

collectorspace
presents:

A Collection at
601 Artspace

collectorspace
presents:

*Installation
View:
Streaming
Live from
a Private
New York
Collection*

*A project by
Jennifer and Kevin
McCoy*

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Foreword

Haro Cumbusyan

In September 2011—around the time we had our first exhibition at collectorspace—Mari Spirito, a dear friend and an advisor to our organization suggested that I meet David Howe, an American collector who was doing an artist residency in Istanbul. I was intrigued by the idea of collector-turned-artist. Our decision-making process was, however, complicated by 601Artspace—an exhibition venue in New York, affiliated with David’s collection. At collectorspace, we give priority to collectors whose collections are not already open to the public, making David less of an obvious candidate for our program. But then Mari told me about a project that David was organizing at 601Artspace, and that sealed the deal in my mind: He had offered the artists Jennifer and Kevin McCoy access to his collection to curate a show, and they decided to stream live images of selected artworks from their original locations onto the walls of 601Artspace instead of bringing the artworks physically together in the exhibition venue. In this work that they called “a curatorial intervention” and titled *Installation View*, the McCoys were very deliberately playing with concepts around display, while also intending to peek into the

“private lives” of artworks and to observe them in their “natural habitats.” At collectorspace, we have always been interested in how artworks are presented—or stored—in private collections, and in general, how collectors live with the art in their collection. For us, collaborating with David would give us a chance to discuss a question that we often think about: Who gets to mediate the act of watching in a private collection?

I met with David in Istanbul and quickly realized that he wasn’t an “ordinary” collector. Through his collecting activity, he had gained access to top-notch artists, and he was employing that privilege to develop his own artistic practice. He opened 601Artspace not with the all-too-familiar motivations—his intention has been to provide artists and art professionals his space and collection as a resource to exhibit and work with. David’s philanthropic involvement with Art21— a nonprofit that aims to introduce broad audiences to contemporary artists and their creative process—was another example of his desire to open the doors to the “behind-the-scenes” of art-making to himself, as well as to others.

A highly understated and private person, David graciously accepted our invitation to participate in the collectorspace program, including the exhibition, a video interview, and this publication. On our part,

we agreed not to put his name in the exhibition title or on the cover of this publication, which would have been our standard practice. In this publication, the curator and writer Andrea Hill discusses how David approaches his collection as well as the public-facing side of his practice.

Andrea's essay follows a text by the artist Merve Ünsal that puts the spotlight on the artwork that we brought to Istanbul, and explores the relevance of *Installation View* in the local context. The curator and writer Sohrab Mohebbi provides a series of notes on the McCoy's' project that he never saw in person, musing on the idea of how live broadcasting changes the conditions of viewership. Lastly, we publish an in-depth interview we conducted with David to understand his thought process driving his involvement with art.

We are grateful to Erin Sickler and Peter Blake of 601Artspace for their support and helpful advice throughout the exhibition. It was truly a pleasure having Kevin in Istanbul for the installation of the work, and our appreciation for the thought and effort he and Jennifer put into the project is unquantifiable. And of course, we're deeply grateful to David and his wife Charlene for most generously opening up their collection, their homes, and their private lives to the public throughout the duration

of this exhibition as the carefully positioned cameras more than a few times captured live images of them casually passing by the artworks in *Installation View*.

On Installation View at collectorspace

Merve Ünsal

Having viewed *Installation View: Streaming Live from a Private New York Collection* in Istanbul, I would like to draw attention to two aspects of the surveillance-cum-artwork. The first is the theatricality, or rather, the theatrical setup in collectorspace's idiosyncratic venue, and the second is the connotations of broadcasting to this particular street.

First, theatricality—as in relating to theater.

The modernist Michael Fried had famously disregarded Minimalism by arguing that Minimalist works were pieces for/of theater and not art as they required the presence of the viewer to complete, to give meaning to the work—contrary to the modernist conception of the artwork as self-contained demi-God.

I say demi-God with a grain of skepticism that mimics the McCoys' semi-reverent relationship with the works of art that they choose to look at for their installation. For the McCoys, the boundary between their work and the pieces by other artists that they employ to make it, is the surveillance camera—through which the habitats of these objects of interest are broadcast. In other words, highly regarded works of art, such as a Sugimoto, a Lawler, a Serra, become

quintessential elements of the McCoys' own work—reduced from a work to an element necessary for but not the sole constituent of a *different* work of art.

