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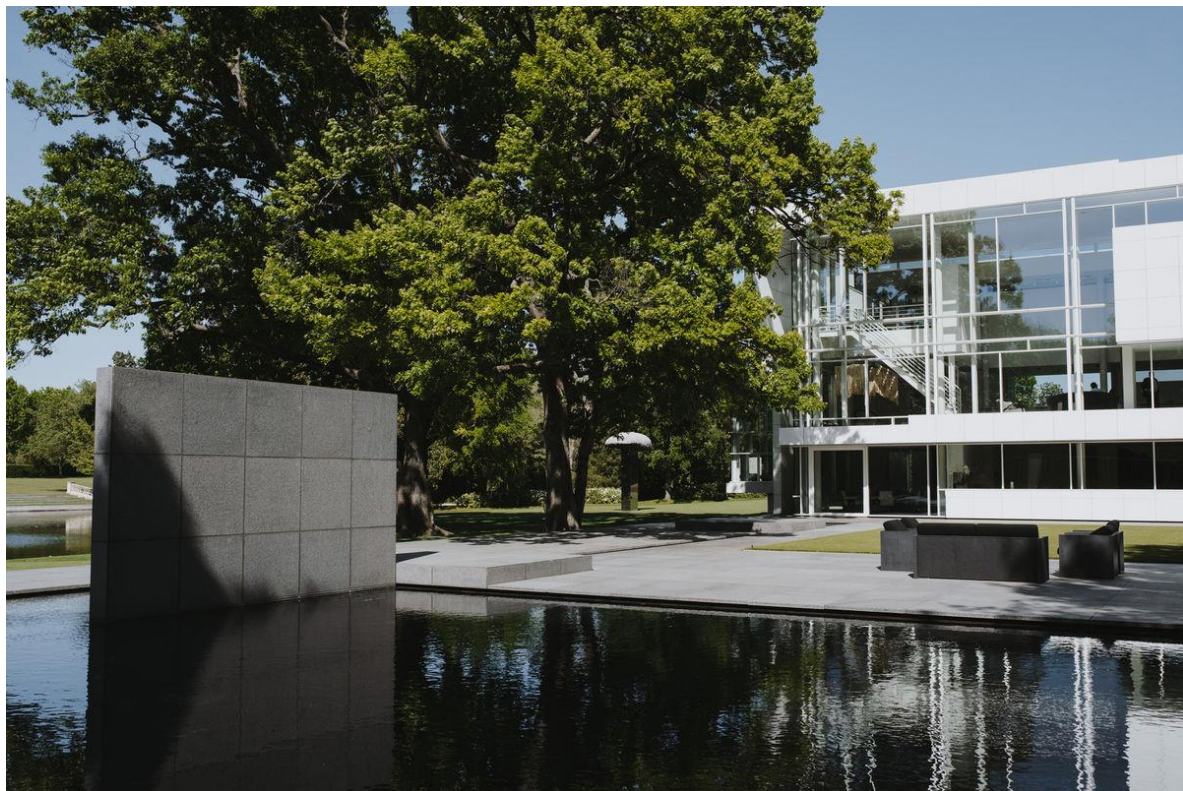
The Collector Who Helped Build Dallas's Texas-Sized Art Scene

By Nate Freeman

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A white wall interrupts the line of stately oversized McMansions on Preston Road in Dallas, behind which lies a home that looks like it was airdropped in from outer space: a box-like, ultramodern Richard Meier-designed home that belongs to Howard Rachofsky and his wife, Cindy, the collectors who have helped more than most to elevate this oil and gas kingdom to a hotbed of contemporary art.

Over the last four decades, Rachofsky has built one of the world's most mind-bogglingly extensive collections—a trove of roughly 800 works spanning multiple movements that has landed him and Cindy on the *ARTnews* top collectors list 14 years in a row. But his impact is most deeply felt in Dallas, where the cultural landscape has been palpably shifted by just how badly he wants people to see his collection.



View of The Rachofsky House, the Dallas, Texas home and contemporary art collection of Cindy and Howard Rachofsky. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

While Dallas art patrons have long hid their treasures inside their stately mansions, Rachofsky did the opposite, building a translucent, glass-walled home on Preston Road to which he invited school groups and adults alike to see his collection, and later establishing The Warehouse, which opened in 2012 (yes, in a warehouse). This openness and enthusiasm for education, especially around contemporary art, has deeply influenced the city's collecting corps and laid the foundation for the Dallas Art Fair—which opened its 10th edition to the public on Friday—to thrive.

