



Life

How to Become an Art Collector: A GQ Primer

If the art world feels like a cold, intimidating, and often very closed place—well, it kinda is. But it's also a wonderful world to wade into, from the thrill of the hunt to the rush of discovery. And we're here to tell you that it's not out of reach, no matter how small your budget

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHU PLACEK

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New Artist We Love

Chris Johanson

Started on the Street, Headed for the Met

Born: San Jose, California

Lives: Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon

What Johanson Makes: Colorful and almost childlike paintings of people, cities, and solar systems, often with words of wisdom or existential outbursts. Also: sculptures, video, and music. (See his record label, Awesome Vistas.)

His Chops: Brief attempts at two colleges. "Quitting school was one of the smartest decisions of my life," Johanson says. "Schools are structured for a particular kind of brain, and if you don't fit into that, it's fascist. Luckily, I realized school is everywhere."

The Work: Johanson is a color-drunk traveler barreling across the road of excess. The early stu# in the mid- and late '90s depicted the struggles of everyday life in S.F.'s then downtrodden Mission District, where he spent his "artistvoice- finding" years. But his momentum, technically and conceptually, kept him moving onward and up.

Now Johanson's initial visual trademark—gritty, gray-toned urban decay—has given way to a more threedimensional POV. His palette has broadened to include not only brighter colors but also a more hopeful worldview.

Johanson on Getting a Desk Job: "I'm a lifer, man. I was never going to have an office job. I wanted to make art all the time, free-form, free trip, no pension, no security, no board meetings. Everything reminded me of 'Peanuts'—you know, the sounds of the adults. Now I make enough money to eat organic food—and that right there, that's the jackpot."

Where to Find His Work: [Altman Siegel](#) in S.F., [Mitchell-Innes & Nash](#) in N.Y.C. (Works on paper start around \$3,500, paintings around \$20K to \$60K.) Coming up, an October show at the Modern Institute in Glasgow, then a November 9 public sculpture installation for SFMOMA.— *Arty Nelson*