

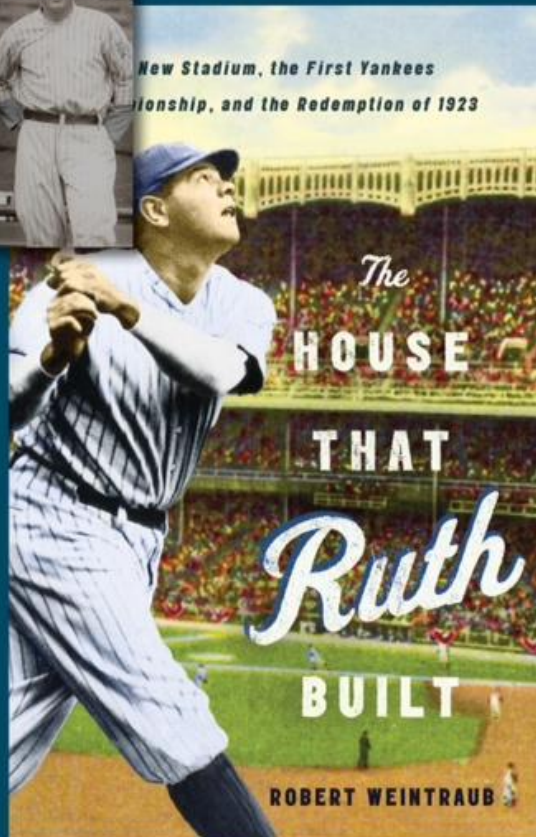
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## Neil Scherer

# The Art Of Dealing In Art

by Peter Haas

**T**o many people, an "art dealer" is someone who simply buys and sells fine works. To Neil Scherer, however, it's much more. "Being an art dealer is about building relationships. People come into my gallery, they look around, they stop suddenly in front of a painting—and you hear them say, 'wow!' The painting has gotten to them, a connection has been made. That's what I like most about this profession."

Neil Scherer is the proprietor of Scherer Galleries, on Manhattan's East Side. "Sometimes people are intimidated when they come into a gallery and are surrounded by art," he points out. "But I've had people who bought their first painting from me, and it moved them into the art world. It's very rewarding to build collections with my clients."

"I once overheard three businessmen discussing their investments at a sporting event at Madison Square Garden," he recalls. "One bought real estate, one bought stocks, the third bought art. They were talking about what they look at when they purchase. The first two said that they look at whether the numbers are going up or down. The third person said, 'I don't follow which way the numbers are going. I just enjoy art. I wake up in the morning, it's there, and it brings me pleasure.' As for myself," Neil adds, "I love meeting clients, having them meet a painting, and letting those forces take over from there."

Neil Scherer has been operating Scherer Galleries for some 15 years, and is now well known by collectors, auction houses and art dealers across the country. They are among the sources for the art he buys and re-sells, or handles on consignment. "Top galleries or private dealers will contact me and say, 'I just saw something great; I think it will be of

interest to you.' Friends, friends of friends, estates, word of mouth—they're all sources. Good art can come from anywhere."

So can buyers. "I deal with many prominent people: doctors, lawyers, business people whom I have gotten to know or who are referred to me," Neil says. "Quite often, clients will ask, 'Neil, what have you got that's new?' If I haven't come up with a new addition in a few weeks, I can sense their disappointment."

Neil is also a frequent source for galleries that are seeking fine art, often on consignment. "I'll walk along Madison Avenue and look in at some of the finest galleries," he says. "Often, paintings I've obtained are in the windows, waiting for the right buyers."

As Neil's business has grown, it has attracted investors in art. "They go into it as a business venture," he notes, "but often, after a short period of time, they get involved with the art itself. It grabs them!"

It took a while for the art world to grab Neil, who grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. When he was a youngster, his family would vacation in New England, where his father, an art dealer, bought antiques. "The stuff was old," Neil recalls, "and I was embarrassed by it. I didn't want my friends to see it! But in time, I started to appreciate the pieces, their value, and the history behind their workmanship."

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Neil earned a law degree and went to work as an attorney for the Carvel

ice cream company. When Carvel was sold, Neil intended to continue his law career, but he returned home, borrowed a painting from his father, and sold it to the first gallery he entered. "It was beginner's luck," he says, "but I discovered the fun of being entrepreneurial, and I caught the bug of being an art dealer."

Neil subsequently formed Scherer Galleries. In fact, Neil is Scherer Galleries. "You're looking at the entire staff!" he says. "That means that I work 40, 50, 60 hours a week. But when you are doing something that you love and enjoy, you don't think about the hours. I can go till 2 in the morning and not get tired, because I'm all excited working on various projects."

