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Where-Housing Art

The news that Jerry Seinfeld purchased an entire Manhattan building just to house his vintage sports cars came as no surprise to space-strapped art collectors everywhere. For this insatiable group—whose acquisitions often outpace their display space—Seinfeld's move was a creative solution to a familiar problem. "Storage is always an issue," says Cristina Grajales, a New York art adviser. "Collectors have to be clever. They store their holdings everywhere—in the nanny's room, the guest room, closets. Sometimes they just pile things on the floor." Others turn spare apartments or second homes in the country into storage spaces. But Renee Vara, a former Chubb art specialist who now works with private clients, warns collectors not to store art in the basement or attic: "Dampness and changes in temperature—not to mention squirrels—can wreak havoc." Collectors who want to limit their prints' and photographs' exposure to damaging UV rays can take them out of their frames when they're not on display and store the works in drawers or flat boxes. Maurice and Margery Katz, L.A. collectors of American modernist art, rotate works between their own walls and picture racks built into closets. Or they loan them to their adult children and to grateful museums.

For others, rotating the collection means picking up the telephone. Specialized New York warehouses, including Crozier Fine Arts, Cirker's Fine Arts, Judson and Artex provide

unlimited space and white-glove services. "Just tell us which works you want. We'll bring them over, take the old ones down and hang the new ones—we do it all," says Kevin Lay, of Crozier. Such convenience is seductive, but in the wake of last May's fire at the Momart warehouse in London, in which hundreds of contemporary works (many belonging to Charles Saatchi) went up in smoke, collectors need to choose a facility carefully. "Do a walk-through and ask questions," says Vara, who advises her clients to keep their own inventories of stored works. "You want climate control, twenty-four-hour monitoring, burglary-detection equipment and a fire-detection system that reacts to smoke—not just a sprinkler system. Not only will water from sprinklers ruin your collection, but by the time they come on (at 140 degrees), there will already be so much smoke damage that they won't make a difference."

ANN E. BERMAN



Driven up the wall: This frame collector has just about run out of display space.