

**Art Clvb:
A Conversation with the Team**

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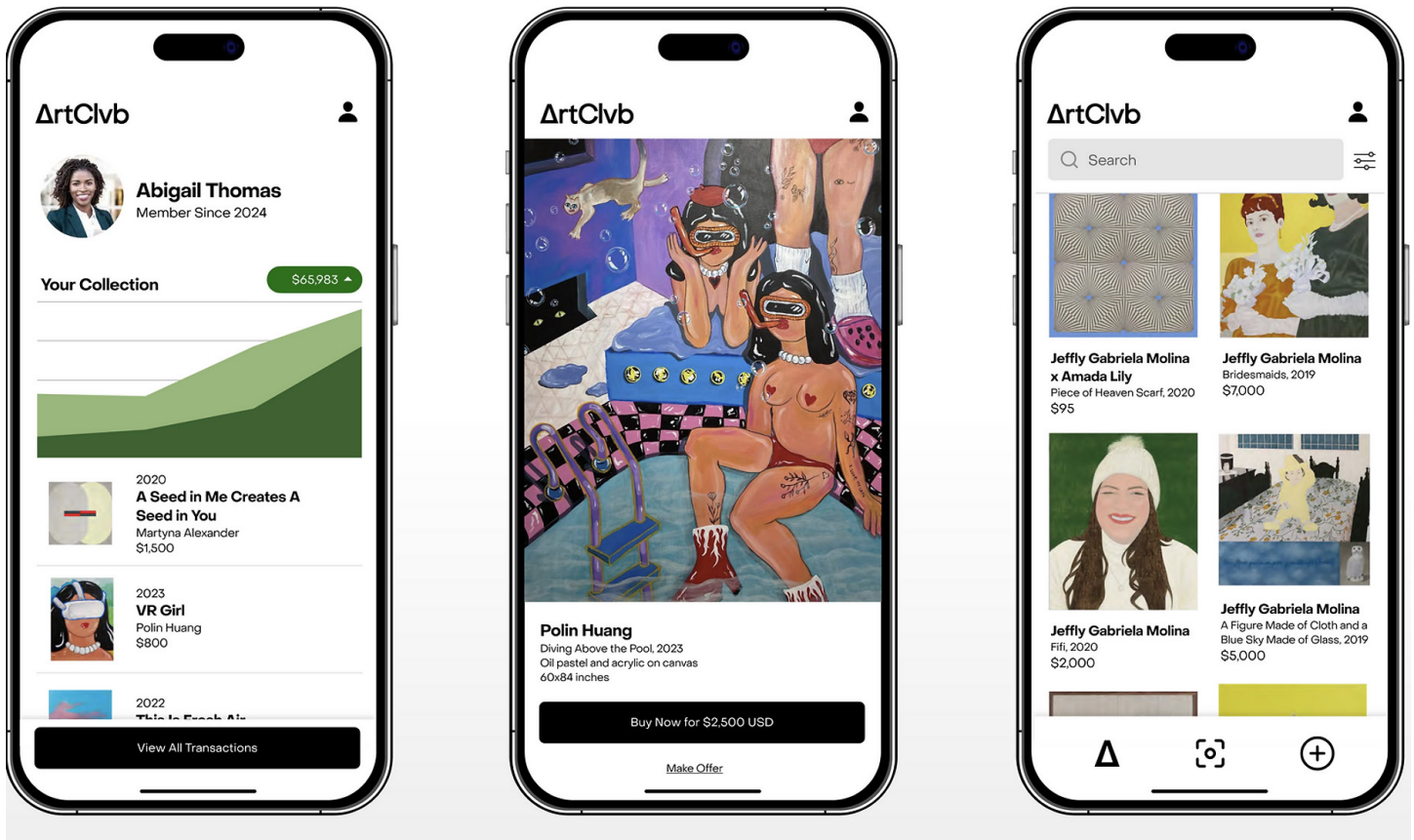
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Art Clvb is a Detroit-based Market Network created in 2022 by Steve and Dorota Coy with the intention of facilitating connections between artists, collectors, curators, galleries, and individuals involved in the local art ecosystem. Since the debut of their mobile application, which features profiles of artists work for enthusiasts and collectors to access with ease, the team's efforts have grown to incorporate in-person events, studio visits and now, Art Fair | Detroit. Here, we present a conversation with Dorota and Steve Coy, Kara Barnes, and Josie Curtis that unpacks their backgrounds, how then got to where they are now, and where they imagine their work will take them in the future.



Art Clvb leadership team. Pictured Left to Right: Jay Norman, CMO. Dorota Coy, CEO. Kara Barnes, CSO. Steve Coy, COO.
Team members who are not pictured: Josie Curtis, Head of Design. Jaime Pattison, Curator Assistant. Sam Shapiro, Tech Lead.



