



INTERVIEW WITH

A Guide for Emerging Collectors:

A Q&A With Jack Trodd, Founder of Brushes with Greatness

BY ZOË GOETZMANN

Established in 2021, Brushes with Greatness (BWG) is a gallery and agency founded by Jack Trodd. Across the group, Brushes with Greatness works with a broad international network of multidisciplinary artists, providing support to their practices through an ever-growing calendar of London-based public exhibitions, commercial projects, community activations and private opportunities. BWG hosts an annual exhibition programme across a variety of spaces in London, dedicated to growing the careers of the city's most exciting talents, along with a selection of international creatives. Later this year, BWG will be launching its first residency in Scotland.

The artists BWG is currently working with include:

Marina Renee-Cemmick (@marinareneecemmick)
Joe Grieve (@joebennellgrieve)
Sam King (@samking_art)
Olivia Mansfield (@olivesalchery)
Suhaylah Hamid (@suhaylah.h)
Orlando Marosini (@orlandomarosini)
Jack Hughes (@jackhughesartist)
Benji Thomas (@benjithomasart)
Raffael Bader (@raffaelbader)

After nearly a decade of working in the corporate and marketing sphere, Jack Trodd made the decision to turn his passion for art into a full-time career as a gallerist, curator, art dealer and art advisor. His gallery and agency, Brushes with Greatness (BWG), presents an annual program of exhibitions, tailored to the unique artistic talents he represents. A young Gagosian-in-the-making, Jack's natural inclination and savvy entrepreneurship, his DIY and guerilla approach to curation, his innate ability to find "superstar" artists and his dedication to making art as accessible as possible make him "one to watch" in the London art scene and the international art world.

When did you begin to collect art? What was the first piece you ever bought and/or acquired in your collection?

As far back as I can remember, my bedroom walls were plastered in “blu-tacked” posters, “magazine rips,” my own sketches and other unique curiosities. As a child, my collections were motivated by a desire to relive experiences, a constant need for sensory experience and a propensity for the eccentric. I liked to provoke wide-eyed reactions and questions from people who walked into my room and saw the collaged walls. I had this ingrained belief that human connection and idea-sharing began with visuals—something that demands attention.

As I grew older but had no cash, I began collecting artwork from charity shops—not looking for works based on recognisable names or high-value, but connection, passion and often the strange or curious. £2 here, £5 there would get me a rendering of a classical nude, a carriage full of clowns or an alpaca with an old woman in front of a church. This continued to the point where I had an “art collection” that could be hung “salon style” throughout every room in each flat I moved into.

This was the golden age of collecting, the lack of financial attachment meant I could easily gift and replace these artworks. If someone loved a specific artwork, they could take it home that evening—and its legacy could live on in someone else’s home. I suppose the desire for “dealing” started here: the need to respond to and share someone’s passion for art. This has, naturally, evolved into my collecting many emerging artists, lots of whom I work with directly, including Sam King, Kris Lamba, Olivia Mansfield, Benji Thomas, Orlando Marosini, Suhaylah H. and Joe Grieve, plus many besides.

To answer your question though: the first piece I purchased at a gallery was a framed photograph by Winston Duke titled “Waltz in the Dark.” I am not a photography enthusiast, but this piece tore down all my barriers and tapped instantly into my love for horror and mystery.

What made you start Brushes with Greatness (BWG)? What is the mission behind it?

The BWG Gallery vision was inspired by a fatigue with the white-wall gallery experience. I loved the art displayed in these spaces, but the curation and cold receptions were a “turnoff.” Through BWG, I want to

inspire audiences, rather than reject or condescend their passion for art. Education and wealth should not matter or factor into the enjoyment of the everyday art lover visiting an exhibition.

At BWG, we seek to create inviting exhibition environments which welcome anyone to engage with art and have their voice heard, should they wish to share or discuss the artwork on show. We also seek to inspire people to begin collecting, and break down the invisible barriers of the art world as it stands.

What do you look for when consigning an artist or an artwork? As a gallerist and/or as a dealer?

