

November 28, 2023
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Sisters Roselyn and Alexandra Mathews Shed Light on Their Family's Illustrious Art Collection

The prominent Texan family provides state-of-the-art lighting to top art institutions around the world, and has built an enviable collection to boot.



Alexandra and Roselyn Mathews at the opening of the Lucifer Lighting showroom in Tribeca on October 26, 2023, with David Salle's *Black Eyed Susan with Envy* (2002). Photo: Yvonne Tnt, BFA, 2023.

Gilbert and Suzanne Mathews, along with their daughters Roselyn and Alexandra, are the brains behind [Lucifer Lighting](#). Based in San Antonio, Texas, the family-owned company grew out of the desire to illuminate the high-end clothing on display in Frost Brothers department store, launched in 1917 and later owned by the Mathews family.

One of the first upscale stores in the U.S., Frost is credited with introducing [Hermès](#), Gucci, and Estée Lauder, among other luxury brands, to American audiences. It is thought that Christian Dior designed special women's collections for the store as part of his postwar New Look.

By the time Frost came to an end in 1986, the Mathewses had carved out a new niche: pristine lighting. The unobtrusive fixtures are particularly popular among architects—many of whom, according to the company, will only work with Lucifer for their lighting needs. (The name Lucifer refers to the “bringer of light” in Latin, a description of dawn, not the fallen angel.)

Nearly four decades later, Lucifer has supplied state-of-the-art lighting products to art institutions ([SFMOMA](#), the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, and the [Israel Museum](#) in Jerusalem), top hotels (Four Seasons, Mandarin, St. Regis, and Ritz Carlton), and retail spaces (Apple, [Chanel](#), Cartier, Rolex, and [Louis Vuitton](#)) and around the world.



A work by Ann McCoy is featured at the Lucifer Lighting factory in San Antonio, Texas.

The Mathews family also collects postmodern and contemporary art, including works by [Mel Bocher](#), [Sonia Delaunay](#), [Alberto Giacometti](#), [Adolph Gottlieb](#), [Henri Matisse](#), and [Francisco Toledo](#), to name a few. Their personal collection adorns all parts of their work environment, from the reception area through the manufacturing floor of the 13-acre factory and campus, as well as family homes in San Antonio, New York, and Santa Barbara.

Recently, the Mathewses opened a Lucifer flagship showroom in Tribeca. For the launch, they arranged for a curated selection of art from Lehmann Maupin Gallery—including Catherine Opie and David Salle—alongside their personal art collection, which gleamed under Lucifer's ultramodern luminescence.

We caught up with the Mathews daughters Roselyn and Alexandra, who both had careers in communications and art before joining their parents at Lucifer Lighting, for a glimpse into the Mathews family collection, as well as their own.

Roselyn Mathews:

What was your first purchase?

A Tiggly Ticehurst painted canvas that I bought from him outside the [Whitney Museum](#) in 2014.

What was your most recent purchase?

A Destiny Belgrave mixed media work. She creates such penetrating and loving images of her family members. She also happens to be one of the nicest people.

What is the most valuable work of art that you own?

My love of art and collecting is also a family passion. My father, Gilbert, started collecting during his trips to Europe while working for his family business, Frost Bros., and through his aunt, who was on MoMA's board of trustees with David Rockefeller. My mother, Suzanne, was also a former gallerist before she joined Gilbert at Lucifer Lighting. I've always grown up with art in our home and also at the Lucifer Lighting corporate campus in San Antonio.

The work that is most valuable to me is a watercolor that my father painted to memorialize our trip to [Marfa](#). The scene is from a night we spent star gazing at the McDonald Observatory. Sadly, we didn't see any of the famous Marfa mystery lights.

Where do you buy art most frequently?

I am lucky to have friends who work in the art world who keep me updated. One of my closest friends, Elisabeth Johs, owns a stunning gallery in Mexico City, JO-HS, and she is always showing emerging Mexican artists at a great price point.

Is there a work you regret purchasing?

I can't regret anything as there must have been something of the moment that convinced me to buy.



A work by Kikuo Saito in Roselyn Mathews's home. Photo: Al Rendon.

What work do you have hanging above your sofa? What about in your bathroom?

Behind my sofa, I have this Kikuo Saito purple oil on canvas. My mom was an art dealer in San Antonio and used to represent him. He was [Helen Frankenthaler](#)'s studio assistant, and his works are a mix of mesmerizing and dreamy.

A few years ago, we did a sexy smoke photoshoot of our lighting fixtures that Lisa Romarien photographed. I have one of the images framed in my bathroom.



A work by Lisa Romarien.

Alexandra Mathews:

Which works or artists are you hoping to add to your collection this year?

A Matisse oil-on-canvas odalisque... a girl can dream!

Tell us about a favorite work in your collection.

An [Alex Katz](#) (on loan from my mother) of a print of a living room interior that hangs in our living room. There is something playful about the rendering of a space, within that space.



A work by Alex Katz in Alexandra Mathews's home. Photo: Al Rendon.

What is the most impractical work of art you own?

I have a deep love for pairs of antique chairs. I have a set of Yoruba chairs from the '50s; they're gorgeous but not winning in comfort. I also have a very large Chinese chest that we've converted into a bar, but it's so tall it doesn't fit in our living room, so the top piece sits in storage.

What work do you wish you had bought when you had the chance?

Nothing that immediately comes to mind. That is not to say I haven't missed something that I should have bought, but I am not one for regrets.

If you could steal one work of art without getting caught, what would it be?

We just opened a showroom in Tribeca, and Lehmann Maupin has curated the upstairs with amazing works by their artists. There is a large David Salle hanging that looks so beautiful in the space. I would steal it in a heartbeat.

What work do you have hanging above your sofa? What about in your bathroom?

A Toledo masterful watercolor.

In our bathroom, drawings our daughters have made!

Tell us about a favorite work in your collection

I visited Toledo's atelier in Paris with my mother when I was about five. He told me I could pick a drawing to color with his charcoals. Hanging in my daughters' room today is this framed piece; it's his pen and ink animal drawing with my pastel coloring all over it, signed by each of us (I asked him to sign a second time in print because I could not read his name in cursive).