As Minimalist works required the viewers to be completed, *Installation View* requires another work of art to be completed, at all times. The viewer is arguably not required, but desired and the shift, the co-dependency between two works of art clashes with the authorships and the self-containednesses of each respective work. Just as Fried deemed Minimalism theatrical, drawing a clear distinction between works of art and theater—the works really flourished only when viewers were participating in them by walking around, looking up, looking down, or in other words were *present* with their bodies—the McCoys' broadcasting can only function if there is a work of art to be broadcast, drawing an invisible connection between the space in which the viewers are seeing the work and where the broadcast stems from. What we see in the space is not the only component for the work and the work of art is not independently autonomous.

This constant tension between the Work of Art and the works of art that make up the Work of Art resonates in collectorspace, as the whole space is visible from the busy street that leads to Taksim Square. collectorspace is located a few steps up from the sidewalk; the space can be entered only after going through the doors of the main building. It is not a storefront, but has a floor-to-ceiling glass façade

that faces the street. The office space in the back is divided from the front by half a wall, making the workings of this small-scale institution public—the whole of collectorspace is not bigger than a small studio apartment. The scale of the exhibition venue alters the experience of *Installation View* as the intimacy of watching another person's belongings is strongly reiterated. The proximity to Taksim produces a tension; this "intimate" space is so close to one of the most trafficked squares in Istanbul—often considered the most central square outside of the old City. The passersby are heterogeneous, representative of the city where the work is shown, hosted in the intimate anonymity of their square, peering into another's.

I see somewhat of a parallel between the works in a private collection, that has partially become public through the online streaming in collectorspace, viewable through iPads, and the very institution hosting this "situation" that has made itself partially public through the glass window, but is still located within the building. Though stretching this parallel, the relationship between the McCoys' work and the space that hosts it becomes particularly pertinent when the building is locked up for the night. Visible to the outside at any point in time, for anybody who might be passing through the street, the subversion of the private is right then and there, and it is perhaps at such moments that the work's denouement *happens*. In other words, the inherently intimate nature

of the work is challenged at night, when collectorspace is nothing but a storefront in Taksim, broadcasting to the street. Since there is nobody at collectorspace, the viewer can potentially stand there for hours, heightening the sense of "surveilling" works of art that we know belong to a private collection miles away.

I use the word "happen" as I'd like to further draw a parallel between the constant expectation of something to just *happen* on the screens. An expectation that we don't even know that we have until something does not happen; the crux of *Installation View* is this anti-climactic gesture of just showing.

In which case, the issue arises of the agency of the camera.

It is the presence of the camera, the constant broadcasting that substitutes the camera in lieu of the artists as the author, as the owner of the gesture. It is this recorder of events, of moments, of temporality that is the vehicle for the artists' gesture, and there is something sinister about this act of appropriation through the unlikely accomplice, the surveillance camera, that charges this particular vehicle with a pregnant agency. In other words, a functional, disregarded tool that is invisible as long as there is not a problem, has become the perpetrator of the "problem," of the artistic gesture in this particular case. The inside of collectorspace is always visible through the glass, facing the street and it hosts the insides of other places through the iPads displayed, collapsing the spatial divide and

satisfying the voyeuristic urges of the passersby to always see more.

Despite the fact that the live streaming cameras place it in the here and now, I situate *Installation View* in the canon of institutional critique, with the likes of Hans Haacke, Sherrie Levine, and Louise Lawler. In particular, I am thinking of Sherrie Levine's *After Walker Evans*, which derives meaning from its co-dependence with Evans's originals, bringing up questions of authorship, craft, aura, and obviously, gender. Thus I perceive *Installation View* to be in line with this period of postmodern art history and I wonder why this kind of critique is happening now: Have private collections replaced public art institutions to the extent that they invite the same approaches and critiques as public institutions did forty years ago? To put it bluntly, what about the private collections is so stagnated that artists feel the need to poke into this support structure, if one may call it that? Institutions are predictably and most often associated with multiple agents, funding structures, decision-makers that unravel when considered within a critical framework. Private collections, on the other hand, are defined by the initiative of a person, a family, who make acquisitions in accordance with a variety of criteria or lack thereof and are—most likely—infinately more mobile than any institution can be. This "organic" or "unstructured" form inviting the sort of subversive or critical gesture that the McCoy's have authored is thus interesting on

a purely structural level, triggering the viewer to wonder about this lack of institutionalization perhaps being a new form of institutionalization.

Collecting Conversations

Andrea Hill

Collecting is usually a closed system where artworks disappear from the public view and are limited to private appreciation. Meditating on this notion, *Open::Closed* was an exhibition at 601Artspace during the fall of 2012, curated by collector David Howe. Howe writes in the press release how “daily life is increasingly digital, binary, polarized, on-off” in contrast with the “open system” and its “pleasures of ambiguity, possibility, change, and imagination.” The exhibition—featuring works by Kerry Tribe, William Powhida, Robert Gober, Sherrie Levine, and Hiroshi Sugimoto, among others—helps us understand Howe’s approach to collecting as a pursuit of endless possibility that could involve many participants including artists, curators, students, and the general public. He founded 601Artspace in 2008 to allow for the art in his collection to circulate and gather new syntaxes of meaning within a wide network of collaborators and contributors.