Visual representation of the Art Clvb mobile application.

A: So here, we have Dorota, Steve, Kara and Josie. I want to start off by summarizing what Art Clvb is, which is to make exhibiting and purchasing contemporary art easier. The initial idea was that you would do this using an application, and so is this upcoming event Art Fair Detroit the roll-out of the application?

D: So we have already launched our first version of the application. But we are now approaching the next step in the development of the app, which will be ready for the fair. We know it is not going to be perfect and we do not want to sell it as a finished product. I think these stages are all part of the process. We are not striving to be perfect in any way. What we are trying to do is create something that can facilitate more opportunities for artists to show and sell their work.

Since Steve and I moved to the city 15 years ago, we have learned that there are so many people throughout Detroit, and the state of Michigan, that want to engage with and support local artists, but they have struggled to find the avenues to do so. Of course there are the different galleries in the city that are representing local artists, but there are still thousands of great artists without these opportunities.

Detroit is geographically a big city, and things are quite spread out. Art Clvb as an app, and Art Fair Detroit as an event, are platforms that collect hundreds of different artists in one place or at one time to increase the chances to be seen by art collectors and enthusiasts.

A: So do you think an app like this is as important in a place like Los Angeles or New York? What was it about Detroit that inspired you to establish Art Clvb here specifically?

D: We were inspired to do it here because we are originally from here. For over a decade, Steve and I have been practicing artists in the city, and you know, whether you are in Detroit, LA or New York, all artists face the same struggles of trying to create something beautiful, get your art out there while being able to also pay your rent. This issue is definitely not isolated to Detroit.

S: I would say though, that the idea for Art Clvb was inspired by our experience being here. We have seen so many undervalued artists, and this is not the fault of the galleries necessarily. I think most galleries here are struggling to support artists, and even struggling to stay open, as well. Initially, we did believe that it was a Detroit issue, but when we zoom out, it is easy to recognize it as more so a national issue to have a ton of undervalued artists across the US.

A: And why do you think that is? I actually just returned from a trip to Switzerland to meet artists and see art. I must say it is such a stark difference between the support that artists in Switzerland have and artists in the US. It's almost the complete opposite, actually. I think it is difficult for Americans to see art and artists as an imperative part of the cultural ecosystem, and in Switzerland, the appreciation of art is second nature. This appreciation or lack of appreciation ultimately impacts the amount of funding that goes into the arts in any place.

D: Yes, culturally, we are different from what is happening in Europe in terms of how artists are supported, because people value different things. How the American system is set up, how the government is set up, grants and foundations, is based on the value system of the country, and then of course determines who gets the funding to exist.

S: And this sort of brings up the conversation about how Late Capitalism operates within the US. To really have a cultural movement here, you need to have popularity and a large network, so the idea behind the app is to connect the various avenues that exist in the local and broader art ecosystem. From there, we hope to create some sort of movement around collecting affordable art created by emerging artists.

D: We are starting with what we have control over at the moment. Ideally in the future, we would be able to tackle bigger issues like the structure of the art ecosystem and how artists are supported. We are already aware of some of the needs that artists have, like affordable studio space, and would love to be able to encourage foundations to invest in things like that.

A: Something that is interesting about Detroit too, is that most of the culture is generated and supported through DIY initiatives. The people fill the gaps and provide the infrastructure that is missing.

D: Yes, and to back that up, there are statistics world wide that prove how much the economy benefits from creative forces. How many millions of dollars come into the city each year because of the galleries, art events, music events, etc.

This is the reason we decided to do the art fair. Most of the fairs we are familiar with are driven by galleries, who pay to enter. We acknowledge those fairs to be important to the art ecosystem, but they are still providing opportunities for the top tier of that ecosystem.

K: And not only that, but, for instance with the Chicago Art Expo, visitors are expected to pay to enter. While that is fine for some people, that becomes a barrier for an art enthusiast or just someone who is curious about art. Our art fair is free, in person and online. Many locations across the city have



Double Bloom by Jessica Tenbusch. Colored Pencil on Paper.



Everyone is Everyone by Niki Williams. Photograph on Archival Paper.

donated their space for this fair, and we invite anyone who is interested in art to come check out the work.

A: I want to go back to the app real quick. Could you describe it for people who are unfamiliar with it? Do you upload the content to the app, or is it the artists who upload the work and information?

D: The artists manage their own profiles, so they upload the images and information themselves.

