

COLLECTING LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS

One Artist and His Patrons

Over a number of years, a Colorado couple bought and commissioned more than a dozen works from Peter Campbell. The paintings were created outdoors or were based on his plein air studies.

Peter Campbell says he is not the best at promoting his artwork. So the story of how he sold a large body of work to one couple is interesting, perhaps especially to other artists who aren't experienced salespeople and to art lovers who may be reluctant to begin building a collection.

"Our friendship and business relationship began quite serendipitously," Campbell explains. "Carol Madeen, owner of Madeen Interiors in Durango, Colorado, showed one of my paintings to Marjie and Howard Wilson to determine if they might want to buy it for the Arts & Crafts home they built." The couple agreed to keep the oil painting for a few days, and after becoming comfortable with it hanging in their home, they bought it. Then, after living with the first painting and seeing it differently each time they studied it, they wanted to view more of Campbell's work. Over the next few years, they wound up buying about 15 pieces and commissioning 10 murals. Clearly, the Wilsons responded positively to Campbell's landscape paintings, enjoyed getting to know him, and thought his paintings looked perfect in their Arts & Crafts-style home.

Campbell says that in his experience, one sale often leads to another from the same collector, although it doesn't usually add up to as many paintings as the Wilsons have acquired. "If a collector really responds to the subject matter and emotional content in my paintings, they usually want to have other works that have a similar look and feel," the artist says. "My best clients say they really enjoy my paintings because the images seem timeless. That is, they could have been painted 100 years ago or yesterday. Because of that, the owners don't get tired of the paintings."

Like many collectors, the Wilsons responded to Campbell's paintings of landscapes illuminated by the light of dawn or dusk. "I trained as a photographer and first worked as a professional in



The view into the Wilsons' living room, with Peter Campbell's 34 x 28-inch landscape painting titled River Light hanging above the fireplace.



Two of Campbell's paintings, After a Rain (28 x 30 in.) and Nightfall (44 x 38 in.), in the Wilson collection. Each is in one of the artist's custom-made frames.

(Below) A bedroom with one of Campbell's 30 x 36-inch landscapes, Cut Fields, and a small 8 x 6-inch figurative titled Backlight



that field, and it is understood that the best time of day to shoot most subjects is at the beginning or end of the day," says Campbell. "The light at midday is too harsh and flat to accentuate the dimensions of a building, person, or landscape, and it is harder to create a mood or grab the viewer's attention. Painters don't have to record exactly what they see, and they do have more of an opportunity to push the colors, textures, or values in a scene, but in general a painting will have more visual appeal if it records the light at the beginning or end of a day."

Another factor just as important as a collector's response to the content of paintings is the personal connection between the people engaged in the sale transaction. Collectors like to know the painters, the subject depicted in their artwork, the circumstances under which the work was created, and how the pictures they choose connect with others the artist has made. Perhaps more importantly, collectors like to know that the artists are individuals they can like and admire.

"I suspect the Wilsons bought the first painting because they liked the image and thought it fit into the style of their home, but after that our friendship became a factor in their buying decisions," Campbell says. In all likelihood, it also mattered that Campbell was flexible in working with the Wilsons as they picked paintings to fit into certain rooms of their beautiful home. They appreciated that he wanted to help them find the right pictures for the rooms, and that he was willing to make his own frames for the paintings with simple Arts & Crafts molding that matched the wooden beams and details in the structure.

Dealers and interior designers often play a critical role in connecting artists with collectors, as was the case of the Wilsons' patronage of Campbell. Those professionals can help collectors sort through thousands of works of art to find pieces that match their taste and budget, they can help uncertain clients feel comfortable with owning paintings, and they can close the deal. In many sales transactions, plein air painters have an advantage over studio painters because they respond directly to locations that may have significance to potential collectors.

It also matters that Peter Campbell is a sensitive, articulate, and dedicated painter who presents his work in a very positive way. Moreover, he has a background that establishes him as a professional artist whose career is worthy of the attention and support of collectors. In



*Another long 16 x 46-inch horizontal painting, *Sunset on the Mesa*, in another bedroom filled with Stickley furniture.*



*A display of three small plein air paintings by Campbell titled *Animas Valley Winter* (4 x 6 in.), *Oak Tree* (8 x 6 in.), and *Valley Trees* (8 x 10 in.).*

1997, when Campbell made a transition from photography to painting, he studied the work of 19th- and early-20th-century artists to gain a better understanding of how they created a feeling for light and form in their paintings. He also participated in workshops taught by David A. Leffel and Michael Del Priore to learn more about the craft of painting and various ways to develop portraits, still lifes, figures, and landscapes.

Campbell calculates that he spends about 30 percent of his time painting outdoors on canvases in sizes up to 16 x 20 inches. "I have to spend time looking at nature to be able to convey a true sense of the landscape in my paintings," he says. "I also take photographic references, but as a former professional photographer I know how inadequate they are in capturing the total experience of being in nature. I think of my camera as a sketching tool for recording details — a piece of sky, a grove of trees, a distant river — but the real artistry of painting is being able to instill a personal, emotional quality in a landscape. In my experience, that is essential for engaging viewers who might become collectors of my work." 📷

PETER CAMPBELL is represented by Meyer East Gallery in Santa Fe, NM; A. Banks Gallery in Bozeman, MT; Ann Korologos Gallery in Basalt, CO; Sorrel Sky Gallery in Durango, CO; and S.H. Brennen Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ. For more information on Campbell, visit www.campbellfineart.com

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*Campbell's 48 x 32-inch painting
Afternoon Orchard on display at
the end of a hallway.*

*All photographs this article:
Morona Photography, Durango,
CO (www.moronaphoto.com).*