601Artspace has allowed David Howe to expand the usual collector-artist relationship in which the collector controls all decisions concerning the hanging

and context for the work after the purchase. Guest curators Robert Blake, Susan Sollins, and Vera Lutter have further complicated this dynamic proposition with new ways to view the collection through exhibitions about time and cultural memory. 601Artspace has also served as an experimental lab for realizing major new media works such as Jennifer and Kevin McCoy’s immersive *Installation View* (2011–2012), which directly involved Howe’s art collection as the subject matter. For this piece, Howe agreed to the McCoys’ setting up a network of surveillance cameras in his home, art storage facility, and other locations, which live-streamed footage onto display monitors at the gallery. By readily accepting the artists’ request to expose his life at home to the public in ways he could not control; he appreciated that making art and collaborating with artists could be a high-stake endeavor. Collecting art is only the beginning of a process that finds Howe conversing, interacting, and collaborating with artists, and following their lead.

David Howe’s collection has a strong emphasis on photography represented by some of its most important artists including Louise Lawler, Gabriel Orozco, Cindy Sherman, William Eggleston, and Hiroshi Sugimoto. Aside from being significant for the history of photography, these artists share

a sense of humor and a talent for making visible what is usually private or hidden. Louise Lawler captures the lifecycle of artworks beyond the institutional setting in storage facilities, auction back rooms, and collectors' homes, replacing the pedestal with wit. Gabriel Orozco blends humor with lyricism in his surprising combinations of mismatched objects and photographs of found ephemera. Exploring numerous personae and genres using self-portraiture, Cindy Sherman uncovers our deepest cultural obsessions with her provocative and humorous images. William Eggleston captures the intimate moments and elevates the mundane details of American life in saturated color. And Hiroshi Sugimoto is perhaps the artist who most closely exemplifies Howe's notion of the "open system." His long exposures of movie theater screens and meditations on the horizon line are rife with ambiguity and possibilities for the imagination, and his blank, incandescent movie theater screens present a canvas onto which many meanings can be projected. More broadly, there are no ostensible themes or eras that dominate Howe's collection, but more often than not, the work on his walls offer open-ended interpretation and a touch of humor.

Howe's appreciation for art history is evident and represented in his collection through works

by Sherrie Levine, Vik Muniz, and Olafur Eliasson, who quote and appropriate art historical references. Sherrie Levine's *After Kasimir Malevich* paintings come from a series that copy masterpieces by Joan Miró, El Lissitzky, Henri Matisse, and Piet Mondrian. These paintings challenge the concept of authenticity while wrestling with a male dominated canon of art. Vik Muniz uses chocolate, dirt, diamonds, and industrial waste to recreate well-known images from art history such as Gerhard Richter's *Betty*. Howe also owns the *Reykjavik Series* by Olafur Eliasson, a direct homage to Bernd and Hilla Becher's iconic, "objective" manner of photographing architecture. Eliasson is best-known for his immersive installations and experience-based work, but these serial photographs tunnel into the investigative instincts behind his wider practice. Seen together, these works prompt us to reexamine the very nature of image making and originality.

Although the collection includes many of the most recognizable names in contemporary art, Howe has also made unexpected and refreshing selections not always representative of each artist. Even the archetypal artworks have been purchased for personal reasons rather than for being signatures of the artist. For example, the well-known

Airport photographs by Fischli & Weiss show interior views taken from airport waiting rooms, places where Howe frequently finds himself. Owning this work has subsequently altered Howe's own experience of airports as unusual and highly contrived tableaux of modern travel. For David Howe, a successful work of art very simply "tunes him into the world in a different way."

A refreshing aspect of Howe's collection is the substantial number of new media and video works by the medium's pioneering artists such as Eva and Franco Mattes (0100101110101101.org), Peter Sarkisian, and the McCoys. The challenges of collecting, presenting, and preserving new media within a domestic setting are formidable and David has meticulously installed these works and given them pride of place. At his home in upstate New York, Peter Sarkisian's video piece *Hands on a Table* projects onto a tabletop with the sounds of tapping fingers echoing throughout the large living room. A noisy audio-visual piece is most frequently experienced in a gallery or institutional setting with the persistent audio track as background for museum guards. Seen inside Howe's home, *Hands on a Table* can be taken as a representation of his family, their hands gathered around a table, playing, exploring, interacting, and communing.

