

Campbell Frank
Guarisco Gallery
Washington, DC
1 September 2013

1

As I unpacked a painting by the famed French Impressionist artist Pierre-Auguste Renoir on my first day of work at the esteemed Guarisco Gallery, I knew my role as a gallery intern would be a rewarding and unforgettable experience. The gallery, founded in 1980 in Washington, D.C., is one of the largest nineteenth and twentieth century American and European private collections in the world. Over six-hundred Romantic, Barbizon, Victorian, Belle Époque, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works featuring a variety of subjects including animal, genre, landscape, marine, oriental, sporting and still life are offered to clients; thus, the immense collection appeals to a variety of artistic tastes. Guarisco Gallery's buying philosophy places top quality, condition, aesthetics and affordability at a level of equal importance. The gallery emphasizes the availability and affordability of fine art: The top 10% of most artists' work is still available to the buyer. The gallery highlights that investment in fine art is one that is a secure, long-term investment.

Due to its continued success, Guarisco Gallery, currently parallel to the Ritz Hotel, is in the process of expanding to a second location (the original space, actually) situated next to the Four Seasons in Georgetown. This strategic placement subsequent to an illustrious hotel, a personal business philosophy of the owner, attracts many wealthy hotel clients as well as window-shoppers through the location alone.

The gallery offers its clients the highest quality, and it maintains a reliable and reputable business; presentation and preparation is a major component in running the efficacious gallery. One such element of this success is in the preparation of 'packets' of each piece of art. Preparing and printing 'packets'—which consist of a full shot of the painting, a perspective shot to better understand the size, and a detailed shot of the paint application—was a major role of mine during

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2

my eight weeks. Notably, the gallery is in the process of upgrading their packet inventory from a three full-page system to a single-sheet system which features the three images. I was taught how to create the new single sheet packets in Photoshop, and I, along with the two other interns, spent many hours upgrading the packet inventory. The gallery often sends packets to returning customers who have expressed interest in similar works, and also mails packets to potential future clients. More so, packets are often sent abroad as the gallery has clients scattered throughout the globe (a bronze statue was sold to a man in Mongolia while I was there!); this personalized marketing technique has amplified the success of the gallery. Further, the photo packets assist in record keeping and filing for the gallery: when a piece has been sold, the according packet is filed with the artist biography and financial information.

Additionally, a major component of my work was writing artist biographies to be included in said packets. I copiously researched and wrote upon artists including American watercolorist Donald Teague, master of French contemporary figurative art Jean-Pierre Cassigneul, Polish artist Moise Kisling and the exceptionally versatile American artist Helen West Heller. A memorable work day included a trip to the remarkable Library of Congress for artist biographical research; I thoroughly enjoyed this detailed research which expanded my artist repertoire. The importance of the biography should not be overlooked: they legitimize the piece for the potential client. This informative description emphasizes name recognition by declaring the artist's association with famous schools, masters, contemporaries, exhibitions and works in order to mark the piece for sale historically significant. Selected titles, exhibitions, museums and images are also often included in the biography.

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3

Additional responsibilities included researching and writing down prices of similar pieces at other galleries around the world which helped to competitively price the pieces. A favorite project of mine included researching the location painted on a canvas which simply featured a minaret (I concluded that the location was in Cairo, Egypt). Yet another task included ‘hanging’ the back room of the gallery with watercolors—the visual aesthetics and physical labor of this arduous task was extremely eye-opening. Further memorable experiences included a trip to an auction house in DC, and visiting a framing and restoration studio (which used to be an Indonesian carriage house) with a coworker.

The comparably small size of the gallery allowed me to do a range of activities and feel as if my work made an impact: my artist biographies were to be sent out to potential clients, I often greeted customers at the door, answered phones and helped to prepare for a show held in Aspen, Colorado. I felt I was able to actively engage and contribute to the management of the gallery which was a wonderful feeling. The amalgam of my duties provided me with a strong foundation of how to manage a successful gallery.

More so, the people with whom I worked wholly contributed to making this such a wonderful experience. The curator would often include me in his every day work decisions: on one occasion, prior to making a purchase, I helped to assess the condition of a painting using a black light. This particular light helped to ensure that the painting was legitimately signed by the proper artist, to see if paint was added at a later date, and to view restorations to the painting (which showed up red if there was restoration). On one of the paintings, the black light revealed a large rip in the canvas and the gallery ultimately did not end up buying the piece. In addition to

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4

their unparalleled inclusion, the affable staff was incredibly approachable and offered help and advice in all areas of my life.

The funding I received to complete this internship was truly a gift; it led to experiences that were invaluable to my growth as a person and as a student. This experience amplified my confidence in professional environment and honed my research and networking skills.