

YOUNG COLLECTORS 2021

CULTURED

TOGETHER THE CLASS OF 2021 EMBODY EVERYTHING THAT WORKS ABOUT THE CURRENT PATRONAGE SYSTEM, WHILE LEAVING BEHIND ITS MORE INSIDIOUS MALPRACTICES. WE SEE SIGNS OF HOPE AND PROGRESS IN THEIR DEDICATION TO RESEARCH, PEER-CENTERED INVESTMENTS, SOCIALLY-ENGAGED DIALOGUES AND APPETITE FOR LISTENING AND LOOKING AS MUCH AS SPEAKING.

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VIKRAM RAVIKUMAR AT HOME WITH
TWO CYNTHIA TALMADGE WORKS, ONE
REFERENCING THE COVER OF TOM
WOLFE'S THE *BONFIRE OF THE
VANITIES* AND THE OTHER AN ODE TO
THE FRANK E. CAMPBELL FUNERAL
HOME ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE.
PORTRAIT BY RYAN PLETT.

Vikram Ravikumar

Vikram Ravikumar began attending [Ellie Rines's New York gallery](#), now called [56 Henry](#), back when it was still a jolly closet on 55 Gansevoort Street. The beer-warmed crowd that spilled out of the jewel-box-sized space operated as a kind of gateway drug to a larger cosmos of Downtown gallery communities, where Ravikumar, an inventor of medical devices, discovered a compatible outlet for his left-brain needs. His first purchase of a shaped canvas by Graham Collins broke the seal, transforming the Upper West Side resident from spectator to actively engaged. These days he is picking up two to three artworks a month from a constellation of personality-driven spaces like 56 Henry, Helena Anrather and Situations.

This consistent investment in the physical output of select imaginations mirrors Ravikumar's office life, where he problem solves within the medical space, creating alongside his father. The task of bringing different inventions to market gives Ravikumar an appreciation for the scrappy ingenuity of upstart gallerists who must build and shape the context around a practice so it can flourish in a wider world. "In my job, the bottom line is always about functionality and cost-effectiveness," Ravikumar explains. "In art, I found an escape from that mindset."

The entrepreneur finds himself drawn to work that examines the aesthetics of power through the lens of the outsider or perceived outsider. This translates into an admiration of material originality, humor and those that engage with the idea of passing. For example, he has two works by [Cynthia Talmadge](#), who toys with the nostalgia of coastal elites by invoking their coded aesthetics through obsessive procedure. Her paintings are hung not far from plaster work by [LaKela Brown](#) that picks up the language of archaeology and classical sculpture but switches the subject matter to histories of Black fashion and culture.

It could be said that all of Ravikumar's ambitions move towards disruption of the establishment. A second-generation immigrant and the son of physicians with artist friends, Ravikumar remembers friend at work. "It felt like a mausoleum," he recall. "That is why I've always been attracted downtown, to where people take their programs seriously and other things less so. I like the idea of shepherding in the next generation. I think that is something I'll always do in my collecting. I don't see myself graduating from the community I've built."