In David Howe's exhibition *Open:Closed*, a closed system implies a narrowing and limitation of possibilities; however, in classical mechanics, a closed system actually provides structure and form that allow scientists to isolate variables and control results. It is conceivable that a closed system may also facilitate the artist to create his or her work and tunnel into the solitary studio practice. However, the display and dissemination of art through exhibitions, catalogs, and archives are necessarily part of an open system in which an audience plays a critical role. In this sphere, David Howe has expanded the field of possibilities for his collection to resurface into the public view while opening new pathways for education and discourse. It is the sign of a collector who wants to keep the conversation going.

Watching from a distance: Notes on Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's Installation View

Sohrab Mohebbi

What comes below is a series of notes on a project that I did not get a chance to see in the exhibition space, but saw via the Internet. The project invites such commentary as it relies on the same infrastructure that made this kind of commentary possible. The fragmentary nature of the piece responds to the way that it was received yet not experienced physically in the space.

1- Is live broadcast the return of aura in the age of global connectivity? Live broadcast means authenticity, urgency, immediacy, access to temporal and spatial locales other than the one's own. It is the brick and mortar of the 24/7 news cycle, social networking, Twitter, and Facebook—YouTube now has a live channel. Who'd ever watch the World Cup, Olympics, F1 Grand Prix, PGA Tour, Grand Slams, etc. with a delay? From Tahrir Square to the Super Bowl, it's the live broadcast that bestows

the event the sense of urgency that captures the attention span of the distracted contemporary viewer. Watching live is the closest one can get to active participation—being-there-now. No one will watch his/her team lose after they have already lost. Further, live spectatorship means being a part of a community, a kind of togetherness that is created around an event that we are all watching at the same time even if not from the same place.

2- What does being look like in the age of live broadcast? A photograph shows us something at some point was somewhere—the famous Barthesian having-been-there. Live broadcast on the other hand tells us something is somewhere at the very moment we are somewhere else, adding a spatial displacement to the temporal. While the photograph represents a linear notion of time (albeit already it is inserting past into the present and as such interrupts the present moment), live broadcast implies the fragmentation of the present—as for instance those with live access to an event share a different temporality or notion of present with those without such access.

A Richard Serra might have been somewhere at some point—for instance in front of the Federal Plaza—and a photograph can testify to that (to some extent); it is, however, the live broadcast that tells us if a Richard Serra is somewhere now, or if it's being moved, removed, destroyed, or about to be destroyed. In the absence of constant media presence a

thing, a person, a being, does not exist.

Now, granted this global live madness is generally towards itinerant objects, things that move, events that are developing and transforming as we watch.

Static objects are no more than live stream's graveyard; they are where transmitters go die. Yet, banks, museums, government offices, nuclear reactors, the treasury, prison walls, are under 24/7 surveillance.

Cameras are fixed on inanimate stationary objects ad infinitum, not because there is an audience receiving these images on the other side—albeit security personnel could be considered viewers of such imagery if not strictly speaking its audience—but rather because there is the possibility of undesired movement or uninvited presence.

4- One can imagine there will be a moment when these two seemingly disparate spheres of liveness—action filled, eventful spectacles on the one hand, and static, inert blanks on the other—these co-temporary atavists of lost aura, will eventually fuse into a total mediasphere where the distinctions between the worthy and unworthies of lens attention wither, i.e. everything will be under the omnipresent gaze of the camera (the feared Armageddon of cynical media theory).

With art's status as a commodity at a historical peak—auction prices as global news headlines, and speculators treating it as highly profitable investment—art has elevated to a symbol of value, or more specifically commercial and by extension popular

value, equal to other luxury goods such as yachts, jet planes, and race cars.

Thus, it wouldn't be a stretch for television to move towards showcasing collector's houses, art fairs (remember Art Basel Miami?), museum galas and so on and so forth. The kind of celebrity home shows where MTV goes to some random teen idol's house and s/he shows off her 24-bedroom Bahamas vacation house with jacuzzis in every room, golf court sized walk in closets and a parking lot full of Ferraris. The average teen idol now also has a bunch of Damien Hirsts, Anish Kapoor, or Jeff Koonses laying around, or for those with a more refined taste a Liam Gillick or a Dan Graham. This is by no means understating the aesthetic and critical integrity of such pieces, but rather of acknowledging their status as global symbols of value, objects worthy of any sofa spud's attention span.

5- One of the main complaints of the human rights community, and the civilians under brutal shelling of oppressive regimes or caught in civil wars or just normal everyday preemptive wars, is the fact that the surge of visuals, live and relentlessly updated, does not result in any "action" taken by the international community. "Can't you see children are dying?" means, do something about this, now that you can see it.

