

ARTY ALTRUISM

Vermont art collector and archivist **MARK WASKOW** bought his first piece of art at the 1998 **SOUTH END ART HOP** in Burlington. It was a table encrusted with cigarettes made by artist Gretchen Whittier. Now Waskow's collection is so vast, it has a name: the Waskowmium. And he's on a mission to share his love of collecting with other Vermonters.

Toward that end, Waskow has created a program that will allow individuals to buy art from local organizations. First, he donated \$2,500 to each of three arts nonprofits: **STUDIO PLACE ARTS** in Barre, and **FROG HOLLOW VERMONT CRAFT GALLERY** and the **SOUTH END ARTS AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION** in Burlington. The same sum will be donated to those arts organizations again next year. Using the donation, the three institutions created their own gift certificates valued at \$500 apiece, with which prospective patrons can purchase art from them. In this first round, at least, Waskow himself will select the lucky recipients.

The program is as yet unnamed, but it could be filed under "what goes around comes around."

As an avid serial art buyer and advocate, Waskow recognizes that he is somewhat of an outlier in Vermont. "For a lot of different reasons, most people don't routinely buy art," he says. "I was thinking about what one could do about this, and it came to my attention that maybe there was a way of both supporting organizations that I'm interested in supporting and, at the same time, promoting the collection of art. So I started a micro-grant program."

SEABA is holding on to one of its five gift certificates and plans to award it to a recipient at the Art Hop in September. **SUE HIGBY**, executive director of SPA and Waskow's partner, says the pair will begin to create and distribute her certificates this week.

Waskow will distribute Frog Hollow's certificates, but the craft center is throwing in a bonus: Each recipient will also get a membership to the nonprofit, which includes 10 percent off all merchandise.

"The way I look at it, it's the least we can do," says Frog Hollow director **ROB HUNTER**.

How does Waskow choose recipients? "In the course of my travels, I run into people who have an interest in art and would be purchasing it regularly if they were able to do it," he explains. "So that's the basis of the gift. People that would otherwise collect art but can't."

Another part of Waskow's mission is to dispel the notion that art is just for the well heeled.

"I think a lot of people have a resistance to purchasing art because they've been told that you have to be really wealthy," he says. "I have a feeling that if I start some of these people off with the opportunity ... it'll be followed by other purchases."

Waskow's project is planned to last just two years. Maybe another collector will pick up the mantle?

SADIE WILLIAMS

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ART

Mark Waskow

MATTHEW THORSEN



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