“The Warehouse is open all the time, for appointments for people to come by to experience the art,” said John Sughrue, a co-founder of the Dallas Art Fair. “[Rachofsky] didn't want to have children grow up in Dallas and have to go out of town to see great contemporary art, like he had to do. He's a champion, and he's a community leader.”

Like many Texans, Rachofsky has deep roots in the state, and has remained loyal to it. His grandfather lived in Dallas and worked as a blacksmith; his father had a pawn shop on Elm Street. When he was young, Rachofsky got a taste for business with a soda-selling operation in University Park, home to Southern Methodist University. He attended Wharton, the famed business school at the University of Pennsylvania, but returned to his home state to get a law degree at the University of Texas at Austin in 1970.



Works by Kazuo Shiraga, Kazunori Hamana, Sadamasa Motonaga, and Shozo Shimamoto are featured in the Rachofsky home. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

While working for a law firm, he found himself toying around with the stock market to the extent that he quit the firm and started his own hedge fund. By the 1980s, he had become one of the most successful traders on Wall Street—despite working out of an office in Dallas—and by the early 1990s, he was flush enough to be able to ask the architect Richard Meier to build him a gigantic one-bedroom bachelor pad, after admiring Meier’s undulating all-white High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

His bachelordom was cut short after meeting Cindy, so he turned the would-be bachelor pad into a private museum and event space, open to the public upon appointment, and moved with Cindy to another house a mile away. When they opened The Warehouse, the 18,000 square feet of exhibition space became the main place to display their collection, so they turned the Meier house back into their primary residence, joined by a tiny little white dog named Sophie.

Despite no longer being open to the public, it’s still a great place to see art, starting from the lawn, where an intricate land art work is installed on the grass: Robert Irwin’s only private commission, *Tilted Planes* (1999). A remarkable work that ruptures the landscape with the distinctively rust-colored Corten steel and soil raised or lowered in sloping increments, it offers

the viewer different perspectives depending on where she stands. An untitled sculpture of a boy with a drum by Maurizio Cattelan hovers on the edge of the roof. And down the lawn sits another mind-altering sculptural installation, Dan Graham's *Argonne Pavilion II* (1998), its mirrored curled panels revealing the duck-studded pond beyond it, and further on, a neighboring Georgian home that would not look out of place on a classic college campus.

"It's the battle of the architects!" Rachofsky said. "Robert A.M. Stern versus Richard Meier!"



View of Nobuo Sekine, *Phase—Mother Earth*, 1968/2012, at The Rachofsky House. © Nobuo Sekine. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

Rachofsky was in Texas-casual mode, in a pressed white shirt and sockless in grey loafers, his grey mane combed back and complemented by grey-white stubble. As he walked up the stairs, passing athletic, vigorous works Japanese Gutai artists, he commented offhand that "this is the most Gutai work you'll see in America."

At a table upstairs, with a perfect view of Irwin's land intervention through the glass panes, Rachofsky apologized for only having an hour to spare ahead of the opening of the 10th edition of the Dallas Art Fair, which has grown to become an international destination for top-tier galleries.

“You could make a case that almost parallel to the evolution of the art fair, from a fairly modest beginning to sort of a full fledged event, was the interest in post-war and contemporary art in this community,” Rachofsky said.

When he started collecting in the 1980s, the city’s major arts patrons had amassed tranches of post-war treasures, but didn’t always acquire work by living artists, and the public never got a look at the work.



Portrait of Howard Rachofsky in his Dallas home. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

Rachofsky took another tack. He went from buying brand-name artist prints—Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Edgar Degas—through a local dealer to liaising with contemporary galleries in New York, and started buying with the intention of eventually putting the work on display at the house that was being built for him by Meier. And when the house was finished, he wanted to start collecting more extensively, with more of a curatorial eye. His friend Andrea Schwan, who works in public relations in New York, recommended that he talk to Allan Schwartzman.

At the time, Schwartzman was a freelance critic for *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times*, and he had never advised a private collector on his purchases before. After working with Rachofsky, Schwartzman went on to become one of the world's most sought-out art advisors, eventually taking the helm of the collection belonging to Brazilian mining billionaire Bernardo Paz, who named him director of Instituto Inhotim, his private museum in the jungle. Schwartzman later founded Art Agency, Partners, with the auction veteran Amy Cappellazzo, which was purchased by Sotheby's in 2016 for \$85 million. Schwartzman took the Meier house as a "logical beginning point" for the collection, leading Rachofsky to start buying American Minimalists. From there, Schwartzman pushed Rachofsky to venture into related movements that most American collectors—and certainly no other collectors in Dallas—had yet to discover, such as Gutai and Arte Povera.



