

JACKSON WHEELER'S TEN TIPS ON MAKING ART PART OF YOUR LIFE (or Original Art isn't just for Millionaires)

1. Don't be afraid to have an opinion about art. Opinions are a mixture of knowledge and instinct. Have you seen a work of art (painting, photograph, sculpture, print) and immediately liked it? Have you seen a work of art (painting, photograph, sculpture, print) and immediately disliked it? You **do** have an opinion. Opinions are as unique as fingerprints so don't be embarrassed if you like something many don't or if you dislike something many like. You can hone your skills by looking at art in museums, art galleries, studio tours, on line, in art books, on TV programs, DVDs or Videotapes, or attending talks on art. If you go to a museum or gallery take a moment to look at something you really like. Ask yourself why you enjoy looking at the piece, is it the size, shape, color, subject matter, etc. Try the same approach with something you don't like. What is it that you don't like? Next time you are looking at an art book try the same exercise, why do I prefer this painting or sculpture over this one? John Berger has written a book On Looking, and the art historian, Robert Hughes has also written about looking at art. Sometimes it is possible to deepen one's appreciation of the work of a specific artist by reading about them. It is surprising what one can discover by using some of the computer search programs.
2. Get to know an artist or two. Most areas have artist associations or clubs. Learning about technique and what motivates an artist also enriches one's critical eye.
3. Spend some time learning about different processes that might interest you, for example, the difference between a monoprint, a lithograph, a silkscreen, a watercolor, a giclee, an oil painting, a limited photograph.
4. Learn to distinguish between mass produced and something which is one of a kind. Some mass produced reproductions are sold for hundreds of dollars – sometimes it is possible to have an original oil painting or watercolor for less than a nicely framed Monet reproduction thousands of people have in their homes.
5. Art is an investment you make in yourself not your bank account. Buying art as an investment is the wrong reason to buy art.
6. Don't be afraid to buy what you like.
7. Original art is affordable, more affordable than most people realize. In Ventura County we are fortunate to have several galleries and associations. Studio tours occur each year in Ojai and Ventura. Focus on the Masters provides opportunities to hear artists talk about their work and creative process. The local community colleges and universities have art galleries on campus and some have fundraising auctions. At least one gallery, The Buenaventura Art Association Gallery on Santa Clara Street in Ventura, allows one to rent art for a nominal fee. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art also has an Art Rental Gallery in the Bing Building, which has featured the work of Ventura County artists, Hiroko Yoshimoto and Jane McKinney.
8. Places touted as artists' communities, for example, Sante Fe and Cambria, tend to be more expensive than buying art locally.

9. It is possible to discover original art in thrift stores and antique shops (refer to #1) Buyer beware – caveat emptor applies in situations where you may or may not be buying what you think you are buying.
10. Think about developing an “art budget”, don’t be afraid to ask if you can make payments on a piece or approach an artist directly. The worst thing they can say is NO.

I’d like to express my appreciation to the Oxnard Carnegie Art Museum and its Director Suzanne Bellah for providing this opportunity to talk, my friend Joe Rund for his friendship and guidance, especially with contemporary latino art. I’d also like to thank the Buenaventura Artists’ Union Gallery, Phil Taggart, Marsha de la O, Paul Lindhard, and Peter Eble for first approaching me and asking that I talk about collecting.

Jack Wheeler