing Spelling when he felt he wasn't getting his fair share. The day was saved by fellow producer and Hollywood godfather Ray Starck. "Ray told me he was giving me a present," Cramer recalls. "He said, 'You need a lawyer Aaron will listen to. I've got a friend who is just leaving a job in Washington and going back into practice.'" The friend was Attorney General William French Smith. "I'd had 30 days of my lawyer trying to get his calls taken by Aaron," Cramer continues. "He took Bill's first call. We resolved it without going to court. It was equitable. And that's what gave me my freedom."

Today Cramer has the freedom to engage in a little Hollywood dishing. Those mud-fights between Alexis and Krystle? Linda Evans and Joan Collins weren't just acting. Their feelings for each other were similar to their characters'. Cramer himself came up with the idea of the catfights. "It was one of my greatest inspirations," he says. "There was so much tension between them in terms of press, clothes, scenes and lines. After one of the fights, things were noticeably easier on the set for weeks, because they were able to relieve the tension." But, Cramer adds, "Once Linda got going, she got going. We were always worried, because Joan was not as strong as Linda. Joan always came out of those black and blue."

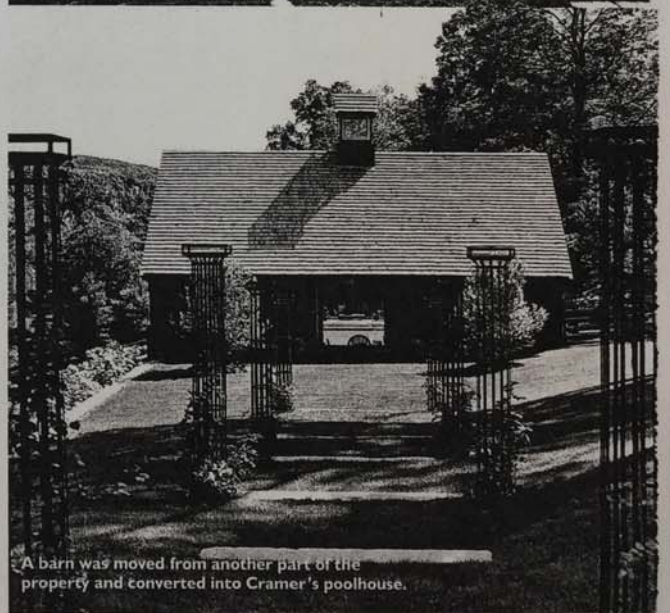
Peacekeeping, it seems, is a big part of a producer's job. "I spent most of my time keeping Bob [Reed] and Florence [Henderson] apart," he says, referring to Mr. and Mrs. Brady. According to Cramer, Henderson, along with creator Sherwood Schwartz, "suspected Bob might be G-A-Y. They had a problem with that, because he was supposed to be the father of all these kids."

"It was very hard on Bob," adds Cramer of Reed, who was gay (he died of AIDS in 1992). "He was a very sensitive actor. He lived at home most of his life with his mother."

Most of Cramer's shows, it turns out, were plagued by on-set strife. On "The Odd



A steel sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly greets visitors to Dogwood Farm. First century AD. Roman marbles below.



A barn was moved from another part of the property and converted into Cramer's poolhouse.



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## “Hollywood is all about hiding the money

