

Mutual Appreciation

*A Florida Collector Displays His Passion for 20th-Century
Pennsylvania Impressionists in a Tropical Setting*

By Gladys Montgomery
Photography by Jerry Rabinowitz

Some thirty years ago, when a south Florida CEO with north-eastern roots set out to establish his art collection, he determined to choose from the heart, selecting works he loves—distinctive twentieth-century American impressionist, realist, and modernist paintings and sculpture. His primary focus is on the group of artists known as the Pennsylvania Impressionists or the New Hope School, arguably the largest school of American Impressionism.

“Although I have acquired the work of many of the important American impressionist and modernist painters, such as George Bellows and Birger Sandzen, I have a passion for collecting artists of the New Hope School,” says the collector. “These artists are truly a national group. They are no longer considered a regional group. During the prime of their careers, many of these artists were considered among the nation’s elite. They were winning medals at significant exhibitions and were known for the quality of their work.”

Like contented snowbirds, the northeastern paintings appear right at home in his family’s

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Double verandas leading from the living room and master bedroom of this 2004 house express the Mediterranean Revival style made popular in Florida in the 1920s by architects August Geiger and Addison Mizner. Features include classical arches and Corinthian columns, a tile roof, louvered shutters, and wrought-iron railings.

A bronze female nude by Harry Rosin (1897–1973), the most famous sculptor of the New Hope art colony.







The great room's "modernist wall" (left to right, top row) shows *Red Center*, circa 1941, by Lloyd Ney (1863–1964); *Blue Lady*, circa 1930, by Charles Frederick Ramsey (1875–1951); *Canal in New Hope*, circa 1932, by R.A.D. Miller (1905–1966); *Checkered Abstract*, circa 1938, by Charles Frederick Ramsey; and *In Flight* by Lewis Stone (1902–1984). Below them are (left, top), *Pink Lady*, circa 1939, by Josef Zenk (1904–2000); (left, bottom) *Three Graces*, circa 1931, by Charles Evans (1997–1992) and *New Hope Mills*, circa 1932, by R.A.D. Miller. At right are *Casual Smoke* by Joseph Meyerhans (1890–1980) and *The Wrench* by Lewis Stone. The "speedboat" is a 1940s radio.

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The living room's array of decorative arts includes an early-twentieth-century fire screen, Chinese ceramics on the mantel and Chinese bronze-inlaid pewter vases on the hearth, a Victorian Pietra Dora table in front of the hearth, and a circa-1910 bronze sculpture of a running horse. Above the mantel, in a Max Kuehne (1880–1968) frame, is *Nude with Parrot*. Painted circa 1915 by George Bellows (1882–1925), its provenance includes ownership by Gertude Vanderbilt Whitney.

lifestyle

sun-filled Mediterranean Revival style home, which though built in 2004, appears to date from the 1920s, thanks to its architectural vocabulary drawn from classical Greece and Rome and Moorish-influenced Spain. "This home provides many great places to showcase art, because of its high ceilings, wide open spaces, ample wall space, and layout," notes the collector. To cruise through its generously proportioned rooms, wide hallways, and gra-

cious staircase, is to enjoy a spatial flow with visual delights at every turn. Its architectural detailing is composed of Corinthian columns, niches, and arches, with wrought-iron railings, crystal chandeliers and expansive windows that frame ocean vistas. But it is the fine and decorative art and the collector's juxtaposition of pieces that most captivate the eye.

"My tastes are eclectic in that I like the Art Deco and the



THIS PAGE, TOP:

Man with Shovel, circa 1933, by John Grabach (1895–1946), the most important of the early twentieth century Newark painters, combines with new furnishings that have an Art Deco sensibility, including the lamp, which is one of a pair, and the console, which displays two French Art Deco pieces and a bust by Boris Lovet-Lorski (1899–1973).

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At the base of the formal staircase, a sculpture by Boris Lovet-Lorski (1899–1973) is positioned next to a Louis XV ormolu-decorated French kingswood cabinet, which displays George Jensen silver and Stueben and Emile Galle glass. A period Newcomb-Macklin frame contains the 50- by 60-inch oil painting, *Down in Pennsylvania*, painted in 1935 by Daniel Garber (1880–1958).

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In a guest room with reproduction period furnishings, noteworthy pieces include (from left) *Still Life with Iris* by R.A.D. Miller, a nineteenth-century French ormolu-embellished vase; a circa-1925 Provincetown view, *Overlooking the Harbor*, by Nancy Mabin Ferguson (1872–1967); and *Underwater Garden*, a circa-1920 three-panel screen (reflected in mirror) by Eleanor Abrams (1885–1967). Both Ferguson and Abrams were members of the Philadelphia Ten.



The mix of periods and styles in this hallway includes a chair of hand-wrought metal and hammered copper by New Hope art colony painter and artisan Morgan Colt (1876–1976) and a wrought iron and tile Arts and Crafts lamp table by the master blacksmith Samuel Yellin (1885–1940). Above them hangs *Wild Horse Creek*, by Birger Sandzén (1871–1954), in a period Newcomb-Maclin frame. At right is a circa 1908 view of Boulogne harbor, *In Port*, by Edward Redfield (1869–1965), in a period carved, gilded frame. It hangs above a reproduction eighteenth-century English giltwood console table displaying two sixteenth-century European marble sculptures.