Neil's business has grown, and he now receives calls from collectors across the country seeking art for their homes and offices. "I look for works by great artists such as Jasper Cropsey, Albert Bierstadt, Milton Avery, Jaimie Wyeth and Wolf Kahn—works by these artists are all currently in my inventory—but also for great pieces by less renowned artists. It balances out. Even great artists can have mediocre days, while artists who may not be recognized as top notch can create a '10' painting. Or, to put it in baseball terms, even .220 hitters hit home runs!"

Baseball terminology is no accident: Neil operates a second, thriving business dealing with sports art. "I've always been a sports fan," he notes. "I hold season tickets for Knicks and Yankees games, and I'm

*"I love meeting clients, having them meet a painting, and letting those forces take over from there"*





pretty knowledgeable in that area. I started collecting sports art, with the idea of keeping it for myself rather than selling it. However, after numerous customers asked me to sell these historic sports tributes, I have moved in this direction."

One of these customers was Marlene Steiner, senior vice president at The Corcoran Group, one of New York's premier real estate firms. "I was renovating my own apartment," she recalls, "and I walked into Neil's gallery. Shopping for art can be intimidating, but Neil was more than happy to talk to me about it. I saw his sports art, and, as a businesswoman, I could see its potential. Further, as a real estate professional, I knew of venues where it could be displayed. I think the business has phenomenal promise. How often can you marry knowledge and passion of a subject? Who doesn't love the glamour of it?"

Neil's sports-art presentations are carefully crafted works that commemorate historic individual and team accomplishments. One large piece documents and celebrates Roger Maris's 1961 chase of Babe Ruth's 1927 single-season home run record. The art work contains signed photos of Maris hitting his 60<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> home runs; signed photos of Jack Fisher as well as Tracy Stallard, the pitcher who served up the record-breaker; and autographs of all 46 pitchers Maris homered against that year.



(Clockwise From Left) Neil Scherer and Efram Navas; Neil Scherer, Marlene Steiner and Jeff Mann; Micky Mantle Memorabilia; and Mets Memorabilia

Another work represents the 1951 final playoff game between the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers. The winner of the game would go on to the World Series. It was the bottom of the ninth inning, the Dodgers were winning, when Bobby Thompson came up to bat against Ralph Branca and hit the "Shot Heard Round the World" that cinched the pennant. In the art piece, photos and ticket stubs commemorate the moment.

A third display remembers the 1936 World Olympics, where Adolph Hitler wanted to promote the "superiority" of the Aryan race—and Jesse Owens, representing the U.S., won four Gold Medals. The tribute contains ticket stubs from the games and several of the printed programs. "I have

authenticating letters for all the pieces—probably because of my legal background," says Neil.

"These works are history lessons," he says. "However, I'm not dealing in memorabilia as such. These are art works. In addition, they're conversation pieces. You bring a number of people into a room, they gravitate toward one of these displays, and invariably they start reminiscing and talking to one another. Isn't that beautiful?" **M**

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PRICE LIST

1. "Mickey Mantle World Series Home Run Record"	53 x 31	\$38,000.00
2. "Roger Maris Single Season Home Run Record"	47 x 38	\$35,000.00
3. "1961 World Champion Yankee Team"	43 x 61	\$25,000.00
4. "Babe Ruth and Roger Maris HR Record"	21 x 38	\$32,000.00
5. "1962 Post Cereal Baseball Cards"	31 x 42	\$ 6,000.00
6. "Mickey Mantle WS Home Run Mark w Pitchers"	50 x 30	\$42,000.00
7. "1927 World Champion Yankees"	34 x 36	\$65,000.00
8. "Shot Heard Round the World"	42 x 35	\$16,000.00
9. "Bobby Thomson with Progam's"	23 x 40	\$15,000.00
10. "Wait Till Next Year Yanks-Dodgers 1941 WS"	51 x 39	\$16,000.00
11. "Miracle Mets"	40 x 39	\$14,000.00
12. "Hank Aaron Home Run Champion"	40 x 45	\$18,000.00
13. "Green Monster Hero's"	46 x 36	\$ 8,000.00
14. "Thanks, YAZ"	40 x 38	\$ 6,000.00
15. "Strike Out Kings"	31 x 40	\$ 7,000.00
16. "Brooklyn Dodgers World Champions-1955"	43 x 64	\$32,000.00
17. "Ice Bowl"	35 x 40	\$ 6,000.00
18. "NBA Top 50-Red"	45 x 60	\$70,000.00
19. "New York Knicks 72-73 Champions"	24 x 28	\$ 5,000.00
20. "Starting 5 1972 Knicks with Holtzman-BB"		\$ 3,000.00
21. "NBA Top 50-Blue"	45 x 64	\$75,000.00
22. "Ben Ganz-Yankee Stadium"	12 x 15	\$ 10,000.00
23. "Palmer Hayden-Michie Stadium"	23 x 30	\$30,000.00
24. "Gary Erbe-Amazin Mets"	63 x 44	\$135,000.00

