



Buying Art Online vs In-Person – is the Experience the Same?

By Shantel Susan

Buying art can be a daunting endeavour for anyone – whether you are an expert or not.

Today with the increase in art available online, as artists work independently to sell their work, there are no shortages of quality art to purchase and certainly there are buyers and collectors that want to.

Of course, there are still the traditional methods of buying original art from galleries local and otherwise, whereby you can have a totally different experience through visiting the gallery and seeing the work first hand.

To further make it interesting, there are a variety of local art fairs, art walks and art shows that provide plenty of art for sale if one is energetic and wishes to discover art all on their own and have direct contact with the artist.

It really is a question of time, energy, interest and what type of experience you are looking for.

Let's consider them.

Buying art online has the overriding benefit of convenience. More and more artists are embarking on having ecommerce equipped sites that present their work well and it allows the visitor to view, buy and order their selections with it being shipped to their door within a reasonable time frame. There are really no geographic limits, other than currency exchange differences that can impact the cost. The drawback is there is no way to actually sense and feel the work – you can only derive so much from looking at even the most accurate and high definition screen. Also, many art buyers, in particular collectors, prefer to be able to converse with the artist or representative in order to have a more personal, interactive experience.

This is where the traditional art gallery is best. For some patrons of art, the art gallery provides a place to look at, observe and truly connect with art on a real meaningful basis. The gallery is able to provide information in the form of a real human story about the piece, and this allows the art work and the potential buyer to connect on a closer more intimate level. No one can deny the feeling that comes from your own eyes being able to see the colours and study the textures – sometime you can even sense the aroma of paint! Also the added advantage of viewing a variety of artists all in the same venue before making a decision is helpful. From a purely business standpoint, the gallery can provide other services such as appraisals, framing, insurance, in addition to delivery and installation. These are services that collectors especially appreciate and frankly demand – together with a certificate of authenticity (COA) and other provenance about the piece and the artist.

Let's see what the art fairs and shows have to offer. It is interesting that it is sort of mid-way between an online experience and an art gallery in that you can have access to the artist while also seeing the piece up close. Further, you are able to purchase art at point-of-sale and take it with you. You also have the opportunity to look at a variety of artists all in one place, before making a buying decision. All this is quite an experience and for those with an adventurous pursuit of art, who love to exert considerable time and energy in searching for art through various venues on a more proactive basis. Also, there is the added benefit of hands-on discovery of a new artist that hasn't quite reached the gallery stage of their career (if in fact that is where they wish to go).

In the end, it is a matter of preference for buying art online, through an art gallery or at another peripheral venue. However, the overriding and most important factor is that all art devotees remain encouraged to seek and purchase original art. Through giving yourself the chance to encounter and pursue art is reflective of the most fulfilling aspect of owning it – that of discovery and knowing you have purchased something of intrinsic value that will forever emit the feeling of belonging to a larger part of creation.