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By Maxwell Rabb

Inside the Mathews Sisters' Bold New Vision for Their Family Collection



Portrait of Alexandra, Gilbert, Roselyn, and Suzanne Mathews with David Salle's *Black Eyed Susan with Envy* (2002), 2023. Photo by Yvonne Tnt, BFA. Courtesy of Lucifer Lighting.

For Roselyn and Alexandra Mathews, each museum visit during their childhood was marked by the selection of a new postcard to add to their collection. Daughters of Gilbert and Suzanne Mathews, founders of the Texan lighting giant Lucifer Lighting, the sisters remember each postcard as chapters of their artistic upbringing.

“Whatever memory I have of my childhood, art is a part of it,” Alexandra said to Artsy. “It’s a part of it visually. It’s a part of the actual content of the memory. It’s a part of the travel. [Art is] my parents’ life and much of my family beyond our parents.”

Roselyn and Alexandra were always immersed in a world where art and aesthetics were intrinsic. Lucifer Lighting designs and manufactures the lighting for several premier art museums, such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and SFMOMA, as well as luxury retail spaces including Chanel and Hermès. Art collecting runs throughout the extended family. Their great aunt Louise Reinhardt Smith is honored with a room in the MoMA, and the family’s collection features a dizzying array of artists from [Adolph Gottlieb](#) to [Alberto Giacometti](#).

Now 31 and 42, respectively, Roselyn and Alexandra play integral roles in their family business and art collection. Both sisters hold master’s degrees in fine and decorative arts—Roselyn from Sotheby’s Institute of Art and Alexandra from Christie’s Education—and serve as vice president and executive vice president, respectively, for the family firm. “Now, when our parents come to us to ask our opinion on something, we have a little bit more weight on our shoulders,” said Roselyn.

A family of art lovers



Installation view of Candida Höfer's *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien V111* (2003) at the Mathews family's home in Santa Barbara. Photo by Matt Walla Photography. Courtesy of Lucifer Lighting.



Installation view of Dan Christensen's *Western Blues* (2001) at Lucifer Lighting, Tribeca. Photo by Brett Beyer. Artwork courtesy of Berry Campbell Gallery.

The Mathews family's love for art stems from their grandparents, Jeanne and Irving Mathews, who started collecting [Art Nouveau](#) and [Art Deco](#) glass in the 1960s. Their collections, now partly housed at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, inspired their son Gilbert—Roselyn and Alexandra's father—to develop a lifelong affinity for art of all kinds. He would make his first purchase with [Henri Matisse's](#) *Diane* (1938), a linocut work that currently hangs in his bathroom and has sparked a lifelong obsession with the French artist that the daughters would come to share.

Meanwhile, their mother, Suzanne, ran a gallery in San Antonio from 1977 to 1988, bringing contemporary artists such as [William Scott](#), [Emilio Sanchez](#), and [Kikuo Saito](#) to Texas. Alexandra remembers meeting [Francisco Toledo](#) as a child in his Paris-based studio. There, she would color in one of Toledo's drawings, with both her and the artist printing their names on it. It now hangs in Alexandra's daughter's bedroom.

The sisters' approach to collecting is unmistakably informed by their family's rigor and attention to quality. "It's really impressed on me to not get the 'good deal,' [but rather to] get what's in great condition," noted Alexandra. Their professional upbringing also plays a crucial role. Roselyn, learning from her parents' expertise in lighting, carefully considers how light impacts each artwork, a lesson she and her sister learned from years of viewing art on the job.

Showcasing artists in Tribeca



Portrait of Roselyn Mathews at Lucifer Lighting's Tribeca showroom with David Salle's *Black Eyed Susan with Envy* (2002). Photo by Yvonne Tnt, BFA. Artwork courtesy of Lehmann Maupin. Courtesy of Lucifer Lighting.

In October 2023, the Mathews family inaugurated the Lucifer Lighting showroom in Tribeca with a curated selection of art from [Lehmann Maupin](#), including works by [Catherine Opie](#) and [David Salle](#). Roselyn was enamored by Salle's *Black Eyed Susan with Envy* (2002), a massive painting that she championed despite her father's initial reservations about its risqué nature.

"This must be what it's like to work at a museum," said Roselyn, detailing how the showroom allows her and her family to develop a relationship with the artwork. Though the Salle painting was beyond her current budget, she emphasized the importance of showcasing works that cultivate an appreciation for art's value. Similarly, the showroom features works by [Dan Christensen](#), [Ethel Schwabacher](#), and [Yvonne Thomas](#), provided by [Berry Campbell Gallery](#)—and Alexandra has her eyes particularly set on a vibrant painting by Thomas.

A collection built by relationships



Installation view of Karel Appel's *Trois Tetes Volantes* (1959) at the Mathews family's home in Santa Barbara. Photo by Matt Walla Photography. Courtesy of Lucifer Lighting.



Interior view of the Mathews family's home in Santa Barbara. Photo by Matt Walla Photography. Courtesy of Lucifer Lighting.

The close engagement with the art they admire has been instrumental in shaping Roselyn's and Alexandra's own budding collections. After finishing their art degrees and eventually starting to work for Lucifer, they stayed connected to artists and gallerists on the ground level—evident in their first major purchases. Alexandra's eye for design led her to acquire two [Francis Jourdain](#) chairs made in the 1940s that she found at a Paris flea market, while Roselyn purchased [Paul Lazono's](#) *Ice Cream* (2022) from her friend Elizabeth Joh's Mexico City gallery, [JO-HS](#).

Roselyn notes that her relationships with artists often come from visiting artist residencies. A current obsession of hers is Indian artist [Sagarika Sundaram's](#) textiles after encountering her work at the Silver Arts Project at 4 World Trade Center earlier this year. At the same residency, her parents encountered and purchased a work from a senior fellow of the residency, [Jared Owens](#).



Installation view at Lucifer Lighting, Tribeca. Photo by Brett Beyer. Artwork courtesy of Berry Campbell Gallery.

Roselyn's latest purchase, *Untitled* (2023–24) by [Pauline Shaw](#), was also acquired through a residency program after she met the artist during the Naranjo 141 residency in Mexico City. Alexandra, meanwhile, loves to find new artists by browsing art fairs and attending auctions. Both sisters emphasize the importance of social media, mainly Instagram, in contemporary collecting. Roselyn uses the platform to reach out to emerging artists, noting how she takes an interest if prominent collectors, such as Aby Rosen, follow emerging artists. A suggested follow from Alexandra is art advisor [Illa Gaunt](#).

The sisters' shared love of art is represented by their intergenerational collection. Their keen eyes for aesthetics, honed from years of observing how light transforms art, are just starting to shape their collections as they usher in a new era for the Mathews collection. Roselyn, who "tends to err on the side of quirky" and values her parents' "gut checks," and Alexandra, whose collection is "made up of fine and decorative art," are dedicated to building a legacy that honors their parents' collection, while embracing their unique perspectives and ambitions.