Christiane Amanpour's famous report from Kosovo underlined the barrage of reportage of atrocities and how they fail to change the situation on the ground. It is in response to this global couch potato apathy that



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activists and survivors world-wide are appropriating strategies that increase the visual and dramatic appeal of suffering, by exploiting universal references and symbols, dramaturgical techniques, and performative tactics to compete with other visual factories such as Hollywood, arena rock, professional sports, or museum franchises.

Nadja Millner-Larsen analyzes West Bank Palestinians fashioning themselves as Na'vis, *Avatar's* blue indigenous creatures, as "moving away from the typical visual idiom of global humanitarianism." This co-optation of the mainstream iconography ties the activist's claims to a universalized notion of struggle that such mega-productions bolster.

6- The pieces selected by Jennifer and Kevin McCoy to be live-streamed using projectors at New York's 601Artspace and on iPads at Istanbul's collectorspace are chosen as popular, inaccessible valuable objects of desire.

They are objects that are made for and have successfully acquired retinal attention of connoisseurs and field experts and by extension, larger populace. As live-streamed static objects, they are at the intersection of surveillance and spectacle.

As artworks, the McCoys' pieces are information units that provide visual access to otherwise inaccessible objects and reinforce the live-streamed objects' existence and value.

The McCoys' pieces exist as digital data, so do the works that they are live streaming, but while the former

might have an afterlife as objects—in print for instance—the latter have a reversed trajectory. But yet both exist as image objects, where the location of the work is no longer the physical or virtual space. The project as such underlines that post-Internet artworks can no longer be reduced to a certain physical location and that the work incorporates its online existence, even if its production precedes the Web 2.0.

Further, by empathizing on the act of watching, the work reflexively comments on the nature of the medium of video by virtue of pointing to a work of art and its condition of viewership. As such, one can imagine these works as video degree zero.

In Conversation with David Howe

collectorspace: How did you start collecting art?

David Howe: The first piece that I ever acquired is a lithograph by Giacometti, which I rented from MoMA's art-lending service when I was in college. I rented it for a year, and it cost me five bucks. At the end of the year, I had the option to buy it for 100 dollars, and I did. I still have the piece on a wall in my home. I didn't always have the wherewithal to collect, but the urge to live and interact with art over time—rather than to just own art—has been always there.

In a previous phase of my life, I collected American folk art and American furniture, "Americana." For many years I collected wine and now I have more wine than I could possibly ever drink in my lifetime, so I've stopped, which tells you a little something about the nature of my collecting. Once I reached the point of being absurdly beyond consumption, I stopped. It is related to the actual use of the thing that's collected. The same with art—I wanted to have art in my home, and I didn't want to continue collecting folk art. I went from that into American modernist painting and then from there my interests got increasingly contemporary and somewhere along the way, I returned to my own roots in photography.

When I was in college, I did a lot of photography and theatre. After

college, I was in the movie business for ten or eleven years, so I have a whole history of engagement with photography, video, and the visual arts in general. Eight or nine years ago, I started taking pictures again. My collecting then became more contemporary and more intertwined with my own interest in making photography and art in a more general sense.

collectorspace: How would you describe your collection? What are you trying to achieve with it?

DH: My collection is an eclectic one and it's not goal-oriented. I'm not building a collection as an object in and of itself. I'm not thinking about the collection as something that I want to have a particular shape, size, fame, or an ultimate destination. It's almost like a record of where my interests in art are at any given moment.

collectorspace: Do you think that a visitor going through your collection would see something more than individual artworks?

DH: I would hope that somebody coming through the collection would see that the pieces connect with each other and also find new connections between the pieces that I'd never thought of before. But I don't think about the collection thematically. And in fact if you asked me what the themes of the collection are, I don't think I could tell you.

collectorspace: It's not uncommon for an artist to build an art collection, but it's more rare for a collector to become an artist. How does your artistic work influence the way you collect?

DH: I started making pictures when I

was 10 and continued during and after college. I didn't think about making pictures as making art, but the notion of producing something that could be art has been with me for most of my life. The connection of that to the collection came about because it could. In other words, I might have gone back to photography anyway and learned it just in all of the usual ways. I'd have taken classes and practiced, but since I was fortunate enough to be able to collect as well and was already collecting, then it was somehow natural for the collecting to start to reflect my interest in my art-making.

collectorspace: Different schools of photography are represented in your collection. Is that the cause or the effect of you being a photographer yourself?