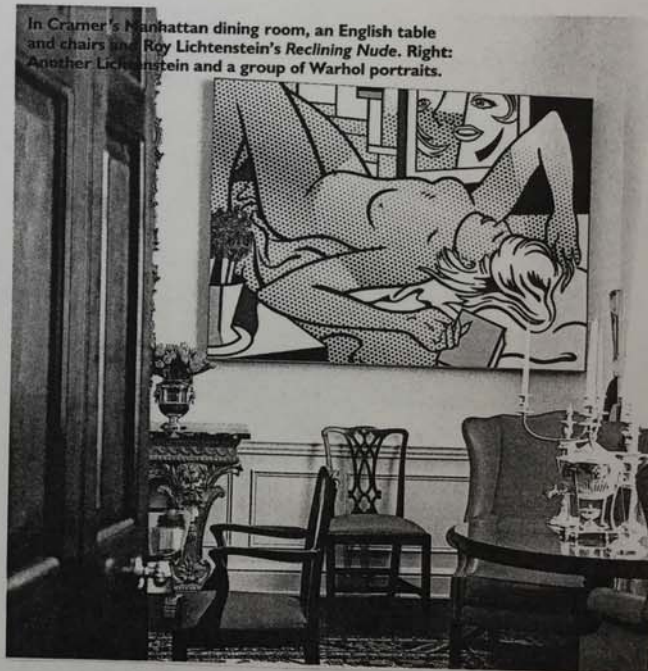
Couple,” creator Neil Simon was in foul humor. He wanted Mickey Rooney instead of Tony Randall; moreover, he’d gotten a bad deal on the show. “Jack and Tony did much better,” says Cramer. Moral of the story: “Always have a good lawyer, and know your own deal.”

In television, he observes, there is nothing more important than casting. “It’s 60 percent,” he claims. (Writing, concept and time slot account for the rest, he says.) One strong actor can make a show. “‘Dynasty’ was a bomb during its first season,” Cramer says. “Only when Joan Collins joined the cast in the second season did the show turn around.”

Cramer points out that “Dynasty” didn’t become a huge popular success until they started “camping it up.” But not everybody got the joke. “I saw people in St. Louis watching a scene and taking it deadly seriously—the same scene they were roaring over in New York.” Indeed, Spelling, the man many consider the king of camp, wasn’t *au fait* with the concept. “Once, before he did an interview, he came to me with the questions, which he’d gotten in advance,” Cramer remembers. “One used the word ‘camp.’ He asked me what it meant.”

For better or worse, Cramer’s shows had a profound impact on popular culture. “Sometimes it’s an awesome responsibility,” he says. “It can be frightening. I remember seeing little girls running around in Wonder Woman costumes and thinking, What have we done? Now I look at Ally McBeal and that poor tragic body and wonder, do she and

In Cramer’s Manhattan dining room, an English table and chairs and Roy Lichtenstein’s *Reclining Nude*. Right: Another Lichtenstein and a group of Warhol portraits.



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isn't the only place he finds it. There's also the ferociously competitive art market.

Cramer tells a story of a recent visit to dealer Larry Gagosian to see the work of the young sensation Cecily Brown: "I was shown four paintings and told I could pick one. I did, and immediately Larry nodded to an assistant who was on the phone to another collector who was literally circling the block waiting for me to leave."

Cramer also smiles knowingly as he recounts the jockeying to visit the studio of Ellsworth Kelly, who is finishing a group of new works. "About three weeks ago, Matthew Marks started taking groups of the anointed, one or two at a time, to make a choice," he says. "When the show opens, it will be sold out."

Fortunately for him, Cramer is among the anointed. But it wasn't always so. Decades ago, a dealer of Julian Schnabel's, Margo Leavin, would barely let him in the door. After meeting Schnabel at a party, however, and learning about the artist's love of vintage cars, Cramer arranged to trade him a Mercedes convertible for a plate portrait of himself and his son. Leavin wasn't amused when she later caught wind of the private deal. "She got bitchy," recalls Cramer. "I sent her a hubcap."

More recently, Cramer found himself in the doghouse with Brice Marden, whose work he had previously bought. After securing one of those highly coveted studio visits, Cramer was unprepared for what he saw. "It was the moment Brice dramatically (*continued on page 361*)

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### The Producer

(continued from page 353) changed his style to Chinese calligraphy. I hesitated." A big mistake—Marden took it as a personal affront. "It took five years before he finally consented to let me buy another work."

As for the celebrityhood so common among artists today, Cramer says, "I think it's wonderful that artists are stars, as long as it doesn't keep them from painting." But, alas, it often does. "I see Damien [Loeb] at every party. I want to say, 'Go home and paint.'"