Above the billiard table in the club room hangs *Brooklyn Bridge at Night*, circa 1909, by Edward Redfield (1869–1965). Below it a coconut husk table displays sculptures by Harry Rosin (1897–1973) and Boris Lovet-Lorski (1899–1973).



The living room's eclectic mélange of furnishings and art includes a nineteenth-century inlaid burled walnut table displaying a Japanese cloisonné vase and two giltwood wildlife sculptures; *Buckingham Valley* by George Sotter (1879–1953) hanging above a late-seventeenth-century English carved and gilded cabinet with iron feet; a Pairpoint lamp with a reverse painted shade standing below *Crowds Overlooking the Harbor, Gloucester*, circa 1910, by Martha Walter (1875–1976); *In the Park*, painted circa 1915 by Nancy Maybin Ferguson (1872–1967); Italian carved wooden monkeys; a Handel lamp; and *Shinecock Hills*, circa 1915, by Morgan Colt (1876–1926) above *Lock Keepers House*, circa 1925, by Clarence Johnson (1894–1981).

modern periods, as well as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European and Asian pieces. I believe these different periods complement each other,” the collector says.

The diverse mix gives the interiors a lively *au courant* sensibility, while evoking this part of Florida’s heyday in the early twentieth century, when it first became a playground of the elegant and well-to-do. Each room in the house has a distinct personality; the casual great room, club room,



The club room’s Art Deco furniture includes new pieces, such as a table made of coconut husks and the barrel chairs, along with vintage ones, such as the black chairs. The yacht, circa 1910, is a nine-foot-long builder’s model of *Drottning Victoria* ocean liner. On the wall are (left to right) *A Perkiomen Mill*, circa 1930, by the prolific Walter Baum (1884–1956), *Brooklyn Bridge at Night*, circa 1909, by Edward Redfield (1869–1965), and *Broomal*, circa 1926, by Antonio Martino (1902–1988).



At the end of a hallway, *Snow and Ice*, by Fred Wagner (1861–1940), which won the Fellowship Prize at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1914, hangs above an Anglo-Indian punched-metal-on-wood chair. At left, *Boothbay*, circa 1925, by Henry Snell (1858–1943), surmounts a Louis XV commode displaying a pair of silver gilt English Georgian candlesticks and a Chinese ceramic bowl in oxblood glaze. At right, a nineteenth-century Adamesque demilune table displays a lidded Wedgwood jar; over it hangs *Woodland Mansions* by Arthur Meltzer (1893–1989).

and den combine commodious sofas with Art Deco and mid-century Moderne furniture and decorative pieces, while the living room is a mix of rich fabrics, Persian carpets, and European and Asian antiques dating from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The rooms derive their color from the bright and subtle hues of the paintings and decorative arts. Rather than fixing on a single period or style, the theme that emerges in this collection is a dedication to quality. “I always go after what I consider to be the best,” the collector notes. “It’s my philosophy to always buy the best quality that I can afford.”

The New Hope painters, though associated with that area of Pennsylvania, painted everywhere they went—New York City, Philadelphia, Gloucester, Massachusetts, Monhegan Island, Maine, Arizona, New Mexico, California, England, and Europe—as well as capturing images of landscapes, farms and towns along the Delaware River, many of which scenes have remained unchanged in the intervening decades.

The collector discusses the myriad approaches these painters took, with their highly individual and often colorful palettes, varied styles and techniques of putting down paint, and modernistic and impressionistic compositions: plein air scenes, abstracts, floral still lifes, portraits, and landscapes. Though some clearly shared the artistic sensibilities of their contemporaries, the best, like Edward Redfield (1869–1965), whose resumé of accolades and gold medal awards is second only to that of John Singer Sargent, and Daniel Garber (1880–1958), M. Elizabeth Price (1877–1965), George Sotter (1879–1953), and Robert Spencer (1939–1931) are highly individualistic and important. The collector points out what he most admires in this group: “Redfield for his plein air winter landscapes, Garber for his colorful, delicately handled compositions, Spencer for his broken brush stroke technique depicting mills and the working man, Coppedge as a sublime colorist, Price for her gold leaf background