Interior view of The Rachofsky House, featuring Seung-Taek Lee, *Paper Tree*, 1970s. Courtesy of the artist; Gallery Hyundai, Seoul; and Lévy Gorvy, New York. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

“There were not a lot of Americans chasing this material” in the 1990s, Rachofsky said. “The Europeans had had it for for decades, so they didn’t need to buy Fontana and Manzoni and these things—but *we* did.”

The collection of 800 works reflects Rachofsky's catholic tastes—there is work by post-war Japanese artists, '80s art stars like Julian Schnabel, Italians from the Arte Povera school, German Expressionists, and Minimalist masters such as Irwin and Donald Judd. The couple will offload certain works to buy others—in 2008, they consigned Jeff Koons's *Balloon Flower (Magenta)* (1995–99) to Christie's (where it sold for \$25.8 million) specifically to acquire a suite of four paintings by Sigmar Polke.

While he was building the collection, he decided to introduce contemporary art to the world of Dallas society balls. In 1999, after just six weeks of planning, Rachofsky invited a few hundred of the town's upper-upper-crust to the Richard Meier house for a fundraiser he called Two by Two, which would benefit the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) and amFAR, a foundation for AIDS research. The crux of the benefit was a charity auction, live and silent, in which the big-haired debutantes in flowing gowns would plunk down a few grand on a work of art that they didn't totally understand.



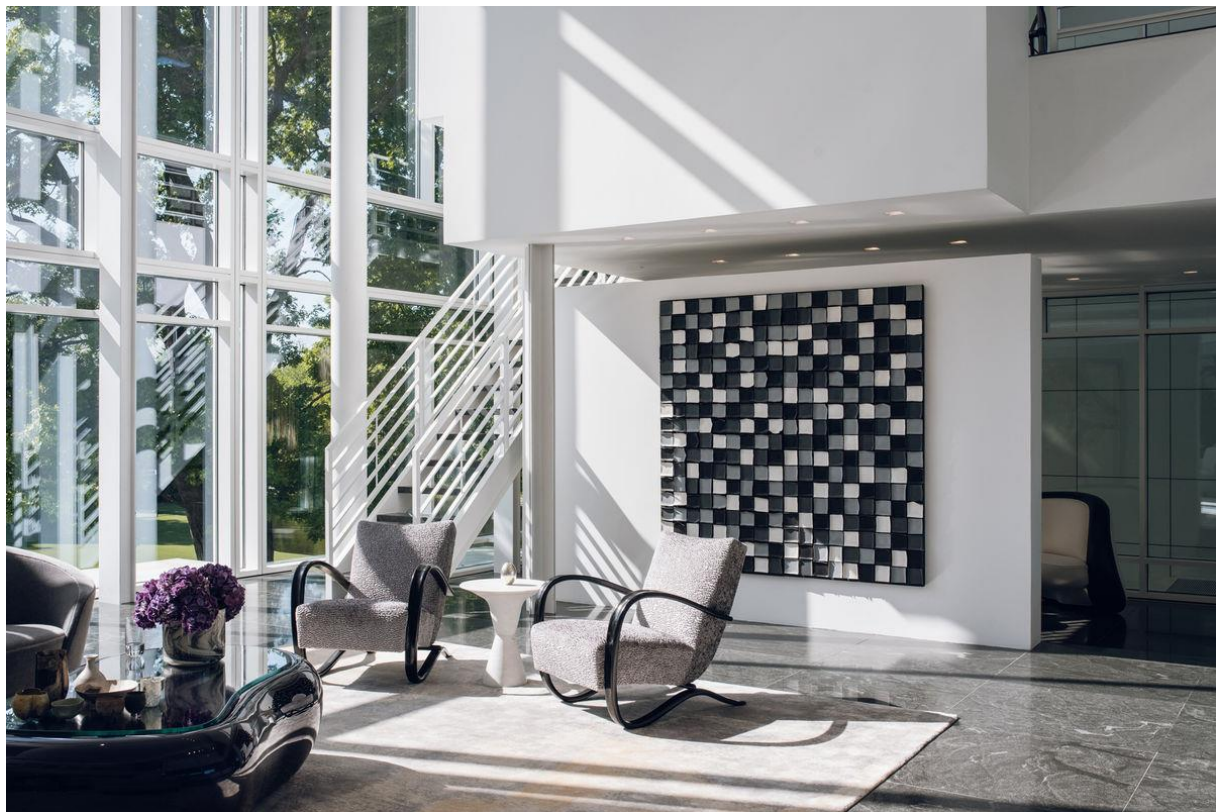
View of The Rachofsky House, Dallas, Texas. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

“They had been exposed, but they weren't comfortable with it,” Rachofsky said. He hoped the domestic environment and fleshed-out wall labels would assuage some of that anxiety. “My goal was to not only sell something and raise some money, but be informative. It could be like...an intellectual safe house.”

