



Wendy Cromwell founded her own art advisory firm in 2002, after spending 15 years in the contemporary art department at Sotheby's New York. She is now vice president of the nonprofit Association of Professional Art Advisors (APAA), helping private clients assemble contemporary art collections, whether from scratch or by bringing an existing collection to the next level. She spoke with Meredith Mendelsohn about her approach to collection building and her top picks on Istdibs.

You studied at Smith, which has a wonderful college art museum. Did your access to that collection affect your own approach to collecting?

It was a big influence. Smith's founders, in the 1890s, thought that contemporary art should be part of everyone's education, and they started the museum to collect contemporary art. So, I really learned to think about everything — even a 19th-century William Merritt Chase painting —

as it would have been perceived when it was contemporary. It really helped me to think about why, and if, new art will last.

How do you determine if work by an up-and-coming artist has staying power?

One thing I look for is how artists either engage the dialogue of the past in a new way or push that dialogue forward in a very radical way.



Among the works Wendy Cromwell has purchased for clients in her capacity as an art advisor is Dan Colen's *S&M*, 2010. Portraits by Barry Sutton