Indeed, the young star recently delivered a picture to Cramer six months late. Loeb had promised Cramer the pick of his next batch of work following a mix-up at his last opening at Mary Boone, where Cramer bought a picture only to discover that another collector claimed he'd already bought it from Loeb's studio.

Cramer didn't make a fuss but went to Loeb's studio to select another work. Loeb paints from photographs, which he cuts up and combines into a composite image. Cramer picked one image of two groups of teenagers—one chatting in the foreground while a couple in the background engages in oral sex. When the

work was finally hung at Cramer's apartment in the city, his household staff objected. It now hangs in a discreet corner of his bedroom in the country.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Cramer says he might be an art dealer if he had to do it all over again. But dealers and producers, he observes, have a lot in common. "Dealers treat artists

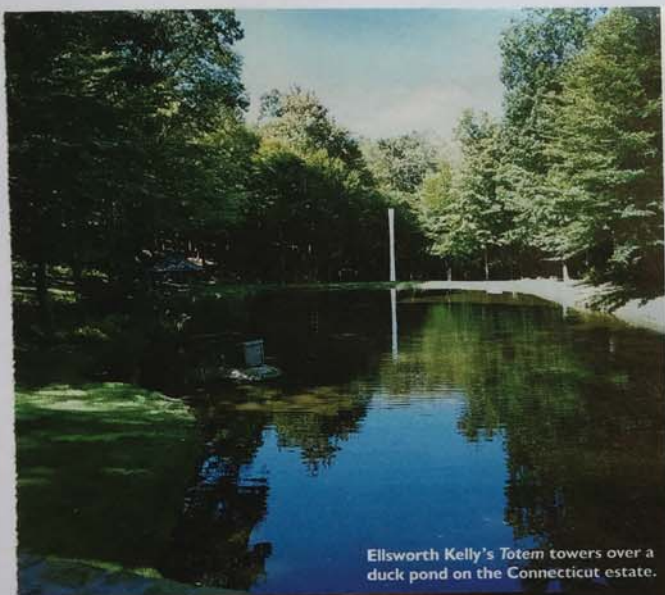
the same way producers in Hollywood do actors and directors," Cramer says. "You're both helping to create a market for them. You're setting the stage for sensitive and possibly temperamental people. You've got to be sure it looks good up there, that it's recognized and well received."

Oh, and one more thing: "You've got to make sure it sells." ●

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Ellsworth Kelly's Totem towers over a duck pond on the Connecticut estate.



Two paintings by Robert Motherwell, *Edelstein Views I* and *2*, hang in Cramer's living room, decorated by Mica Ektogun and the late Chessa Rayner.

the people on the show know the signals they are sending out?"

Would Cramer ever return to television? "I get calls from networks or production companies every few months asking me to do something," he says. "But I don't want to meet all those network kids who are under 35, think they know everything and want to tell me what to do." Cramer also attributes his lack of enthusiasm to "the sorry state of television today.

"I used to love working in television, because the producer had freedom, the way a director does in movies and a writer in the theater. Then, it was joyous. Now, it's all network dominated, with committees and countless people you've got to go through if you want to get something on the air. The best work on TV today is coming out of HBO, because they give freedom to the producers."

The networks are dinosaurs, Cramer believes. "There's something antediluvian about them. Everything else has changed, but they haven't changed the way they do business since the Sixties. I'm disappointed in ABC. I wish Michael Eisner would shake it up. I'd love to see Barry Diller, who always knows how to break barriers and do things differently, get NBC. It's going to take someone like him to make networks as important now as they used to be."

In fact, the onetime prince of television hardly turns on his set today. "I don't watch it," he says. "I find it depressing because of the rigidity of the networks' formulas. Television works when you can use bits of a formula, break it and go further."

Over the past few years, Cramer has been writing a script of his own, *Cotton Candy*, based on Aaron and Candy Spelling. "It's not really Aaron and Candy, but it's Aaron and Candy types," he explains. Should he ever have it produced, he predicts Spelling is not going to be amused. "He won't like it."

