

Kinkade paintings selling briskly after artist's death

By Maura Judkis, Washington Post

Thomas Kinkade's paintings of bucolic landscapes and light-filled cottages have been scooped up by collectors nationwide ever since the artist's death more than a week ago. Kinkade galleries across the country report a surge in sales of originals and limited-edition reproductions as fans mourn the "Painter of Light's" death.

But if you're among the ranks of would-be Kinkade collectors looking for a piece of his art, there are a few things you should know about the market for his works.

Know the difference between originals and reproductions. Kinkade, who was from Placerville, painted original works, but many of the paintings you see in galleries and his online stores are factory-made reproductions that the artist has never touched. Though other artists have employed similar practices – Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons, for example – Kinkade was the subject of criticism for the prices he could command for these duplicate works. According to the Religion News Service, the Kinkade factory would produce more than 500 works a day.

Some of the reproductions get a touch-up from a "Master highlighter," an artist who enhances the light by hand. Though these highlights were done "under the supervision of the artist," they were not done by Kinkade himself.

Original Kinkade works sell in the tens to hundreds of thousands, but they're rare. Even though they can also command prices in the thousands, most Kinkade works you encounter are reproductions.

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