K: Right now it is featuring only Detroit artists. People who are interested in using the app would sign in. There is an artist interface and a buyer interface, and both have access to the stream of all of the artists on the app, which includes

images, information on the art, a list of the work that has already been sold, and even in the future, the information about who the work was sold to. The app also has a scanning mechanism, so at our in-person events, anyone can take a picture of the artwork and it will pull up the profile of the artist.

A: So, one of the big things about being a collector who works with a gallery is that the gallery sort of guides the collector as to what would be a good investment for them. Are you providing support like that, to guide the collectors on how to invest carefully?

D: Starting with the art fair, we are going to start providing tips on how to collect. That will be something that we



Rodin's Mirage by Amadeus Roy. Acrylic & Molding Paste on Sculpted Wood.

offer for free, and as we get going, we want to start a more advanced art collecting program, which will incorporate education on historical art movements, their styles and the meaning behind that type of work. Then we would provide a list of artists on the app who work in that style who we think are worth investing in.

S: We want to do two things. One would be the collecting tips, including size guides and price guides. We will also always have a curatorial team that will look at work that is submitted and talk to the artist to establish whether they are ready to be featured on the app.

D: Back to in person events, the art exhibitions are great, but I think one of my favorite events we did was what we called Studio Deals, which invited artists to open up their studios,

and art enthusiasts and collectors would visit their studios, meet the artists and buy work right there. This also leads to future purchases and commissions.

S: We have learned over the years that a lot of collectors want to get to know the artists a little bit, so organizing these types of events is great for that purpose.

A: I do wonder, if anyone can just make an account on the app, how do you ensure that the work is quality work?

D: We do have an approval process to look at all of the pictures and learn about the artist so that we get a better idea on the level of dedication they have for their practice.

A: So, what are you looking for in the artwork or the art-



Sweeper by Shea Chang, Ink & Graphite on Cotton Paper.



The Last to Laugh by Daniel Geanes. Acrylic on Canvas.

ist? If there is a submission and approval process, obviously you are looking at the images to ensure the art is lit well and things like that, but do you ask for writing from the artist, or a CV?

D: I look through their website, biography, CV, anything that they give me. From there, I am able to determine whether the artist is committed to their practice and that is the most important to us.

S: Yes, we want to support as many artists as we can, but there are metrics that we have, and that is to protect the consumers and make them feel comfortable working with each

of the artists featured on the platform. Actually, many of the marketplaces out there do not have this initial screening process. Saatchi, for instance, allows pretty much anyone to post their work on the site to sell. Many on the site are legitimate of course, but it is difficult to truly know because there is little oversight for who is featured on the platform. We want to bring a level of transparency to it that will help guide people as they navigate the app and the experience of buying the work.

D: In a similar way with Art Fair Detroit, we are seeking to provide as many serious artists as possible with the opportunity to participate, even if it is only one painting they want to



Image taken at an in-person exhibition hosted by Art Clvb.

show. For the more established artists, they are given more space. We are really working on figuring out a way to balance the inclusivity while also building something that is useful and reliable for buyers.

A: Is there anything that exists like the Art Clvb application anywhere else?

D: There are a couple of platforms that have come up, but our approach is a little bit different because along with the app, we are organizing in-person events like the art fair, exhibitions and studio deals. We are not only a marketplace that is benefiting off of the sale of artists, we are trying to explore different ways to facilitate exhibiting, selling and buying art.

Steve and I are the founders and we are both artists. We came up with the idea of Art Clvb as an application because we both recognized a need for something like this in our own lives, and that this need is not unique to us. Because we are artists, we are able to approach the development of this project from that perspective.

Kara Barnes joined the team after initially working with Art Clvb as a collector. Working with government technology companies previously, she saw a lot of potential in what we are trying to do, and has contributed a lot of thoughts and ideas to make it easier from the buyers perspective.



Official flyer for Art Fair | Detroit 2024.

Josie Curtis is an artist who just graduated from Wayne State. She just joined the team as our designer, so she takes these ideas and implements them so that they can exist in the real world. She has been working on the development of our website as well as any promotional material we use.

Jay Norman is the marketing advisor on the team, Sam Shapiro is the coder who develops the Art Clvb app, and Jamie Pattison is our Curator Assistant.

On September 27th, 28th and 29th, Art Clvb's Art Fair | Detroit will utilize a variety of spaces throughout the city to showcase contemporary art ranging from emerging to mid-career artists. Anyone who is interested in experiencing or purchasing art is welcome to attend this free event.

You can learn more about Art Clvb at their website:

<https://www.artclvb.xyz/>

and on their instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/art_clvb/

And you can learn more about Art Fair | Detroit here:

<https://www.artclvb.xyz/art-fair>

**All images are courtesy of Art Clvb*

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