Several years ago, Cramer completed a play, the writing of which was a sort of personal exorcism. It was the story of his 10-year marriage to Hollywood gossip columnist Joyce Haber, with whom he had two children, Courtney, now 28, and Douglas III, 31. It was a difficult family situation, to put it mildly. Haber, who died in 1993, was an alcoholic, and Cramer says he raised the children mostly on his own. "Joyce didn't cope at all," he says. The two went through a rancorous divorce in 1976, and Cramer entered a happier relationship with a man, landscape architect Craig Johnson, that lasted 10 years.

On weekends, Cramer now shares his Connecticut house with Hugh Bush, a writer and director. Cramer's upcoming theater productions include a play by Bush, *Wedding Pictures*, as well as a musical, *Take Flight*, by Richard Maltby and David Shure, based on the history of aviation. So even though he has left Hollywood, his life doesn't lack for drama. But the stage

Diebenkorn, lot 15, sold to someone else for a hammer price of \$3.6 million, far above its high estimate, ratcheting up the price pressure on other works. Since

Ferdinand Protzman is a contributing editor of ARTnews and author of *Landscape: Photographs of Time and Space* (National Geographic Books, 2003).

COLLECTION LEHRMAN A

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# How Much Is Too Much

You just bid  
\$10.2 million  
for a work of art.

Will you go  
to \$10.3?  
How collectors  
decide  
when to bid  
and  
when to pass

BY FERDINAND PROTZMAN



**I**N NOVEMBER 1998, ROBERT LEHRMAN attended Sotheby's contemporary-art auction in New York planning to bid on *Sixteen Jackies*, a 1965 Warhol silk screen on canvas that had dazzled him in the presale exhibition. Lehrman was also vying for a late Diebenkorn painting, *Horizon—Ocean View*, from 1959, which was featured on the cover of the auction catalogue.

Lehrman, who is chairman of the board of trustees at the Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, prefers not to be in the room during the sale. Instead, he sits in a separate room in the auction house, following the sale on the phone with the representative who is bidding for him. As the auction proceeded, the Diebenkorn, lot 15, sold to someone else for a hammer price of \$3.6 million, far above its high estimate, ratcheting up the price pressure on other works. Since

*Ferdinand Protzman is a contributing editor of ARTnews and author of Landscape: Photographs of Time and Space (National Geographic Books, 2003).*

COLLECTION: LEHRMAN ART TRUST/2004 ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS/SARIS, NEW YORK

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Lehrman didn't get the Diebenkorn, he was free to pursue *Sixteen Jackies* and prepared for intense competition—up to a point.

"There is more money in the world than great art," Lehrman says. "So if you want a great piece of art, you need to be ready to stretch to get it. I create my own high estimate of a piece's value. I start with the auction-house high estimate, then add on a significant number—not a fixed percentage, like 10 percent more, but a number I get by considering the piece, the market, and the state of my finances. Let's call it the X price."

The Warhol, lot 44, came up. The bidding soon drove the price past Sotheby's high estimate of \$1.4 million and up to Lehrman's X price, which was \$1.6 million. "I had told my representative that if it came to that, we should consider making that stretch, meaning X plus one more bid," he says. "The trouble, of course, is you don't really know what that one more bid is. So I'm listening to the bidding, and I hear it go beyond my X price. I thought, 'Who on earth did that?' I asked my representative if we should stretch. He said, 'Well, we're there, pal.'"

Lehrman's representative had already bid his stretch price. "I wish I could say my reaction was cool or triumphant," he says, laughing. "But at that moment, I was thinking, 'Please, somebody, bid one more and get me off the hook.'" No one did. And *Sixteen Jackies* was his, for \$1.7 million.

"I learned later that the other bidder was a major collector with far deeper pockets than I have," Lehrman says. "I can't say that at the moment of triumph I was standing proud. I was reeling at the financial implications of what I'd done. I didn't even know if I could live with the picture. I was worried its power would be overwhelming. As it turned out, I love living with it, and I think the acquisition was the smartest and luckiest purchase I ever made."

