

HODINKEE



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*Three collectors share
their love for watches.*

WHY I COLLECT

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Ralph DeLuca

Ralph DeLuca is a collector extraordinaire. With impressive personal collections in contemporary art and film memorabilia, he has served as an art advisor to clients like Leonardo DiCaprio and Quentin Tarantino. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman of Sotheby's popular culture department.

PHOTOGRAPHY
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My love of watches likely came from my love of movies. When you see the Cartier in *Wall Street* or the Rolex in *Glengarry Glen Ross...* it was a status of a man's power. You don't ever look at a guys' shoes. Men don't wear a lot of jewelry, and we don't have handbags. So a watch tells you a lot. When people say they're art collectors, I always say, "Show me their walls, I'll tell you who they are." With watches, it's, "Show me their wrist, I'll tell you who they are."

In December 1994, with my first bonus paycheck from working on Wall Street, I went and bought a Submariner, because I knew I made it. My bonus wasn't even enough to pay for the whole thing at the time, but I paid enough to get credit from the jewelry store for the rest. That was my first big watch. My collection now is basically Rolex, some Panerai, I have some vintage Seikos I think are really cool — like the watch from *Predator*. A lot of it goes back to being autobiographical, my love of movies. James Bond is a great example, whether it's an Omega or a Rolex, you put those on and it's like a magic gauntlet. You put it on and you feel like James Bond.

The pathology of a collector is very interesting; why they collect, how they collect. We're all weirdos! I always say I'm only fluent in my own crazy, but I can meet a collector who's crazy, someone who's up at 3:00 a.m. looking at a watch auction or reading

Hodinkee, and you know, I understand that. I get that. I'm not saying it's normal, but that's my brand of crazy that I'm fluent in. First of all, there's no wrong way to collect. You can collect art you love, watches you love, and have nothing to do with money. You can go to an auction house or dealer and say, "I wanna build a watch portfolio as an asset class and not wear them." And that's not wrong.

I think there's a lot of overlap in the art and watch worlds. I look at micro-brand watches the same way I look at an emerging artist — is the person a known quantity in the watch world? Do they collect watches? Do they love watches? Are they just trying to cash in on a watch craze or are they making something perceived as art? People understand how the watch world works and how to market themselves and how to design. There are independents that have gone crazy the same way an emerging artist has gone crazy. The ones that do really well do so because they are unique. The talent is there. They handled their career, whether they're a painter or a sculptor or a watchmaker, and they handled it smartly. They showed with the right dealers, they knew exactly how to market themselves. They knew who to restrict access to and who to give access to. So there's a lot of commonality, you just have to be in both worlds to understand it. That's why I have a job!