DH: I think it's an effect. Somewhere along the way, the collection moved more into photography and my own art-making became more important. At a relatively early stage of the collection, I realized that I collected art that I wished I'd made myself. Being a photographer naturally led to a lot of it being photography. But that wish that I made it myself is not limited in any way to the things that I might actually be capable of making myself, so it goes beyond just photography. It's often the idea, the concept, or the thought behind the piece that captivated me and made me think—why didn't I think of that?

collectorspace: Are there any objective criteria, such as geography, time period, emerging vs. established artist,

that you use to filter out potential acquisitions? Do you set out to acquire works that are produced after the 1980s, or to buy artists who are younger than 40 years old, or works that cost less than 50,000 dollars?

DH: The only objective criterion that I can think of is whether I can afford it. There are many things that I would like to have been able to collect that were beyond my means. But otherwise, there are no particular limits. I'll consider the work if it's something that captivates me—it could be an Ancient Roman work, it could have been made yesterday, or it could be not yet made and just an idea that ends up being executed.

collectorspace: It's clear that you don't look at your collection as a being in itself, but if you were to consider a scale from infancy to maturity, where would you place it?

DH: The only way I can think about that is in terms of the role that the collection plays in my life. The collection has gone from being definable as things that I wish I had made myself to being my personal, very high-end art school. By collecting, I was able to spend a lot of time visiting artists in their studios—people you'd have an impossible time trying to take a class with or even get a chance to ask questions to if you weren't a collector. Because of that, I learned a lot. I could get the backstory of how they'd made it, why they'd made it, how they thought about it, how their process worked, what their studio looked like, what kind of equipment they had, how many assistants they

had, you know, all kinds of mundane details of making art, which are very important to me.

In my own art-making, I don't think I'm at a point where I've established a style or a way of making art, but I do feel that the more deeply I've become engaged in my own art-making, the less important the collecting per se has been. Even visiting artists has become different. It's much less important for me now to visit tremendously successful artists—I would rather visit new artists who are struggling with some of the same career issues that I'm struggling with.

collectorspace: Is a large proportion of your collection on display at any time in your homes?

DH: For better or worse, most of the collection is in storage at any given time. If you were to characterize the collection as a whole—which I can't do but I have a sense of it—the part of it that's on display in my home is not typical. There are many things in the collection that either don't fit into a house or I may love it but I don't want to eat dinner in front of it every day. And that's really why 601Artspace came about, as I wanted a place to display things that didn't work at home, that were too big, too disturbing, or just too crazy for anybody but me. This gave me a place where I could get things out to where I could see them, and has eventually developed more into the public view. There, I've tried to create an environment where people can use the collection as a base, do their own thinking about not only what

601Artspace is but what it might become, and run with it. It has become much more than I could ever have imagined than when I first got this space or even a couple of years ago. It has developed a whole public identity. collectorspace: Approximately what proportion of the works that you have in storage do you think are still waiting to be shown for the first time, either publicly or in your home?

DH: I think that what's in storage—probably 85% of the collection—hasn't been seen since I bought it.

collectorspace: So when you acquire a piece you don't feel the urge to display it right away?

DH: The collection has a mental, virtual existence that is related to the actual objects. It's my memory of the actual objects, my sense of them, my idea of what they mean to me or look like to me, or how they connect to something else that I happen to be thinking about at any given moment. This is like a reservoir of art objects that can become part of my larger thinking about the world. Often, when I buy something, it becomes part of my mental collection and I don't need to see it right away. I'm most interested in seeing things when I'm starting to forget that they are in the warehouse. Then I want to bring it out, remind myself what that object is, why it is there, and find out how I feel about it now, because I might feel very different now than the way I felt when I bought it.

collectorspace: In the more physical sense other than your mental inventory, how do you keep track of all those pieces that you have?

DH: We keep track of the collection in a computer program in which I can sift through and look at an image of almost everything—acquisition data, location data, organized by artist, by all sorts of different criteria. I do that occasionally; it's there and it's a very important tool to physically manage the collection and also for letting other people look at it. It's a cloud-based service that Sotheby's originally designed.

collectorspace: Do you set an annual budget for your acquisitions?

DH: No, I don't have a budget. I do have a feeling at any given moment of what's the maximum amount that I can spend comfortably, and then that amount may be triggered by my becoming aware of some object that I might want to acquire. I don't really keep track of the amount I spend each year—my wife wishes I did—but if I did, I wouldn't have acquired as much as I have. It's more of an intuitive process than a budgetary process.

collectorspace: Do you take risks in your acquisitions, or do you even consider it risk-taking when you buy unknown or young artists?