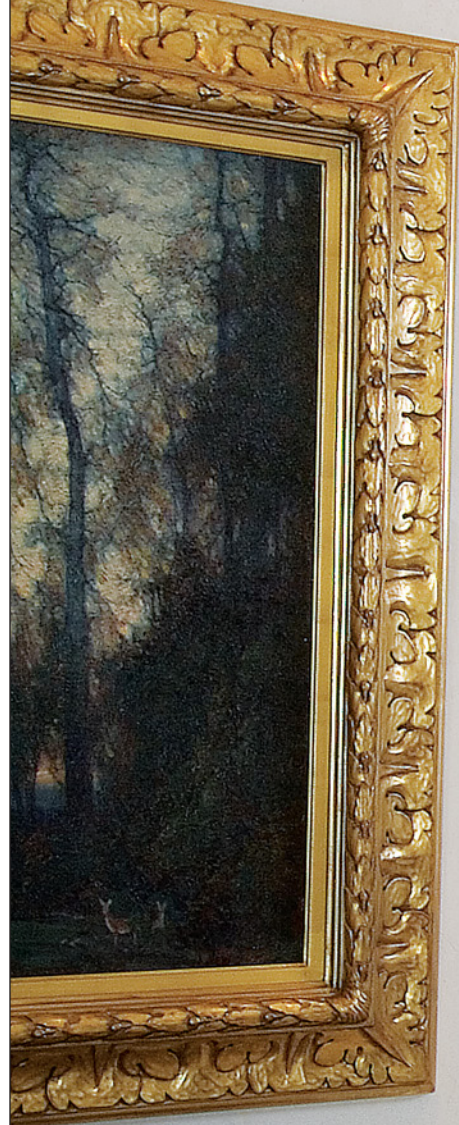


A tropical jungle scene painted in the 1960s by Florida artist Orville Bulman (1904–1978) hangs above a late-nineteenth century northern European console, an example of fantasy furniture produced in Europe, America, and the Far East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and decorated to suit the whims of their designers and commissioners. The chair visible through the arch is by New Hope artisan Paul Evans (1931–1987).

flower pictures, Sotter for his incredible night scenes and beautiful clouds.”

The women artists represented in this collection are a particular revelation. The best known among them is the colorist Fern Coppedge (1883–1951), a member of the Philadelphia Ten, who lived in Lumberville, Pennsylvania, and captured scenes of that town’s snow laden streets, and those of Gloucester, Massachusetts, conveying the





In a hallway, *Woodland Mansions* by Arthur Meltzer (1893–1989) hangs above a nineteenth-century Adamesque demilune table. At left (top to bottom) are *Peaches*, circa 1930, by Henry Rand (1886–1961), in a frame by preeminent frame maker Frederick Harer (1879–1948); also in a Harer frame, *Yacht Race*, with a gold foil background, by M. Elizabeth Price (1877–1965), a prominent member of the Philadelphia Ten, and the circa-1916 *A Breezy Day on the Morris* by Thomas Manley (1853–1938). At right (top) is the circa-1926 *Gift of the Garden* by Constance Cochrane (1888–1962) of the Philadelphia Ten, and (bottom) *Beached*, circa 1930, by John Grabach (1886–1981), a leading member of the Newark School and author of the classic text *How to Draw the Human*.

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An array of ceramics, including crystalline American art pottery, Weller pieces, and a Japanese studio vase complements the soft color palette employed by John Bradley Storrs (1885–1956) for his 1931 painting of a Parisian street scene. Known as a sculptor, Storrs created very few paintings.



character of those locales with intuitive charm. Another surprise is painter Morgan Colt, who also pursued a career as a craftsman, creating Arts & Crafts furnishings in ironwork, hammered metal and oak.

As he discusses their work, the collector recounts the painters' personal histories. This includes accolades like winning gold medals in the era's prestigious academy shows, but is sometimes poignant: Colt, Spencer, and Rae Sloan Bredin (1881–1933) all died before turning 52. It also includes one of the only consortiums in early-twentieth century modernism: Ramstonev — a brief (1937–1939) collaboration among New Hope painters Charles Ramsey (1875–1951), Louis Stone (1902–1984), and Charles Evans (1907–1992), which produced a small, prized number of abstract works.

A reference this collector cites as his touchstone is *New Hope for American Art: A*

Comprehensive Showing of Important 20th Century Painting From and Surrounding the New Hope Art Colony, self-published in 2005 by James M. Alterman, owner of the Lambertville, New Jersey, art gallery Jim's of Lambertville. "It is always best to buy a great painting as opposed to a couple of good or several average paintings," Alterman writes, "...a great work will always be great, and as a collection develops, the mediocre works won't hold up to the trained eye." And, "The most sensible approach to collecting art is to use discretionary funds with the idea of beautifying your home and gaining enjoyment from living with and looking at art. Past history shows that, many times, over the long term fine art outperforms other much less pleasurable investments." This collector's enjoyment of his collection and the investment appreciation the works have shown during the years of his stewardship are proof to him of that advice. 🍷

The collector communicates his sporting interests in the den with Moderne boxing-glove chairs and, atop a 1960s copper and slate table by New Hope artisan Paul Evans (1931–1987), a bronze by Philadelphia sculptor — and onetime Princeton University boxing coach — Joe Brown (1909–1985). Paintings and drawings include (from left) an American boxing genre scene; three pen-and-ink drawings by Robert Riggs (1896–1970) depicting Joe Louis and Max Schmeling; a circa-1935 portrait, *Happy Man*, by Julius Bloch (1888–1966); *The Outdoor Bar at Colligan's Stockton Inn*, circa-1935, by John Folinsbee (1892–1972); and John Grabach's circa-1930 *Wrestlers*.



A circa-1910 painting of the Jardin des Toulleries, Paris, by French artist Cyprien Eugène Boulet (1877-1927) graces the main stair hall.