Answering from a gallerist’s perspective, it’s an amalgamation of four things which reflect the values we bring to the gallery and to our artists: passion, dedication, ambition, and application. Underpinned, of course, by visual quality and commercial viability. Ultimately, though, passion comes first in all things.

In short, we hope our artists will live [out] their love for their art as much as we do. If these morals align, we’ll go above and beyond for the artist.

What makes art “collectible?” What are the attributes that allow an artwork to retain longevity or long-term value?

Only time can really tell when it comes to financial “long-term value.” There are many factors: supply and demand, contemporary relevance, historical relevance, association, affiliation, originality, story and, of course (though not always), if it looks any good.

I think contemporary relevance is the most interesting aspect when it comes to collectibility. Art responds to shifts in society. For example, the most recent lockdown pushed many to re-examine and reengage their relationship with the natural world, and this is reflected in the art world through a rising interest in making and collecting landscape scenes and naturalistic work. The consistent rise in personal spirituality has prompted an increase in the demand for and showcasing of art which explores occulture and mysticism. Artwork evocative of these societal shifts will retain a significant level of emotional longevity for the collectors of the moment.

Both niches [are] explored in BWG’s exhibitions “Spirit Within” (August 3, 2022–August 28, 2022) and “Visions of Healing” (August 15, 2022–February 15, 2023).

Who are your current favourite artists at the moment, from your gallery and/or outside of your gallery?

I do, of course, love all the artists I show through BWG and the public seems to agree. It was a joy to see Suhaylah H.'s (@suhaylah.h) and Joe Grieve's (@joebennellgrieve) first solo exhibitions sell out earlier this year.

In keeping with the theme of our upcoming show "Spirit Within," I can't get enough of Georg Wilson. Her phenomenal painting is enriched by her brilliant eye for curation—creating these experiential environments to elevate the spiritualistic storytelling in her work. Her end-of-the-year show at Royal College of Art consisted of a ritualistic den made out of straw, evocative of British-styled paganism and folklore.

The new direction Rebecca Gilpin (@r.l.gilpin) has taken her abstract painting is wonderful. Her inspiring commitment, confidence and passion are mirrored in the pace at which her work is selling. I love the way Lara Cobden (@laracobden) captures the ephemeral memory of nature. We have the pleasure of exhibiting her work for six months in "Visions of Healing" from August 2022. James Dearlove (@jamesdearlove_art) and Jonathan Schofield (@jonathanschofield_art) are two of my favourite breaking figurative painters right now, both working through colour, abstraction and form in totally different, vividly captivating, large-scale ways.

What advice would you give to emerging collectors or those who are looking to start collecting art?

Buy for passion and let [an artist's or an artwork's] "potential" [value] be a future "cherry on top." Don't follow trends or allow others' judgements to influence your decision-making. Ultimately, you are buying something you can cherish and enjoy again and again. Make sure there's a depth to your connection with a piece beyond the financial, be it purely visual, deeply emotional or an amalgamation.

Broaden your horizons. Find a few galleries in your city who show artists you like, and frequent them! Spend a few months going to galleries and museums to view artwork and understand what you enjoy most. Experiment as you would with any newfound passion.

Feed your desire! If you discover an artist you like, but aren't an impulsive buyer, build a relationship with that artist: ask to visit their studio, meet the

artist, forge a close bond before you buy (just try not to waste an artist or gallery's time!—research the price and check it's within your means, or might be six months down the line). BWG always facilitates artist-collector relationships. The bond with your collection is strengthened when you know the artist behind the work. This type of knowledge will unlock a deeper appreciation and allow you more insight to share with peers, friends and family should they see the work on display.

Don't forget about "the bells and whistles." Consider what you're buying and where it's hanging. What's the colour flow of that room? Will it compliment your other pieces? Have you considered the shipping or import duties on international purchases? Framing can be expensive—will your budget extend that far? Sadly, logistics, especially as your collection grows, become a real concern. Think about them now! ♦

