

A Million Reasons for Buying Art

Some persons may be laughing as they read that headline. They are probably thinking, “Who needs a reason to buy art, one just does it!” For others there may be some hesitancy in their minds. They could have the thought, “Do I know what art really is?” Or, “What if I get the wrong thing?” or even, “Why should I buy this _____?” You can fill in the blank with painting, sculpture, quilt, graphic, photograph, pot or jewelry.



Jewelry and functional works can be more easily justified because you can tell yourself that you “need” that bowl, basket, or necklace. It can even be that you want a painting because you are tired of looking at that empty space over the couch. But how to explain the desire to purchase a work of art just because you want it?

Let’s go back to the beginning, to that moment when you are sauntering through a gallery or walking past an artist’s vendor booth. Something catches your eye. You stop. You gather your attention from your dreamy world to focus on the item. What is happening? You know something important has just occurred, but what is it? Some persons will say, “The piece spoke to me.” And sometimes it feels almost as if your name

has been spoken out loud by an inanimate object. Listen up. Something very important has just transpired.

Something in you – a feeling, a memory, a desire – has just connected with the colors, shapes or images that someone else has captured in themselves and transferred to a vehicle – paint, stone, earth, paper. Can you see the miracle of this? Images that have formed in the mind of one person have been transmitted into the reality of an object. Due to the skill and strength of that person’s being, that thought or feeling has reached out, entered your mind through your eyes, and wham! you are connected again to something of your very own.

You may be able to recognize the association with the thought that the artwork reminds you of a beautiful time in your life or even something you wish you had experienced or owned. Often the immediacy of the artwork will hide this connection or you cannot put your finger on why you were suddenly attracted to this object, but you can feel that you certainly are.

This is a divine moment. Delight in it. Soon enough the doubts rise up in your mind like mists or voices saying, “You don’t really need that,” or “What would you do with that?” Now is the time when you need some help. Perhaps you need some encouragement to answer with: “Hey, this is a special moment for me and I want to honor it by allowing myself to purchase this piece of art,” Or, “If this item has attracted my attention and my desire for it, there must be something I need to listen to, pay attention to, or even live with.”

When the inner critic says, “What if you get it home and find out you don’t like it?” you answer with, “Maybe so, but I want to be closer to this artwork, to absorb its messages and experience its being in my daily life. Besides, nothing is forever, and I want to honor this moment.”

This is a good thing to do because acquiring art is not like buying most other things for your environment. The work of art is unique, one-of-a-kind, even if the artist works in series. Artists can make a certain item or have a style or motif and then pouf! from one day to next they never make another one like it. Or someone else could buy it before you make up your mind. If you are attracted to an artwork, don’t let yourself be fooled into thinking, “I can get it later.” You may even have the idea, “I cannot afford that!” and still want it very much. Offer to pay the artist in installments. Work out a plan that fills your needs. The important thing is that you get the art you want.

And when buying art, have you any idea of the pleasure your purchase brings to the artist? Even though the money is often desperately needed, the pure and simple idea that someone out there liked something made with paint-covered hands so much that they were willing to pay money for, it makes a connection between the solitude of the studio and the rest of humanity that is so huge, so overpoweringly joyous, no words or thanks can fully express it. Artists, every one of them, feels complimented, and completed when something that has pleased them brings joy to someone else. With your purchase of art you are not only increasing your own joy and happiness, but you are also letting your money make one of your neighbors feel fulfilled and gratified.



The artist listens and receives the divine messages from the world around us. By reproducing that image with skill and care, or changing it to carry the artist’s inner convection, that message that you may not have seen in that tree or cliff or wave is now being offered to you once again. This is sacred work. It is not an accident that many people, upon first entering the Gualala Arts Center, say they feel as if they are in a church.

You can go through life ignoring art and the things made by artists. Some do. Others though, recognize the wonder and marvel that occurs when a work of art “speaks” to one, and decide to honor the occasion with a purchase as their part of validating the experience. For this, they get to take the artwork home, to place it among their other possessions, to listen to its messages, and to figure out what secret pleasure it is holding for them.