

san francisco

camera ready

Trevor Traina shares his home's private galleries before his prized photography collection goes on exhibit.

By Bryan Anthony
Photography by Ethan Kaplan

Black and Light
Trevor Traina's collection of black-and-white photographs fills a wing of the gallery, decorated in a complementary color scheme. ABOVE: Traina sits atop an antique Biedermeier table in front of the illuminated work *Church, Carolina St., Vancouver* by Jeff Wall.



TREVOR TRAINA started his photography collection on a nostalgic whim. As a young executive at Seagram's in New York in the early 1990s, he had selected a photo by Nicholas Nixon from the company's impressive art collection to hang in his office. A decade later, Traina, now a successful technology entrepreneur living in San Francisco, read that the same photograph (a black-and-white view of Manhattan's 57th Street) was to be sold at auction. Feeling it would be nice to have it back on his wall, he purchased the image—along with a little street scene by Weegee—and a collection was born.

Today, his passion for photography has nothing to do with nostalgic purchases. A mere nine years since that fateful auction, Traina has amassed what Julian Cox (founding curator of photography and chief curator for the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) calls "a one-of-a-kind collection cataloging some of the most important artists in the past 50 years of photography." Traina became well versed in the medium by reading extensively on the subject, forming relationships with galleries and hiring art adviser Kevin Moore. "Because photography is a relatively young field, it was still within my means to collect some of the masters," says Traina. "For a long time pictures were treated as an inferior form, but today there are few contemporary artists who don't try their hand at it."

Traina's passion for collecting is in his DNA. His father, the late John Traina, amassed the world's largest collection of Fabergé cigarette cases, while his mother, Dede Wilsey, is an avid art enthusiast with a renowned collection of impressionist paintings. But his commitment to photography goes well beyond any familial hobby. Six years ago, when he and his wife, Alexis Swanson Traina, bought a 108-year-old Georgian house in

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Charles, Vasa, Minnesota, Alex Soti



Double Vision

Near the entrance to the conservatory is Diane Arbus' *Identical Twins*, a black-and-white photograph of two young girls that Traina calls his first major acquisition. "Once I purchased this piece, there was really no turning back," says Traina.

SF's Pacific Heights, the home's entire first floor became dedicated gallery space for his collection. This decision provided a bevy of possibilities. "So many art collectors' homes can be held hostage by their collections," says Traina. "I wanted our home to have a design that accommodated art but wasn't designed around it. By creating the galleries below, I'm free to find pieces without having to worry about scale."

The large gallery space has allowed Traina to display oversize pieces rarely found in private residences, from 10-foot-tall images by Andreas Gursky to massive illuminated works by Jeff Wall. It's not just the scale of the collection that impresses guests but also its striking presentation. "The works are installed in a salon-style manner that is both daring and quite stylish," says Cox. "Trevor has created a story that broadens the meaning of the art."

Viewers can experience this photo narrative firsthand starting on June 16, when "Real to Real," an exhibition featuring more than 120 works from Traina's collection, opens at the de Young Museum. Traina credits the persistence of the Fine Arts Museum's late director, John Buchanan, with bringing the exhibit to fruition. "As a member of the museum's board, I didn't want it to appear as though I were receiving preferential treatment," says Traina. "But John could be very convincing. He told me that it wasn't just important that I show my collection—it was necessary."



Superior Screening

Traina often finds himself wandering downstairs just to take in the scenery. "I feel so privileged to have this space," he says. "I come down here and I am instantly reminded of how lucky I am." The large dedicated gallery space frees him to collect works without worrying about scale. Though he sometimes fears that his wife and children might one day try to convert some of the space into a movie-screening room, he has so far been successful at defending it from being used for "inferior reasons."



Peaceful Plumage
 The peacock-inspired library is where Traina keeps his photography reference books. In this quiet escape, he catches up on his reading. The room's design was the brainchild of family friend and decorator Ann Getty. "Ann is so great with plush, over-the-top spaces. Because the rest of the house is somewhat subdued, we thought this was a place to go all out," says Traina. "As far as I know, there has never been another room that has all its walls covered with peacock feathers."



Thanksgiving 1984 (Green Dress), Roe Ethridge



BMX, Ryan McGinley



Fashion Shoot for Amica, New York, Martin Parr