

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

**Mates for the Ages: A Love Story of Two Paintings**

**Dear Artsperts:**

What is your most interesting story regarding a work of art over a period of time?

**Signed,  
Intrigued**

**Dear Intrigued,**

We have many stories attached to certain paintings, but one story in particular surprised even our father, with his 45 years as an art dealer. He will quickly tell you works of art choose their owners. This is based on a personal connection that develops between the work of art and the viewer. Recently, we encountered two paintings that took this concept a step further. They have not only chosen their owners, but chosen to stay together against all odds for 60 years. With it being February, this story can best be described as a love story. One lasting decades, passing through several hands, and traveling over 3,000 miles in the process...always together.

The two paintings are both by the American master, Darrel Austin (1907-94). They were both completed in the late 1950s and they are both small works of art. Beyond those similarities, their subject matter is different and they were never intended to become the pair these two have proven to be.

Their love story begins in 1959 when the two debuted together in the artist's exhibition at Perls Galleries in New York City. On opening night, they were purchased together along with a larger work by Darrel Austin. The purchasers were the famous art patrons, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Neuberger. Through the course of the years the larger work by Darrel Austin was included with the collection that would become the Neuberger Museum at the State University of New York at Purchase, NY.

Our two mated paintings stayed together in the Neuberger private collection, and were passed to other unknown hands (perhaps relatives or friends of the Neuberger) until they ended up together with an art dealer in Maine. Harmon-Meek Gallery represented Darrel Austin from 1964 until his death in 1994 and today we hold many of the works. Naturally the dealer in Maine contacted us and we eagerly took both paintings.

A few months later, we included the two paintings in our annual small works of art exhibition. Over 300 works are included in this exhibition, 50 of which were works by Darrel Austin. The two "mated" Darrel Austin works were hung on separate walls, with many other works separating the two. This was apparently against the pair's wishes. The two somehow connected with their new owner in a way that they managed to be purchased once again together.

From their debut in 1959 to their most recent exhibition in 2018; from the artist's studio in Connecticut, to New York, to Maine, and now to Naples; through an unknown number of owners along with three galleries; and, despite all odds, these two paintings are seemingly destined to remain together for the ages.

**Signed,  
The Artsperts**



"The Cub and the Flute Player" by Darrel Austin oil on canvas, 10"x12", 1958-9

"Little Girl in a Dark Wood" by Darrel Austin Oil on canvas, 10"x12", 1958