Less than a week after the auction, the underbidder's agent contacted Lehrman and asked if he would "flip" the painting—turn around and resell it—for a substantial profit. Lehrman declined,

saying he was interested in the art, not monetary gain.

Lehrman's emotional roller-coaster ride through the upper reaches of the auction market is not unique. Unlike Hollywood's depictions of art auctions as sedate events in which sophisticated connoisseurs coolly match wits and wallets in pursuit of masterpieces, winning and losing with a certain grace, real auctions can be messy exercises in egotism and financial Darwinism. Determining how much is too much for a painting or sculpture often has less to do with strategy and knowledge than

who buy at auction employ a personal calculus to determine how much they are willing to pay for a work of art. Many of them set a specific price limit for a given work, a point beyond which they will not bid. Once the bidding starts, however, many of them ignore the very limits they calculated.

Richard Feigen, a prominent New York art dealer and collector, says he has often exceeded clients' limits when bidding on their behalf and does the same when collecting for himself. "When I do go over a client's limit, whether it is a museum or an individual, it is because I've made a judgment based on all the information I've processed over the years," he comments. "I know what I'm doing. I don't go crazy on something that doesn't merit the praise. My job is not to act as a robot but to use my knowledge and instincts for my client. I know how deep or shallow their pockets are."

Despite his expertise and years of experience, Feigen says he has no precise formula for deciding how much is too much—every auction is different and unpredictable.

"It often happens that you're the underbidder. You have no way of knowing in an auction where the bidding will stop," Feigen says. "I once bid \$10.2 million for the Getty on a wonderful Turner painting. The winning bid was \$10.3 million. But the fact that the next bid gets it doesn't mean anything because you don't know how far the other bidder is willing to go."

In that case, the winning bidder was Canadian billionaire Kenneth Thomson, and Feigen was operating on a \$6 million limit set by the Getty. "So I was way beyond that limit, and maybe Thomson was willing to go to \$20 million. You just don't know."

Exceeding a client's limits would seem certain to cause strife. But Feigen says that in the past 47 years, he has had only one blowup with a client—over a Matisse painting—which was resolved when Feigen took the painting himself and sold it at a profit. "I don't exceed a client's limit unless I'm prepared to take on the purchase myself," he says. "If, as with the \$71 million bid the Getty gave me on Peter Paul Rubens's



In the pursuit of Andy Warhol's *Sixteen Jackies*, 1965 (opposite), Robert Lehrman was prepared to go "X plus one more bid." The silk screen hangs in the Washington, D.C., home he shares with his wife, Aimee (above).

with big bankrolls and obsessive desire.

"Some bidders are hunters. They will never stop bidding until they have it," says Daniella Luxembourg, who recently founded an art investment fund and was formerly co-owner of the auction house Phillips, de Pury & Luxembourg. "Two things really matter: the necessity of the object for the potential buyer and the buyer's nature. Sometimes when these combine, you get very high prices. Most people have a budget, a price in their head. They ask dealers and other buyers; they do research and decide. Sometimes people exceed their budget because of the feverishness of the bidding. If you go through top prices, usually huge bidding wars happen."

Almost all collectors and art dealers



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Man Ray's *Observatory Time—The Lovers*, 1934 (above), sparked a titanic contest between Stavros Niarchos (left) and Dominique de Menil (below). The Greek shipping magnate won.



*Massacre of the Innocents*, I couldn't meet the commitment myself, I stop bidding at my limit." The Rubens sold for \$76.7 million, again to Thomson.

**A**UCTION EXPERTS AGREE THAT IF you truly want a great painting, print, or sculpture, you have to be prepared to pay whatever it takes. Walter Hopps, curator of 20th-century art at the Menil Collection and adjunct senior curator of 20th-century art at the Guggenheim Museum, attended many auctions over the years with the late Dominique de Menil and says she was always very concerned about what market value great works of art carried.

