

Ask the Artsperts

by Kristine Meek and Juliana Meek
Harmon-Meek Gallery, Naples, FL

An Art Dealer's Start to Collecting

Dear Artsperts:

I am sure your father has collected art for all the years he has been a dealer.
How did he get his start?

Signed,
Just Curious

Dear Curious,

Our dad, William Meek, started working for gallery founder Foster Harmon in the fall of 1972. After graduating from college, he first had to complete a summer long Army training course as a young reserve officer before he could begin his position at Assistant Director of Harmon Gallery. When he began his career with the gallery, he was tasked with a six-year apprenticeship in all aspects of operating an art gallery and a retail business (while continuing his service in the Reserves for 8 years). His major in economics and minor in art proved to be a better combination than the dean of his business school ever imagined.

Here is his story in his words on how he started his own private collection:

“As Foster Harmon would always preach to me, ‘Everything that goes into running an art gallery doesn’t matter if you cannot sell art’. That weighed heavily on my daily routine since almost everyone coming into the gallery would naturally want to talk to the director-owner [Harmon].

I wanted to understand what potential clients were facing when deciding whether or not to purchase a particular work of art. Collectors of art generally feel quite comfortable making informed choices, while new collectors often need more attention, particularly if the acquisition is using discretionary funds or if the artwork is “filling a space” in the home or office.

I needed to know what they were experiencing so I decided to buy one work of art every year. Since I wasn’t making a significant income as Harmon’s apprentice working on commission, this decision was indeed a sacrifice monetarily.

I centered in on an oil painting created in 1965 by Louis Bosa (1905-81) titled *Monks on a Wall* and informed Harmon of my decision. He allowed me to pay for it over nine months at \$75 a month (plus 4% sales tax). The \$750 purchase less my commission was never second guessed and the painting now hangs next to the bed my wife and share. It is the last artwork I see before falling asleep. The value has gone up to \$3,500, a modest increase, but this amount is not what makes the painting valuable to me.”

Sincerely,
The Artsperts



Louis Bosa in his studio circa 1965 (above). He is photographed painting the work that would become William Meek’s first purchase of artwork pictured below. “Monks” by Louis Bosa now hangs in our parent’s bedroom, on our father’s side of the bed.

