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Herbert Vogel, Renowned Connoisseur and Collector of Contemporary Art, Dies at 89; Works Collected Over Five Decades with Wife Dorothy Reside in Collections Throughout United States



Dorothy and Herbert Vogel in the 1994 exhibition *From Minimal to Conceptual Art: Works from the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection* at the National Gallery of Art. Photo by John Tsantes. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gallery Archives

Washington, DC— Connoisseur and collector of contemporary art Herbert Vogel died from natural causes at Kateri Residence, New York City, on July 22, 2012. He was considered by many to be a visionary and among the earliest collectors who championed minimal and conceptual art in the 1960s. After marrying Dorothy Faye Hoffman in 1962, he inspired her to join his pursuits, using his salary as a U.S. postal clerk to purchase art while living on what she earned as a librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library. Over five decades they redefined what it meant to be an art collector. Despite their modest income and small apartment, they amassed a world-class

collection of more than 5,000 works that have been distributed to museums throughout the nation, with the majority going to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Their story has inspired generations of passionate contemporary art collectors.

"The radical expansion of intellectual and stylistic expressions in many media by European and American artists since the 1960s is reflected in the diversity of the works that Herb and Dorothy collected over five decades," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We will miss Herb's astute eye and wry sense of humor and we give our heartfelt condolences to Dorothy. We are forever grateful for their generosity in pledging so much of their collection to the nation."

Herbert Vogel was born in New York City on August 16, 1922, the son of Nathan, a Russian Jewish tailor, and Bessie, a homemaker. He grew up in Manhattan and developed a love for animals, caring for an assortment of pets such as turtles, fish, and cats throughout his life. After serving stateside in the U.S. Army during World War II, he worked as a U.S. postal clerk. He did not finish high school but he did spend his spare time in art museums and taking classes in art history at the Institute of Fine Arts and in painting at New York University. His art education was further enriched from the time he spent at the Cedar Bar, a meeting place for artists such as David Smith and Franz Kline. One of Vogel's earliest acquisitions in the 1950s was a work by Giuseppe Napoli, a mid-century artist working in New York.

After their marriage in Dorothy's hometown of Elmira, NY, Herbert introduced her to the art museums of the nation's capital, including the National Gallery of Art. Upon their return to Manhattan, she joined her husband in taking classes in drawing and painting at New York University. They rented a studio with another artist, painting in their spare time and squeezing in visits to galleries on weekends.

Their first joint purchase of art was a small crushed-metal sculpture by John Chamberlain in 1962. They were attracted to minimal art, particularly that of artist and collector Sol LeWitt, who introduced them to talented, emerging artists, such as Carl Andre. Through their formative relationship with LeWitt and Dan Graham, the Vogels collected these artists' early work and that of a wide spectrum of their contemporaries, including Richard Artschwager, Lynda Benglis, John Cage, Christo and Jeanne-

Claude, Donald Judd, Robert Mangold, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Edda Renouf, Joel Shapiro, Richard Tuttle, and dozens of others. In recent years, the Vogels have also acquired carefully chosen work by a variety of other important artists, including Andy Goldsworthy, James Siena, and Pat Steir.

In 1992, J. Carter Brown, who was then director of the National Gallery of Art, announced at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, that the Gallery would receive more than 1,000 works from the Vogels through partial gift and purchase. The announcement led to a story about the couple on CBS-TV's *Sixty Minutes* in 1995. Under the directorship of Earl A. Powell III, the Vogel Collection continued to grow. To date, the National Gallery of Art has acquired 927 works through partial gift and purchase, and the Vogels have promised 275 more.

In 2008, the Vogels—facilitated by the National Gallery of Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services—distributed 2,500 works from their collection to museums across the country, with 50 works going to a selected art institution in each of the 50 states. A website (www.vogel5050.org) tells the ongoing story of the project called *Vogel 50x50*. Two of the beneficiaries are featuring their gifts in exhibitions this summer: ***The Collecting Impulse: Fifty Works from Herbert and Dorothy Vogel***, at The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX, through August 12, 2012, and ***The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection: Fifty Works for Rhode Island***, at the Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, July 20 through December 2, 2012. The Vogels gave nearly 400 works by Buffalo native Charlie Clough to the Anderson Gallery, University of Buffalo, New York, in 2011, and nearly 600 works to the Columbia Art Museum, South Carolina, one year later.

Through the years, selections from the Vogel collection have appeared in numerous exhibitions in Europe and the United States, including two major traveling shows organized by the National Gallery of Art: ***From Minimal to Conceptual Art: Works from the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection*** (1994) and ***Christo and Jeanne-Claude in the Vogel Collection*** (2002). In 2009, an award-winning movie, *Herb & Dorothy*, was produced by Megumi Sasaki, who is working on a new movie, *Herb & Dorothy 50x50*.

The Vogels were presented the College Art Association's Centennial Award for Patronage to the Field in 2011. One year later, the Dallas Art Fair announced that the inaugural recipients of the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Award presented by Gallerist were artists Hugh Scott-Douglas and Jason Brinkerhoff.

In 1994, the Vogels' names were carved in marble among other benefactors' names in the Sixth Street entrance lobby of the National Gallery of Art, West Building, on the National Mall. Works from their collection currently on view at the National Gallery of Art include two wall drawings by Sol LeWitt, sculptures by Lynda Benglis and Richard Tuttle, a painting by Sylvia Plimack Mangold, and a collage by Howardena Pindell.

During an interview in 1994 for an exhibition catalogue, the Vogels were asked, *Do you remember what initially attracted you to minimal and conceptual art?* They responded:

Dorothy Vogel: *To us it was challenging but it wasn't that revolutionary. It evolved from what was before. It was rejecting the abstract expressionists, but it made sense....*

Herbert Vogel: *The work might have been right, but the people weren't ready for that kind of work. So it was revolutionary for many, many people, which very often happens when something does break convention or tradition. Later on, if it is very, very good, it will be picked up by history.[1]*

Herbert Vogel is survived by his wife of 50 years, Dorothy Vogel; a sister, Paula Antebi; two nephews, Julian and Adam Antebi; one niece, Nadine Antebi; three great-nephews; and his beloved cat, Archie.

[1] See "Dorothy and Herbert Vogel in Conversation," in *From Minimal to Conceptual Art: The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection* (Exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1994).

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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