"She said, 'The price of a really great work of art is *always* a little more than you want to pay,'" Hopps recalls. "'So if you're going to get it, you have to pay it.'"

But that dictum didn't always work in

auctions. Hopps remembers sitting with de Menil at a sale in New York, at which she bid on Man Ray's 1934 *Observatory Time—The Lovers*, described by Hopps as arguably the artist's greatest painting. The bidding went well past the high estimate. De Menil kept bidding but finally dropped out. They later learned she was competing against Stavros Niarchos, the billionaire shipping magnate, who got the painting. "He had far greater financial resources," Hopps says. "There was no way she was ever going to get that picture away from him."

Hopps says many collectors and dealers follow a strategy he describes as "bid to get. That means just bid until you get the artwork. If you really want a painting, that is what you have to do. Other people at the auction, however, may be following the same strategy."

Douglas Cramer, a prominent collec-

tor, film and television producer, and trustee of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, used to get caught up in the emotion of the auction when he first began acquiring art. He would often exceed self-imposed bidding limits that he'd based on extensive research on the art, artist, and market. Yet, he would still come away from auctions kicking himself for not bidding more for a piece he didn't get.

Now Cramer sets a specific price level and sticks to it. He frequently goes to auctions intending to buy a particular piece, only to come away with something else because, he explains, "I'll drop out if a work gets too high. But being there, I often find some things going so low I can't resist."

Looking for an edge at auction, collectors and dealers gather all the information they can about an artwork prior to the bidding. Serious collectors and dealers say it is critically important to see a work before bidding on it. Auction houses, such as Christie's or Sotheby's, put the artworks on display at presale exhibitions and in catalogues, and their in-house experts research the history and provenance of the items being sold and come up with high and low estimates.

The auction houses claim the estimates are intended to help participants prepare for the bidding. But expert opinion about the credibility of those estimates varies widely. "The estimates are a tease. Auction houses are trying to pick a number that attracts bidding but shows respect for the work of art," says Richard Polsky, an art dealer and an author based in San Francisco. "In general, the estimates have become more realistic in recent years. Still, sometimes they get a crazy consignee who insists on a price that has almost no chance, and sometimes, for whatever reasons, the auction house goes along. More often than not, that doesn't work out."

Other dealers are more skeptical. One senior New York dealer, who requested anonymity, said he finds some of the presale estimates ridiculous. "Things end up selling for three, four, or five times the high estimate," he says. "You have to remember that an auction house is a business, and its sales catalogue isn't the Bible."

When auction houses misjudge the market's appetite for a piece, it can directly affect the outcome of a sale. "When prices go really through the

CLOCKWISE: ©2004 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/MAN RAY TRUST/ADAPTELIMAGE-PARIS, CHERITO GLI/COURTESY MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON, TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

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roof, it's because the auction house made a mistake with the pricing. They may have estimated too low," says Gerard Goodrow, artistic director of Art Cologne and former director of contemporary art at Christie's in London.

Auction houses also set, in agreement with the seller, a secret "reserve price" for the items they put on the block. If the bidding doesn't reach that price, the item will not be sold. Orley Ashenfelter, a professor of economics at Princeton University, has done several studies of art auctions over the years. He says research shows the reserve price is generally about 70 to 80 percent of the auction house's low estimate.

Auction experts say that while price considerations are key, sales are also driven by psychological and social factors. Some collectors concoct elaborate bidding strategies meant to deceive competitors during the auction. Dealers say the late Norton Simon, for example, would sometimes stand up during the bidding on a piece he wanted and make a show of walking out of the auction room.

"That was the signal that his representative should keep bidding until he acquired the piece," a New York dealer said. "Norton thought it would fool people into thinking he was dropping out and that this would keep the price



Film and television producer Douglas Cramer sits in his New York apartment in front of Roy Lichtenstein's *Nude with Abstract Painting*, 1994. Andrew Lord's *2 Coffee Pots with Tray*, 1984, rests atop the nearby table.

down. I don't know that it ever did. But it added a little drama."

