



"Raphael Mazzucco is as innovative in what I feel is real art as any artist I have seen in decades."

- Louis Meisel

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I have been collecting for 66 years, yes, since 1947 when I was 5 years old! Not baseball cards or comic books... well, maybe some, but Tiffany glass and scuttle shaving cups, a family pursuit. Anyway, 50 years ago I acquired my first Abstract Expressionist painting and shortly thereafter Pop art. By 1969 I had coined the word Photorealism and began building the best works on paper collection of the genre, not to mention the major collection of paintings. I represent most of the Photorealists.

In the early 70's I began paying attention to American Illustration and focused on what I called in my 1996 book *"The Great American Pin-up"* and created the best collection of original art of that genre, and am the primary gallery for this work. My collections include over 1000 photographs and are heavy on Jock Sturges who I represent. All told, my wife Susan and I have over 100 collections and very few are duplicated or similar to what any others collect. Our challenge is finding a category of some sort which catches our attention and has been overlooked by others, and then to create the best collection, learn all there is about the category, and then show and publish.

The past 20 years have been frustrating as far as the art world is concerned. We have not found very much that beckons us. When an art magazine lists "The 100 top collectors" or something like that, 80% will have all the same items. Why? Because very few today are acquiring art because they like what it looks like. Of course, that is why art was collected for most of human history, but **not now**. Now it is about investment, status and finding art that speaks to us and connects with our esthetics. All of the above personal history is relevant to where I am going with this commentary.

After years of frustration of wanting to continue doing what we do, we discovered an artist whose work has been inspired by and influenced by so much of what has interested us for so long.

Raphael Mazzucco is as innovative in what I feel is **REAL ART** as any artist I have seen in decades. While utilizing painting, drawing, photography, collage and all the traditional tools and materials artists have invented and worked with throughout history, he is making new, interesting, innovative, and most important to me — if not to the so-called art establishment — **beautiful objects to behold**.

His imagery strongly involves the female figure, as has been true of a preponderance of artists, at least in their figure drawings. Most over the centuries have relied on working with the female nude in learning that discipline. His “daytime job” as a fashion photographer has enabled him to see and utilize this universally loved aspect and subject matter in new ways in most of his fine art paintings.

The paintings! Yes, they **are paintings**. They are infused with abstract gestures, Pop quotations, even a touch of graffiti. His work is aggressively colorful, and includes still life, landscape and of course the figurative elements. The artist is informed and able to advance on **all aspects of realism** in art. The nude imagery is always sexy but chaste, a quality which made the 30’s through 70’s pin-ups so acceptable and appealing.

Raphael is extremely inventive in the inclusion, placement and statements created by the juxtaposition of these wonderful nudes within the context of each painting, and the result is always engaging and asks for attention and will not let one pass casually. Turning pages in this volume will be much slower as each image demands more than passing flip-the-page activity.

In order to be more leftist, socialist, politically correct and multicultural, according to some sort of influential writers, artists have been taught, and we have been told that **Beauty and Quality** are words to be abandoned in art and other cultural areas. Why? Because so few can achieve what those words are about and “we want everyone to have a chance to be an artist, musician or writer.”

It is touted that to be a significant “artist” one must simply express themselves and draw attention to misery, suffering, prejudice and all that bothers them. Quality, skills, discipline and knowledge need not apply. Well, it just doesn’t work. I say they should do all that on their psychiatrists’ couches.

What we need to inspire us as viewers, listeners and readers are more artists such as **Raphael Mazzucco**. An artist who unabashedly paints, photographs and portrays all aspects of **beauty**, be it the nude, the sunset, the sea, the clouds in splendor. No ugliness, no political statements, no depictions of misery. Goya did that long ago. Picasso made *Guernica*. There was a time and place and reason.

The world now is filled with misery, suffering, violence, hatred, war and general unhappiness. Artists should be going against the prevalent mantra of showing all that. Artists should be giving a look at **hope, beauty and happiness**. That will be more helpful for mankind.

Raphael Mazzucco is doing that and hopefully is the forefront of many coming artists who will realize this as a mission