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Her Family's Aesthetic Is Famously Ornate. But Rothschild Descendant and Young Collector Gwen Tilghman Is 'More of a Minimalist'



Gwen Tilghman is descended from one of 19th-century Europe's most revered art-collecting families. The Rothschild banking dynasty's vast holdings—which, over the years, have boasted historic works of Renaissance art, priceless jewelry, regal furnishings, and rare manuscripts—may have given rise to the infamous eponymous term *le goût Rothschild*, but this young American collector isn't resting on those gilded laurels.

"I'm more of a minimalist," she muses from her office at Volt Global, the New York-based investment fund she founded last year. Tilghman prefers to keep an uncluttered, white-walled home that lets the works in her collection do the talking. "I tend to gravitate toward bright colors and abstract shapes," she says, "and I'm a big fan of nature."

So far on her collecting journey, Tilghman has scooped up color-dripping, eye-popping works by rising artists Markus Amm, Alejandra Seeber, Patricia Treib, Ryan Wallace, and Zak Kitnick—plus "three Daniel Fuller photographs showing abstracted ocean views and sunsets that almost look like Rothkos." Recently, she bought a textured canvas by Marina Rheingantz, donating another piece by the Brazilian artist to the ICA Miami (where her uncle, on the Rothschild side, sits on the Donors Circle). But it's her first purchase, a painting by Sam Moyer, with its undulating

fields of blue, that she considers the centerpiece of her collection. "It reminds me of a Loïc Raguénès wave painting," she says, "with a dash of Cy Twombly."

If there's any family influence behind Tilghman's collecting philosophy, it comes from her mother—also on the Rothschild side—who instilled in her children a reverence for contemporary art. "She was a lifelong collector—contemporary names versus the classics," Tilghman says. Her mother's vast collection featured works by George Condo, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Andy Warhol, as well as "two beautiful Francesco Clemente paintings." Most of those works went to auction following her mother's death in 2020, but Tilghman kept a few as cherished mementos, including a Warhol print of General George Custer and an expressionistic flower painting by Donald Baechler.

Tilghman's gallery circuit includes White Cube, Sean Kelly Gallery, Clearing, and, when she's in London, Kate MacGarry. She leans on a few well-positioned friends to help her edge out the competition when necessary. Some of those insiders hail from her college days at Yale—but while her friends were students in the university's elite art program, Tilghman pursued engineering and economics.

"Those are underrepresented fields for women," she says. "I remember teaching girls to code and helping them to expand their horizons ... Women empowering women, especially in finance—I'm one of the few woman investors who has started a fund—has been a central part of my life." She pauses to reflect. "It's something I try to cultivate in my art collection, too. I find myself seeking out art by women that speak to me."