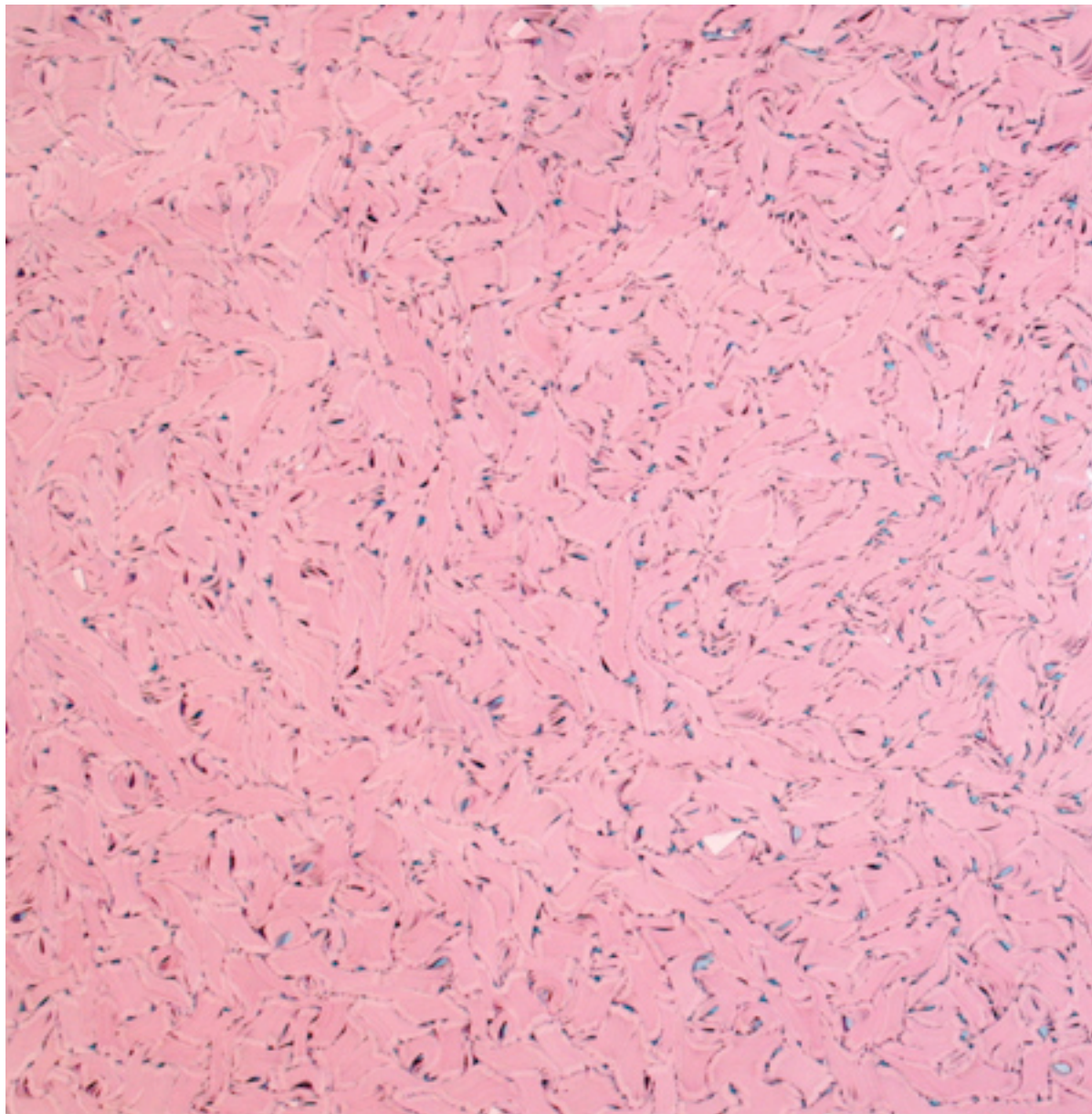


# art ltd.

## On Collecting

by Marlene Picard on Joseph Havel

July 2012



*nothing*, 2009  
**Joseph Havel**  
woven fabric labels

Plexiglas construction

42" x 42"

Photo: courtesy Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston

Joseph Havel's exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in March, 2006 consisted of 31 large-scale works transforming domestic fabric items into bronze sculptures through direct casting—a metamorphosis through accumulation and assembly. He begins with men's white shirts, and expands to include clothing labels, drapes, bed sheets and tablecloths. Seeing the show was a vivid experience, which stayed with me. Later that year, we stepped into a gallery's vast space hung with Plexiglas boxes stuffed with thousands of shirt labels in different colors and patterns, and embroidered with different words. Commencing our Havel collection, we acquired one of these boxes of labels, embroidered with the word "nothing" in pink. Falling in love with a piece of art is visceral and never more so than that first sight of nothing, the title of the work. It seemed like a giant floral tribute made of blossoms clasped together tightly, a gasping delight. nothing had a list of prospective buyers, of which we were third; but we maintained our place, notwithstanding the stature of a museum and a collector with deep pockets before us. Now every time I see this piece, I get a start, recalling the emotions when we heard it was ours, and the force engendered by that powerful museum show. It is a work of art that continues to give joy, fascination, and endless comfort.

—Marlene Picard