

# Collecting art – work of a different kind

By Robert Schimmel

A funny thing happened on the way to the reception. The good news is that “funny” things are happening all the time, right, especially when we are willing to notice? Wanting to see the latest (three) exhibits opening at South Lake Tahoe’s Lake Tahoe Community College on April 18, I hustled but missed the art talk given by the Haldan Gallery’s featured collection’s co-owner, Hanna Porter, so my mind took a detour to anxiousness.

What if she had a real gem to relate or various insights into collecting (the talk’s theme) I’d never considered? What if ...?

Then my nerves calmed as the overall collection came into view and I “bumped” into a friend who gave me a brief summary. Immediately I settled into some veggies and dip to calm the dinner-hour pangs and began to take my usual quick, first impression stroll through the Haldan’s open and inviting space.



Art comes in many forms at LTCC. Photo/LTN file

The collection is definitely as billed, “...an array of

different mediums, content, and styles from an assortment of national and international artists," and not halfway around my initial loop I bumped into two friends of differing views regarding the collection. Although each was armed with a unique and relevant background for said opinion, I was once again reminded of how true the adage "you can't please everyone" really is. As for me, I enjoyed my first look and began seeking ways to educate myself regarding how such a mix of artworks came to be. Then, as serendipity would have it, I met Hanna Porter just as a lull occurred in the reception's traffic. What a blessing this was, and our encounter lasted a solid, stimulating 15-20 minutes as she graciously shared some of her history.

Like most endeavors in this world, there is no right or wrong way to collect art. This collection of diverse work evolved under the loving and discriminating eye of Porter, German born art lover and widow who professes not being an artist but rather a passionately involved lover of creativity and, therefore, all kinds of artistic expression.

As we conversed, this charming and engaging lady with a wonderful German accent, revealed three core principles I was able to isolate: 1) the artwork had to grab and hold her such that she knew she loved it and wanted to own it; 2) she wouldn't spend over \$2,000 for one piece of work under any circumstance; and 3) there needed to be a "story" or relationship connected to the artist that she could feel and/or experience. Mind you, these rules may not have been the only criteria in every case but clearly laid the groundwork for this assemblage. She expressed how at times a piece was acquired through a strategically planned purchase or a serendipitous opportunity. And like most of us, Porter has her favorites and has evolved over time in the styles, techniques, and themes or messages about which she feels most passionate.



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At some point in our conversation I was struck at how fascinating and insightful it might be for her to arrange her exhibitions in chronological order of her purchases. This would more concisely represent the fruits of her own values and changing tastes and give a thread for the viewer to follow and reflect upon re his/her own discriminating notes. I was pleasantly surprised to see her eyes light up with a genuine smile and acknowledgement that the idea indeed had merit and she'd like to try it.

As I left the Haldan, my appreciation for such exhibits and what they bring to our community was heightened. Receptions are not always so personal, and I was very fortunate, but the Haldan staff consistently does a fine job of giving us the chance to meet artist(s) and hear presentations or talks during the reception evenings. And don't forget that the Haldan usually has an audio tour or interview available. Getting some personal notes on "why and how" to collect art is another welcomed contribution to our edification and how this college and its Art Department seeks to improve life in Tahoe.

My sincere thanks to Phyllis Shafer and her staff for all their superlative efforts in bringing us exhibitions of diverse themes, unknown to nationally prominent artists, varied cultures, etc., not to mention the rotating exhibitions in the Foyer and Student Commons Galleries. No small feat under the best of circumstances, so be sure to attend these three concurrent exhibits and take advantage of our tax dollars and private donations serving us in concrete and

rewarding ways.

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