Douglas Cramer recalls being at an auction in New York when one of Simon's ploys backfired. Simon had left such confusing directions that the auctioneer wasn't sure what he was supposed to do or what was happen-

ing. "Norton, in the room, was furious, not knowing if his bid was getting the work or losing it," Cramer says.

Ultimately, however, "strategy doesn't really matter much," says dealer and author Jacob Baal-Teshuva. "Once the bidding begins, a collector is a collector, and he wants what he wants. It's a competition. People who have money get carried away, especially if they want something very much."

Some collectors enjoy publicly displaying their wealth, taste, and business acumen and can afford, on occasion, to let their egos do the bidding. Leslie Waddington, a prominent dealer and director of Waddington Galleries in London, says there are actually two art markets. One is the everyday market, which takes place in galleries around the world. The other takes place in auction rooms. Waddington calls it "the ego market. People will pay far more there than to a dealer," he says. "They're often just showing off."

But the competitive rush of an auction can be hard to resist, even for the most experienced players. "The biggest mistake a dealer or a buyer can make is to have an ego ride and be seen bidding," Waddington says. "I know because I used to do it, stupid bastard that I was." ■

TOP: GLEN FONG; BOTTOM LEFT: THE THOMSON COLLECTION/ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO; BOTTOM RIGHT: ©MIKE CASSE/REUTERS/CORBIS



Canadian billionaire Kenneth Thomson (above) outspent the J. Paul Getty Museum for Peter Paul Rubens's *Massacre of the Innocents*, ca. 1611-12, (left). The winning bid was \$76.7 million.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1997

## INSIDE ART

Carol Vogel



Museum of Modern Art

A large detail from Eric Fischl's "Portrait of a Dog," given to the Museum of Modern Art.

### A Collection Disperses

Douglas S. Cramer, the television producer famous for "The Love Boat" and "Dynasty," is an active collector, as well as the head of the painting and sculpture acquisitions committee at the Museum of Modern Art.

He recently sold his Santa Ynez Valley ranch in California, where the Douglas S. Cramer Foundation operated a 14,000-square-foot gallery and sculpture pavilion. His foundation will still help underwrite exhibitions, but Mr. Cramer is giving much of its collection to museums, including the Tate Gallery in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and, of course, the Modern.

As he is particularly active at the Modern, the museum got first pick. Among the art it was given are works by Joel Shapiro, Ellsworth Kelly, Jim Dine and Eric Fischl.

Other museums were able to fill some gaps, too: the National Gallery received its first Julian Schnabel.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1999

## INSIDE ART

Carol Vogel

Old Hand,  
Young Plan

Just because Philip Johnson turns 93 in July doesn't mean he's stopped dancing. Or designing. On the drawing board in his Manhattan office are designs for everything from skyscrapers to churches and restaurants. He's also been spotted skulking around the P.S. 1 Center for Contemporary Art in Long Island City, where he has designed a multi-tiered disk jockey booth and dance pavilion for the museum's central courtyard.

When the temporary structure opens on June 20, it will be the first project P.S. 1 and the Museum of Modern Art have produced together since announcing their intention to merge. The pavilion has been designed for P.S. 1's second annual outdoor Warm Up, a series of music and dancing from 4 to 9 P.M. every Saturday through the summer. It will stay up through Sept. 11.

