



SUPPORTING ACTORS

Some patrons today want to be more than just collectors. As benefactors, advisers, and even friends, these modern-day Medicis not only help subsidize art but also promote artists' careers. So what's in it for them?
By Jori Finkel Photographs by Noah Sheldon

personal loans, but, he says, "because I'm not Henry Kravis or S.I. Newhouse, it's often a personal sacrifice for me. So if it's a large amount, I will ask to be paid back 50 percent of it."

Lawrence Benenson, a partner in his family's New York real estate firm, also shares that level of commitment. The son of megacollector Charles Benenson says he follows his father's example by "buying what I like"—whether it's African or contemporary art. And he has such faith in two of his artists, sculptor Anthony James and figurative painter Lawrence Berzon, that he has been giving them living stipends for several years now in exchange for first choice of new works. Benenson considers himself a patron in the tradition of Roy Neuberger, who "helped out artists in the 1940s like Milton Avery, long before they were really recognized."

And then there's Shimshak. His loyalties extend well beyond Owens, and his favors run the gamut. As a radiologist, he has even dispensed medical assistance, starting with an



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“I buy what I like,” says New York collector Lawrence Benenson. “I like to support artists before they are recognized.” Here, he is sitting between artists Lawrence Berson, left and Anthony James. The artworks, from left, are Berzon’s *Doggy*, 2005 and *Botnar*, 2003, by Scott Peterman