

W59th St.

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When a lifetime of collecting threatened to take over **Keith Sherman's** apartment, he turned his home into a gallery instead

Words Vanessa Etienne
Photographs Phil O'Brien

In 1939, a dramatic, seven-foot sculpture called 'Riders of the Elements' dominated the New York World's Fair. Created by Chester Beach, it stood at the intersection of the Avenue of Transportation and the Court of Ships, and portrayed man's tangle with technology in the dawn of the Machine Age. Three horses and their individual riders rise up, alongside a ship, a car, and a train.

The sculpture's size would overwhelm even the most generously proportioned New York apartment, so it was made into a (still impressive) 42-inch cast bronze reduction that now sits on a revolving steel pedestal in Keith Sherman's living room. The original, meanwhile, is safely in storage.

"I like things that tell a story, that there's a context with it," says the Broadway publicist and art collector.

Walking into this one-bedroom W42nd St apartment is like walking into a work of art. One window looks across to Hudson Yards and The Vessel; another catches a (disappearing) glimpse of the Hudson River, just a few blocks away. There are sculptures of all sizes on tables, book shelves, and kitchen counters. There are creative pieces decorating the window sills. Even the bar stools, light fixtures, and bathroom sink are what Keith would describe as art, custom-created to his tastes. And the entire apartment is filled »



with paintings that stretch from wall to wall, floor to ceiling.

This is not just Keith's apartment; it's also the home of his gallery, Helicline Fine Art, which he owns and runs with his doctor husband, Roy Goldberg.

The couple have always been collectors. They started with baseball cards and comic books when they were growing up. "When I was a teenager, my parents asked what sort of souvenir they should bring me from their trip to Europe," says Keith. "A shirt? A hat? No. I wanted a painting. And a lifetime love of art was born."

The older they got, the more expensive their tastes got, including their ability to recognize quality items when they saw them. They would spend most of their spare time in art galleries and at auctions, falling in love with the stories behind each work and wanting to bring them all home — and they scored big. "We were able to find amazing works of art that were affordable because no one cared," he says. "It was a period that was completely out of favor for so long."

But when, in 2008, their art collection



Previous page: Keith, Roy, and their dog Murphy in their living room — 'Riders of the Elements' is by the window. **This page:** Sculpture, art, and books about art fill their Hell's Kitchen home.

began to outgrow their city apartment, their home upstate, their offices, and even their storage unit, Keith and Roy realized something had to give — and became dealers. Helicline specializes in 20th century American and European modernist paintings, sculptures, and works on paper. The name itself comes from their obsession with the 1939 World's Fair, whose omnipresent image was Trylon and Perisphere, two monumental sculptures and entertainment venues the size of vast buildings. The Helicline was the curved ramp that connected the two. "So, now, we connect people with art," he says.

Their tastes weren't always so refined. When they moved into their first apartment, they had "old, lifeless" furniture left over from their college days. But over time, they had the opportunity to create a space incorporating their developing style and their love for art.

Working with the artists, architects, and industrial designers they've met along the way, they've created a custom apartment that compliments the works of art that make up their private gallery. "It's our >>

home, you know?" says Keith. "It's not open to public and people come in by appointment — it's very personal."

Pieces start at \$2,000 and go as high as seven figures. But, for him, what's most important is the experience. "That's the joy of it to me," he says. "It's picking people's brains and guiding them."

"I'm all self-taught," he adds. "I don't have any kind of formal training. It's all just been born out of my heart and my energy and my interest in doing all of this."

He loves playing a part in someone else's love for art, discussing pieces of work with anyone who's interested. And it's easier to do at home as opposed to a museum, without dozens of "don't touch" signs. With their private gallery, it's all about the connection between a person and the art. "This is history," he says. "The back of a painting can tell you so much. And one of the great things about living with art is that you can touch it."

He recalls the very first sale he and Roy made. A man reached out to them because he came across their website and was interested in three different pieces of art. When he arrived at their home, he fell into a trance, captivated by the paintings that filled the walls. He walked right past the three paintings he'd asked to see and made his way to another. "What's that?" he demanded. And, ultimately, that's the one he bought.

"It is one thing to see a work of art on a computer screen, or in a book. But to see the detail with your eye — that's a different experience," says Keith. "That's why we go to museums and art galleries."

"If someone just wants a transaction, like they're buying coffee at Starbucks, that's fine," says Keith. "But I'd much rather have conversations with people. It's fun. It gets us out of ourselves and connects us with the world and society."



This page: An illustration of Roy and Keith by Al Hirschfeld is a treasured piece in their bedroom.

Even though the couple love to see people connect with the art in their home, they're still collectors at heart and it's always bittersweet to see some of their favorites go. But, regardless, they always look on the bright side.

"My view is, we don't really own these. We rent them for a period of time, but they will all out-live us," Keith says. "We're living with them now and they're giving me great joy and it would be great to share that with other people too who fall in love."

With so much passion, it's hard to imagine that this is just a sideline to both Keith and Roy's day jobs. And they're certainly kept busy. Keith says: "Just living life can be a challenge, but I see the joy in it. You can live your life with a scowl on your face or you can just manage it. We all have interests in life and I pursue everything that I do with a kind of gracious energy."

heliclinefineart.com



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