

Ask the Artsperts by Kristine Meek and Juliana Meek Harmon-Meek Gallery, Naples, FL

Art Dealers versus Decorators

Dear Artsperts:

I've recently bought a home in Naples and hired a reputable local decorator to redesign the house interior. Everything she designed is beautiful but I am not happy with the painting I bought at her recommendation. The artist doesn't appear to have a reputation like those in your gallery and I can't find anything about the artist. Is there anything I can do with this painting?

Signed, Decorating

Dear Decorating

Good decorators create beautiful interiors with the finest and highest quality furnishings. However, unless the decorator works with a reputable gallery, it is unlikely they will have access to fine art by reputable and established artists. Some decorators do work with fine art galleries, but it is more tempting for decorators to work directly with artists to receive a higher commission from the sale. Established artists are generally not interested in working with decorators and as such decorators must turn to emerging artists. Established artists have set their sights on growing their reputations. This comes through museums, art critics, and published books. All three of which have little respect for decorative artwork.

Reputable artists are also not so concerned with how a work will look in a private home. The artwork they produce serve a greater purpose beyond decorating needs. As Tobi Kahn once said, "all of my work is beautiful, but not all of my work is pretty." The work is meant to draw emotions out of the viewer. It is about how the viewer relates to the work on a personal level. The artist isn't concerned about how the work enhances your home, but how it enhances your life.

Because of the importance placed on museums coupled with striving for work that goes beyond decorating, reputable artists rarely work directly with decorators. While it is tempting to go through a decorator to meet all of your needs, you will likely be disappointed in the quality of artwork available through your decorator. The artwork is unlikely to match the high standards of your home and lifestyle. If you have a Bentley in the garage, you shouldn't hang the art equivalent of a Honda Civic on your walls.

Fine art galleries, are highly specialized in focusing solely on art. We know our artists and their reputations well, along with trends in the artworld. Art dealers are in the best position for giving advice for purchasing artwork. We will also never leave you unhappy with a purchase. We take the time in the beginning to ensure you are happy with your selection, relying heavily on your personal connection with the work. At Harmon-Meek Gallery, we also have a policy that allows clients to exchange a work they purchased for one they like better in the future, as long as it is by the same artist. We don't ever want to leave you feeling stuck with a painting you don't like. While the theme of this article is to say that fine art does not need to match your couch, an art dealer is more than capable of giving advice on good placement of a work in your home.

As for your question about what to do with this painting by an artist you don't know much about, if you aren't happy with it and can't return it to the decorator you can donate it to a charity (if you want a tax deduction you will have to have owned it a year and have it appraised by a licensed appraiser at your cost), consign it with a resale shop, or put it in a place out of sight like in a guest room or rarely used hallway.

Sincerely, The Artsperts



(above) Artist reputation is established through museums. Pictured is a the museum exhibition for Will Barnet (1911-2012) at the Ogunquit Museum of Art in Maine, summer of 2017 (below) Work by Will Barnet (right) in a private home.