DH: For a long time, I did try to buy known artists. I was trying to buy the best that I could find and I could afford. Now, as I've become more focused on the art-making process, I'm looking at artists who are in earlier development stages; I wouldn't say I'm any more or less of a risk-taker however. I won't buy something unless it affects me and unless I think I understand what the impulse might have been. And the risk in buying young artists' work is financially much

lower than that of buying established artists. But there is a price criterion that plays into that equation. If I'm going to spend a substantial amount of money, I'm probably not going to spend it on somebody who I don't feel has really established themselves. By established, I do not necessarily mean they need to be stamped by the market as "blue chip," but have somehow established themselves as having a particular point of view and a body of work that makes sense to me.

collectorspace: In terms of sourcing the artworks, what portion of your acquisitions typically come directly from artists vs. galleries vs. auctions?

DH: The collection is probably about half from auctions and half from dealers. Auction has been a discovery tour for me. I go through all the auction catalogues. If I see an artist I don't know or just a piece that grabs me, by an artist that I've been somehow aware of but haven't really focused on, if I really like it, I'll buy it. And whether I do or not, that may in turn spur me to be more interested in the artist's work, find out who the dealer is and then pursue other pieces through dealers.

I work most with certain dealers because they're interested in having a conversation about the art. That means there's a mutual satisfaction that goes beyond the commercial transaction with those dealers. This has made the process of dealing with the commercial art world structure more manageable and palatable for me. It has also allowed me to acquire things that I would not otherwise been able to have access to.

collectorspace: To follow up on your relationship with galleries, I'd like to ask what your most trusted information sources are.

DH: I don't really pay much attention to the market on an ongoing basis. When market information becomes important is when I'm thinking about acquiring something. And mostly it'll be in an auction setting because in a dealer setting, the price is what the price is, and I just give or take whatever discounts that I can finagle. But the relationship between the price and what I think of the object and how much I would like to own it is much more important than what the relationship of the price to the market in general is. In the auction market though, you have to be aware of the market because you don't know what the price is going to be and you have to decide how far are you willing to go. As a rule, I don't use consultants to help me buy art, but I do have one consultant who helps me with auctions, who was in the auction business for many years, knows most of the key players in the game and can help me acquire information quickly about the market for a particular piece.

collectorspace: In terms of market intelligence, I meant something broader than just price. In terms of new artists or new movements, whatever is interesting that's on view, what information sources do you use to find out about those?

DH: There may be a museum show; I may be in a strange city and I decide to check out the museum and I see an artist that I wasn't aware of, I read

a review in *The Times* or in *The New Yorker*, or somewhere else that makes me want to go see a particular show, somebody tells me about an artist, but it's random. I don't make a point of reading every review or every art publication. In fact, I avoid reading art periodicals—there's just too many of them, I can't keep up. So, other than looking at auction catalogues when they come, and using that as a kind of consistent discovery tool, it's been a random process.

collectorspace: How often do you travel to art events like art fairs or biennials?

DH: In general, I try to avoid art fairs and biennials. I don't like being forced to take in too much at once in a short period of time. Biennials are a little better for me than art fairs because they're not overtly commercial and at least the pressure to make a purchase decision is removed. But still, trying to get through twenty-seven pavilions in 8 hours, knowing that the next day they're going to be closed and the day after that I have to leave town, takes a lot of the fun out of it. I don't often travel just to see art, but it's a good excuse to travel. I like traveling to find new places and to make work there. And if there's good art to see there or an interesting exhibit, that's an added incentive to do it.

collectorspace: What are your favorite public art institutions? And what's the extent of your involvement with them?

DH: If we don't limit the question to museums, the public art institution that I'm most involved with is Art21, which is an organization that produces

a television series about contemporary art for PBS. I've been involved with it for quite a number of years, and I'm currently the Chairman of the Board. The video pieces that they've produced have been an important learning tool for me and that was really what got me involved. I also belong to lots of museums in New York—medium to high level. But I wouldn't say I had a favorite museum. I actually used to rebel against the museum's power and position in art. I'm more tolerant of it now, as my own art-making has become more important and the collecting less important. I don't feel like I'm competing with museums so much for acquisition.

collectorspace: That's a very interesting statement that you almost consider museums to be your competitor. Do these relationships impact your collecting, or have they done so at any point, maybe earlier, maybe in terms of gathering information?

DH: From a collecting point of view, the relationship with museums is a tool if I try and look at collecting as an isolated activity. It's a way of discovering an artist, it's a way of learning to understand and appreciate an artist. Certainly, the most useful museum shows for me are retrospectives. When you get a whole career of an artist and you can suddenly understand an artist—perhaps there were one or two pieces that you were interested in but you didn't really understand how, what the rest of their work was about and all of a sudden you learn the context

and the history—a whole new window opens up into that artist's work.

Museums are great for that.

collectorspace: You were recently in Istanbul for a residency program. How would you envision the role of private project spaces like 601Artspace in a city like this?