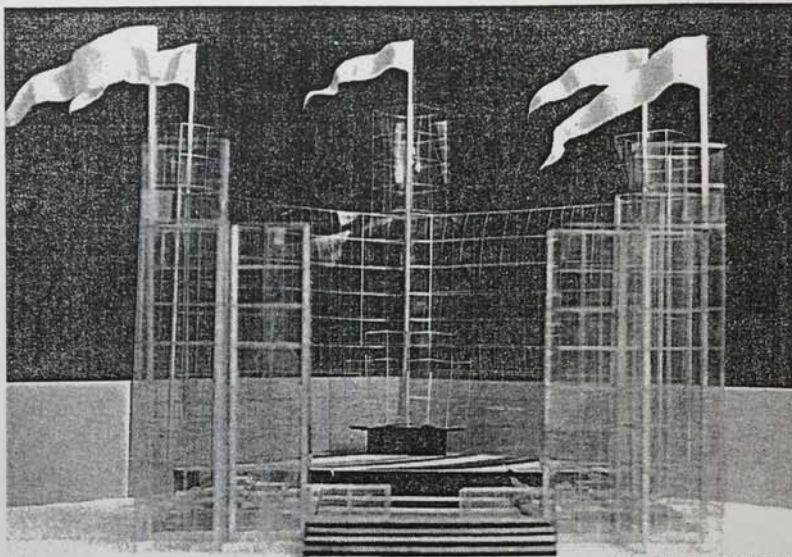
"I never went to Studio 54," Mr. Johnson said wistfully. "This is a disco for the 21st century. It's a medieval amphitheater with a science-fiction feeling."

Officials at both the Modern and P.S. 1 said the choice of Mr. Johnson as the architect was a natural. Not only was he the founder of the Modern's architecture department but he is also a trustee at the Modern.

"We felt that Philip was a symbol of the early years of the Modern and a continuing force in architecture, the perfect person for our first collaborative effort," said Alanna Heiss, director of P.S. 1. "This is all about fantasy, summer and youth."

But because he did not consider himself "a man of the theater," Mr. Johnson said, he teamed up with Robert Isabell, a director of special events, who has coordinated the production of the pavilion. Donald and Taffy Kaufman, the Manhattan-based color specialists, were also asked to join the team. They created an intricate color palette for the dance floor.

The pavilion has a tower for the disk jockey that is suspended over the stage. It is a unified structure combining a dance floor and amphitheater-style steps for sitting or



P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center

A model of the P.S. 1 pavilion shows the D.J.'s booth in the center over the dance floor.

standing.

Its four towers, constructed of galvanized steel and white construction mesh, are as high as 48 feet and topped with silk flags.

Mr. and Mrs. Kaufman are using six highly contrasting colors — chartreuse, chocolate, ultramarine, deep violet, acid green and emerald green — in a pattern of four-foot squares, set diagonally across the dance floor.

The entire structure is a diamond shape, reflecting the shape of P.S. 1's courtyard. The overall effect, Mr. Johnson said, is that of a giant zig-zag.

"For our youngest high-energy audience we felt it would only be fitting for Philip to open the pavilion," Ms. Heiss said. "He's going to be the first guest D.J."

## Helping the Tate

Fifteen years ago a group of American art patrons decided to start the American Fund for the Tate Gallery. Its mission is to insure that American artists are well represented at the Tate Gallery in London.

This week the Tate announced that the fund had helped buy David Smith's "Wagon II" (1964) for \$5.1 million. The sculpture was sold to the Tate by Candida and Rebecca Smith, the artist's daughters.

"Wagon II" has been on loan to the museum since 1996 and joins Smith's "Cubi XIX," acquired by the Tate in

1964. "This is one of the most important works Smith ever made," said Nicholas Serota, the Tate's director.

The American Fund for the Tate Gallery is made up of collectors, including Donald Bryant of St. Louis; Douglas S. Cramer, a television producer and trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, and John and Frances Bowes of San Francisco.

Over the years, the fund has used its endowment to donate works by Philip Guston, Louise Bourgeois, Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd to the Tate.

"They want to see American art on this side of the Atlantic," Mr. Serota said. "Wagon II" is on view as part of the museum's "New Displays, 1999" exhibition.

Smith made the sculpture in 1964, a year before his death, while he was living at Bolton Landing in the Adirondacks. It incorporates the techniques he used throughout his career, including forging, welding, fabricating and the incorporation of found objects.

"Wagon II" rests on four wheels and is made of black painted steel. In the middle is an elongated, slightly curved figure.

The gift is a welcome addition to the museum's growing collection of 20th-century art, much of which will eventually be displayed in its new building, the Tate Gallery of Modern Art, in Bankside. It is scheduled to open in May 2000.