The first charity auction at Two by Two raised \$100,000, indicating some appetite for contemporary art among Dallas collectors. Rachofsky decided to hold it again the next year, and in the two decades since, it's become an essential punch on the Dallas society dance card, raising \$75 million for amFAR and the DMA. It can also be credited with turning some deep-pocketed Dallas residents into full-fledged patrons of contemporary art.

"This gave them a chance to be philanthropic," Rachofsky said, "and a few people developed into real collectors over time, collectors on a real higher level."

Over the next few years, Rachofsky decided to step away from his hedge fund to concentrate full-time on developing his collection, and running the annual Two by Two gala. Then, in 2008, Sughrue, the Dallas Art Fair founder, started talking with local art consultant Chris Byrne about opening an art fair in one of Sughrue's properties, Fashion Industry Gallery, a large space in the city's arts district. Naturally, the duo approached Rachofsky, as he was one of the city's biggest arts patrons, to see what he thought of the idea. He was skeptical.



Interior view of The Rachofsky House, featuring Motonao Takasaki, *Work*, 1964. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

"He counseled caution," Sughrue said. "He recognized that a fair, 10 years ago in Dallas—the question was, 'Is the city ready for it?' And because of that conversation, we took another year to launch the fair."

They went back to the drawing board and recruited the right mix of local galleries and shops from out of town, including New York's Andrew Edlin Gallery and San Francisco's Anthony Meier Fine Arts. It was enough of a success to come back the following year, when galleries like London's Timothy Taylor and Stuart Shave/Modern Art came on board. And, as Rachofsky explained, the fair's first 10 years dovetailed with the rise of art fairs as a must-attend art market phenomenon for collectors, as well as dealers. The first edition in 2009 had 30 participating galleries, and in 2018, it had 90.

"The fair is here to stay," Rachofsky said. "The bigger question is, is the space big enough? It's like, you plant a seed, and now it's a little tree and that tree is continue to grow and continue to have fruit."



View of Nobuo Sekine, *Phase of Nothingness*, 1970/2011, at The Rachofsky House. © Nobuo Sekine.
Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.



View of The Rachofsky House. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

The fair is now firmly entrenched in the Dallas community, and Two by Two is a well-oiled machine that's become one of the biggest amFAR fundraisers on earth. But Rachofsky's more palpable influence might be the generation of artists, dealers, and collectors who grew up in Dallas, and were first exposed to contemporary art through his collection—and the generous spirit that drove him to open it up to the community.

Olivia Smith is a Dallas-bred director at New York gallery Magenta Plains, which is showing at the fair for the first time. She said the Rachofsky collection played a huge role in her introduction to the art world, when she served as a docent during education tours and parties in their home. “That experience made a huge impact on me—providing insight into the international art scene and the crucial role of art patronage,” she said.

And now, as he gets older, Rachofsky is thinking more about how the collection will be viewed by future generations.



View of Sadamasa Motonaga, *Work*, 1963, at The Rachofsky House. Photo by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.

Its final fate has already been arranged. In 2005, along with two other Dallas collection couples—Rusty and Deedie Rose and Robert and Marguerite Hoffman—the Rachofskys pledged their entire collection to the Dallas Museum of Art. At the time, the gift had an estimated value of more than \$300 million, though with additional purchases to the collection and the increase in market value for the artists in it, it could be worth much more a decade later. Upon receiving these deep and thoughtful assembled troves of masterpieces, which Rachofsky is adding at a relentless clip, the DMA will easily have one of the country's most complete contemporary holdings.

Upon news of the announcement, Jack Lane, who was the director of the DMA at the time, told the *New York Times*, "It changes the future of this museum and makes it one of the most important centers for contemporary art in North America."

But Rachofsky realizes that the true judgement of his worth as a collector will come from those who see it at the DMA.

“That will be for the future to decide—if I’ve been a curator, and I’ve done a good job,” he said. “Maybe posterity will decide, ‘Oh, he had a great collection once, but he turned it into crap’—I hope that’s not the case. I hope they say, ‘Wow, what a great eye.’”

Nate Freeman is Artsy’s Senior Reporter.

Header image: Portrait of Howard Rachofsky by Valerie Chiang for Artsy.