

What's New?

I'm working on a little sign for the John Nichols Gallery. The sign will be tastefully mounted somewhere in the gallery and will instruct visitors on how to purchase one of

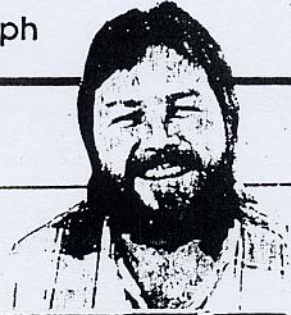
face produced by the transcendent experience that the art has produced in your bosom. You exude pure confidence. All because of art.

Meanwhile, back in the real

How to buy a photograph

John

NICHOLS



the photographs on display. It may seem odd but I think that the general public needs a little direction on how to actually buy art.

Buying art must be a little like buying a used car for some people. I know that I don't really know what is going on when I enter a car lot. I'm always afraid that I will be taken to a little room and be hammered on by cigar smokers wearing lots of gold chains.

Everyone has an opinion on your car and your art and probably even your haircut. Everyone is entitled to an opinion. Some are even entitled to two or three. What matters is your own opinion. I know that I may be asking a lot from some of you but please consider having a few now and then.

Not caring about what others think about you is usually considered the trait of a juvenile delinquent. J. D.'s don't usually buy art so we can count that one out. I'm talking about when your friends and family come over to your house and happen to notice a new piece of art. "You paid \$400 for that? Boy, did they see you coming. When you grow up you'll get tired of that real soon."

Meanwhile you stand next to the piece with a beatific grin on your

world, there are still plenty of people who do not buy photographs. That's OK. It's not mandatory. If you do decide to buy photographs or any other kind of art, I would like to present a few ideas from my sign in the gallery. I have broken this activity into five sections. Five is my favorite number.

1. Look. This part takes years. A lot of art needs to be looked at. Books, museums, galleries, friends' homes, magazines. The more a person looks at art the more that person will be able to determine how well the artist is communicating the idea or emotion. In art we say that a person has a good eye. That doesn't mean that the person has a nice eyeball. It means that the person has used the senses to perceive and the mind to process the input from the senses. Inside the mind the "eye" is developed by the exercise of processing sensory input and filtering it through personality. A perspective emerges. A point of view. The perspective produced by the art experience can then be applied to situations ranging from politics to sex.

2. Think. Since we're talking about photographs I guess we'll have to think about photographs. Is photography art? No. Photography

is just a medium. Art is what an artist says is art. Some artists use the medium of photography to speak through. A lot of non-artists use that medium, too. Thinking about photography can tie one's mind in a knot. Feeling can cut the knot. The message of the artist can be felt as it comes through the medium by the attuned viewer. Artists who possess a high degree of craft find it easier to communicate through their chosen medium. A viewer's knowledge of the medium will have an effect on the perception of the message. It never hurts to be omniscient.

3. Decide. There comes a time in everyone's life when an inner voice speaks up and says, "I just gotta have that." In the case of art, something speaks to us. A larger, usually gruffer voice also speaks up. "Do you really need this?" The answer is yes, you really need this. Art is necessary for human existence. It has been since caves were first drawn on.

Deciding to buy means deciding how to pay. Most galleries have time payments. Anything for a sale. A small deposit and monthly payments can make it easier for some. Others whip out the checkbook and just consider it groceries for the eyes.

A couple was asked after a lifetime of art collecting if they had ever made any mistakes. "Twice," they said. "Two different times we saw art that we liked and we didn't buy it." Yeah, that's happened to me, too.

4. Frame. Some of the art I sell is framed. A lot of it is not. Framing is a matter of personal taste and not everyone likes the thin, black metal frames that I use for exhibiting. Some people like to do their own framing. That's OK by me.

Believe it or not, a lot of people never frame some of the art they buy. They take it home and put it in boxes with the rest of their collec-

tion. Just like big stamps. I know collectors with hundreds of photographs in their collection and only a few prints on the wall at any one time.

Whatever framing is decided on it has to be what is called archival. Works of art on paper last a long time if they are not too acidic or too alkaline. The pH of the mat, mount, backing and storage should be neutral. Acid-free is the buzz word.

5. Enjoy. This should be easy. Then again it could be difficult. It could be difficult because art is not always easy. Sometimes it takes work to appreciate a piece of art. Sometime a piece of art takes so much work to appreciate that it's hardly worth the effort. That work may be better left to the museums and the connoisseurs.

Enjoying is a fine line to walk. The enjoyment comes from the sense of constant discovery of new aspects of a piece of art. The art is constantly giving up something of itself for us to discover. Some art is an endless sponge that never wrings dry of meaning.

Other art can be enjoyed for a while and then it has given up all that it has to offer. It becomes wallpaper. When that happens it is time to move it to a fresh spot, dump it, store it in a closet for a while or live with it as wallpaper. Lots of art is purchased to be wallpaper in the first place. If the art is purchased to match the pillows then it is probably wallpaper. Wallpaper can be very nice at times.

That is what the sign in my gallery is going to say. It will be greatly abbreviated, of course. If I had more room on the sign I would probably just rant and rave about how all these people come in and want to buy Botke etchings and Shively paintings now that the artists are dead and can't make any more and where were those people when the artists were alive and am I going to have to die to become famous?

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