DH: I should say that I couldn't see all the exhibition spaces in Istanbul but the biggest difference compared to New York is that there are no dominant museums. I think I saw more unusual exhibitions in Istanbul than I would have expected, precisely because the scene is much less institutionalized. The urge to institutionalize is almost unavoidable, but to the extent that you can maintain that diversity, I think it will be a much more exciting scene. So private spaces like 601Artspace could have a much more important role in cities like Istanbul.

New York City, October 2011

Artworks featured in Installation View

William Eggleston

Near Jackson, Mississippi, 1970

Dye transfer print

21 ½ x 13 ½ in.

Art Storage, Brooklyn

Fischli & Weiss

In the Studio, 2004

Carved and painted polyurethane

20 x 39 ¼ x 23 ¼ in.

Art Storage, Brooklyn

Susan Hamburger

Ladies of the Right, 2009–ongoing

Acrylic on paper and paperclay,

foamboard

96 x 89 x 4 in.

Artist's studio, Brooklyn

Louise Lawler

Michael, 2001

Cibachrome mounted on aluminum

60 x 46 in.

Country House, Upstate New York

Louise Lawler

Untitled (Stella/Sotheby's), 1989

Cibachrome, crystal, felt

2 x 3 ½ in. in diameter

Beach House, Rhode Island

Abelardo Morell

Portrait of Inghirami by Raphael, 1993

Gelatin silver print

24 x 30 in.

Guest Apartment, New York

Gabriel Orozco

Mi Oficina II, 1992

Cibachrome print

15 ⅞ x 19 ⅞ in.

Art Storage, Brooklyn

Richard Serra

Humpback, 2002

Forged steel

72 x 72 x 14 in.

Country House, Upstate New York

Stephen Shore

J.J. Summer Agency, Duluth, Minn.,

1973/2003

C-print

20 x 24 in.

Apartment, New York

Thomas Struth

Kunsthistorisches Museum III, Wien, 1989

C-print

57 x 73 ⅝ in.

Apartment, New York

Hiroshi Sugimoto

South Bay Drive In, San Diego, 1993

Gelatin silver print

26 x 33 in.

Art Storage, Brooklyn

Jeff Wall

Diagonal Composition (#1), 1993

Cibachrome transparency, fluorescent
light, display case

19 ⅝ x 22 x 4 ¾ in.

Art storage, Brooklyn

About the Artists

The McCoys' multimedia artworks examine the genres and conventions of filmmaking, memory, and language. They are known for creating video installation and sculpture.

Jennifer and Kevin McCoy were 2011 Guggenheim Foundation Fellows and 2005 Wired Rave Award winners. The McCoys' work has been widely exhibited in the U.S. and internationally—exhibitions include Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Pompidou Center in Paris; BFI (British Film Institute) Southbank in London; the Hanover Kunstverein; The Beall Center in Irvine, CA; pkm Gallery in Beijing; The San Jose Museum of Art; and Palazzo della Papesse. Residencies include the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Headlands Center for the Arts. Their work can be seen in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and MUDAM in Luxembourg.

About the Authors

Merve Ünsal is an artist based in Istanbul. She is interested in tracing artistic production through the lecture format. She has previously explored this topic through writing, editing, as well as visual and verbal collages that employ automatization and found imagery. Ünsal is the co-founder of m-est.org, an artist-centered online project in which artist works, studio visits, and articles based on or related to conversations on visual practices are published.

Andrea Hill is a New York-based curator and writer. She is part of Paddle8's founding team and former Creative Director overseeing its projects with Visionaire, Tumblr, Nick Knight, Interview Magazine, and Whitewall. She is currently Paddle8's advisor on Asia development. As a curator, she produced exhibitions for Matadero Madrid, Wesleyan University, and Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert Gallery, among others. Her writing has been published by Aperture and Performa Magazine. Hill's catalog essay on artist Paul Jacobsen was recently published by Galerie Von & Von, Nürnberg.

Sohrab Mohebbi is a curator and writer living in Los Angeles. He is the co-founder of Bureau des Services sans Spécificité, Geneva. He was the 2010 recipient of Montehermoso Research Grant and the 2012 recipient of the Warhol Foundation Art Writers Grant for the blog Presence Documents. He has written for various publications in the US and internationally. He was the 2010 curatorial fellow at the Queens Museum of Art, NY and curatorial assistant at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Mohebbi is a graduate of Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, NY. He is currently an assistant curator at REDCAT, Los Angeles.

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*Installation View: Streaming Live from a
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Jennifer and Kevin McCoy

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Jennifer and Kevin McCoy

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Collectorspace is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that aims to foster critical discussions on art collecting. Through its exhibition program and off-site events, collectorspace presents different collecting practices and points of view on collecting, and creates reference points for new generations of art collectors.

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