

# A Major League Collection

The art of the game.

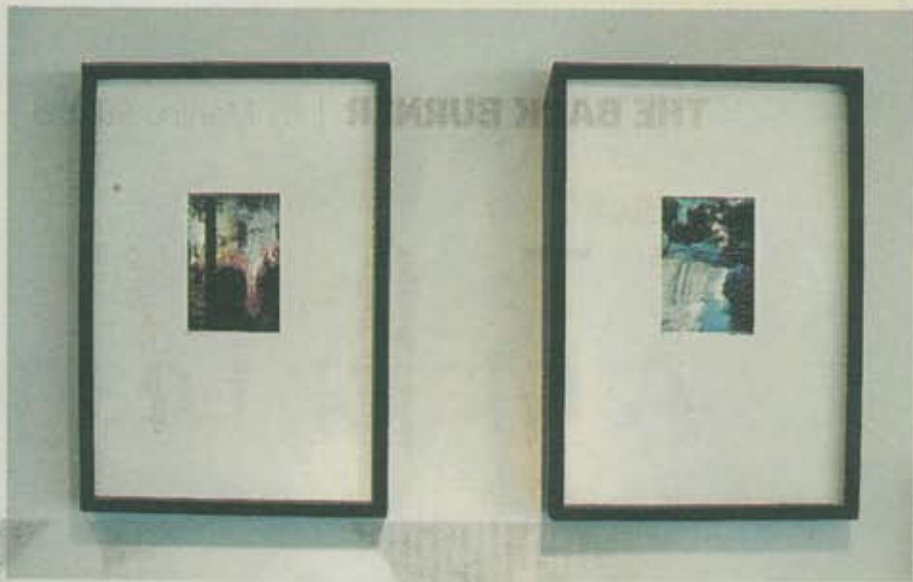


**A**fter graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1995, Lissa Bockrath was ready for the big leagues of the local art scene. She immediately opened her own art gallery in Little Italy to great acclaim.

"I didn't think there were enough contemporary art galleries in Cleveland," she explains.

Bockrath Gallery has given her the opportunity to display her own work, meet and represent artists from Cleveland and across the country, and enjoy support from Clevelanders. "Although it isn't always widely publicized, there's a strong appreciation for art in Cleveland," Bockrath says.

Lissa Bockrath, in the living room of her home in Murray Hill, with her painting, *The Audience*, above the fireplace. Her cat's name is Simba.



Two works of art purchased by Bockrath's husband, Mark Shapiro, are displayed on a wall of their bedroom. Mark bought these when he first met Lissa. The work on the left is titled *Tao Te Ching* and the other is *Song of Life*.

In the process, she made a great catch: Meeting her husband, Mark Shapiro, the new general manager of the Cleveland Indians. He walked into Bockrath's gallery in 1997 and bought two of her paintings.

"He didn't know they were mine when he was looking at them," Bockrath says. "It's a good thing I liked them, because I eventually had to live with them." (The small framed pieces hang in the couple's bedroom.) The two started dating a while later, and were married in January 2001.

Their home showcases Bockrath's artwork and that of artists whose media may differ but whose end results have a similar complexity. "I like work that's layered and has a lot of depth," Bockrath says. "At first the piece looks simple, but then you're pulled in and offered something more."

Bockrath's own works are mixed media: Oil paint over her own photography. "You lose the photography as

you paint. It's just a starting point," she explains.

Bockrath plays with color to establish a strong quality of light and a mood that is somewhere between reflective and provocative. It's as if you can peel through the various shades and discover your own interpretation of the scene.

One of her current focuses is urban landscapes. "I never do work that seems like an obvious location," she says. "Even if it's a Cleveland scene, it won't be of a specific landmark."

A large work by Cleveland artist Craig Bungo, who will have a show at Bockrath Gallery in April, hangs in the couple's second-floor landing and illustrates a different type of strength. The overall image is of a kneeling man holding paintbrushes, but he is surrounded by smaller images that reflect the diverse elements of his personality and his environment.

Although Bockrath amassed the art collection primarily herself, she and Shapiro decorated their home together, mixing his fondness for Asian minimalism with her penchant for eclecticism. Their styles fit well together. "We can walk into a store and pick out exactly the same furniture," Bockrath says. A medley of woods and metals gives the interiors warmth and intensity, much like the surrounding artwork.

A wave of excitement flows through the house these days. But it's not just baseball that has Bockrath and Shapiro buzzing; it's babies. They're expecting their first child in August. ■

