

THE 3  
BIGGEST MISTAKES  
MADE BY ART BUYERS

A Short Guide to Buying Art

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## The Purpose of This Guide

In a world of trouble and stress, we are surrounded by increasing noise and attempts to intrude on our sense of personal peace. Life is difficult but art makes it more bearable. Art is not a luxury. It points us to the transcendent, to the part of us that is not measurable, but we want more of.

Why should you read this guide? If you have purchased or want to purchase art, for any reason, this is for you. After you read it, it is hoped you will be encouraged to buy art (or more art) and will become more successful at doing it.

*“Like our capacity for understanding, or our experience of love,  
art is a vitally important part of life.”*

Gillian Pederson Krag

## About Jason Drake

I have been a creator and manager of art my entire life. From publishing my drawings and paintings in collegiate media, military magazines, political publications and advertising, to selling realist works in some of the country’s most beautiful art establishments, I have made art my life for six decades. While all of us are influenced by trends and cultural movements, I have studied the impact of art throughout history and on the individual today and I believe we are in a period where the celebration of beauty is a resurgent development that is bound to spread.

At the same time there is still a resounding clash in our society with those who would elevate ugliness and function over beauty. And at stake is the future of our culture. This essay is intended to encourage the embrace of beauty and meaning in the pursuit of art.



# THE 3 BIGGEST MISTAKES MADE BY ART BUYERS

When you buy a piece of art you purchase it for a reason. And no two buyers have the same motivation. That is the beautiful thing about art; it can satisfy us at many different levels.

But you can make a mistake when buying art if you don't think ahead and plan. Sure, some purchases are impulsive (artists don't mind selling for that reason), but I want to help you consider key questions before buying so that you can determine if you are going to be a success. If you can ponder these questions before you set foot in an art establishment, or shop for art online, you will be better prepared when it comes time to buy.

So, here are the three biggest mistakes art buyers make.

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## MISTAKE #1. Buyers purchase artwork that is not PRACTICAL.

Many people make a buying decision before they carefully consider what they are going to do with the product. I would dare say our homes are filled with stuff we have accumulated with all of our disposable income and now wonder, "why did I ever get that thing?" when we see it collecting dust in our storage space.

The same applies to art. Most of us (except for the reclusive billionaire) buy art so that it can be seen. No matter what price you pay, consider why you want it and where you will display the work before you bring it home. If it doesn't look right in your living or working environment, or fit your lifestyle, then maybe it is not right for you.



Finding a reliable art dealer can be the first step to buying practical art. Talk to them about what you are looking for and listen as they make recommendations. Don't wander through a

gallery or art show without discussing the art displayed before you with someone who can guide you with knowledgeable help.

When you find a piece that interests you, determine if the art is well made. Does it represent quality craftsmanship, whether in the paint strokes or the sculpture casting? Artists want to be rewarded for the hard work they put into the piece they sell and you, the buyer, should be looking for art that represents good quality work.

How will it look in the same room as any other art you have on display? Does this look like something you would want to pass down to future generations? Even the frame should represent quality workmanship.

As another practical issue, some water media works or even antique prints need to be framed in high quality, museum grade glass to preserve and protect the colors against fading. Can the art dealer verify that this care has been applied to the piece you want?

Another simple question you must consider; is it the right size for you? Measure the space you want to keep it in and even ask the dealer if they can bring it out to your home or office to place it there and look at how it fits. A request like that should be gladly accommodated by a quality art gallery.

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## **MISTAKE #2. Buyers purchase artwork that is not MEANINGFUL.**

When you find that you are attracted to a piece of art, ask yourself, does it mean anything to you? Does it trigger a positive memory or emotion? Does it generate a certain association you have with a person you admire? Many people buy works that they associate with a time past when they experienced something enjoyable and want the artwork to be a good reminder of that time.

Maybe the meaning is found in the color motif of the art and those colors you associate with a time of year or time in your life that is your favorite.



Ask yourself why you keep looking at that artwork or why, after wandering around the gallery you keep coming back to this special one? If you can identify why the artwork has meaning for you, it will make the purchase more special, more valuable, more of a positive experience that you can extend for many years. Art can help life be more bearable if we surround ourselves with pieces that have real meaning for us or those we care about.



Perhaps you relate to the message communicated in the art. The artist may have depicted a scene or viewpoint that you can relate to which can make the art motivating to look at and can impact you as you live around it.

Can you relate to the artist? Get to know them? Art can become relatable for us because we have a personal connection with its creator. A painting can tell you a lot about the painter. The style of brushwork or sense of design will reveal a lot about the way an artist thinks. Their choice of color palette can reflect their mood or can support their longing to draw a viewer into their world and see things from their point of view. Building a relationship with an artist through their work can add an important dimension to both of you and make the pieces you own that much more important to you and to future generations.

Many art buyers say that they purchased a piece of art because of it moved them emotionally. This motive suggests they found meaning in the art and want to look at it over and over in their home or office to remind them of the special way they were impacted.

### MISTAKE #3. Buyers purchase artwork that is not BEAUTIFUL.

Ok, here is the final mistake in our list. Throughout history beauty was a value to be prized and sought after. But today, art schools are convincing young students that any idea they want to express is art. The Tate Museum in London paid millions for an unmade bed surrounded by food wrappers and dirty clothes and called it art. This was not a painting, mind you, but an actual unmade bed. Is beauty in the eyes of the beholder? A subjective thing that no one should judge?



I am not referring to beauty as an extension of fashion. Fashion comes and goes. Beauty lasts. In fact, the beauty of a piece of art can be measured by whether it is timeless in what it depicts and communicates.

So what is beauty and why does it matter?

Beholding beauty is a universal need of human beings. It has a role in human meaning. The meaning of life lies beyond the physical, beyond our appetites and the chaos or suffering that is common to our existence. We have more than practical needs. We have spiritual and moral needs too. If those needs go unsatisfied, so do we.



Beauty is a characteristic in an object or experience that draws us beyond the physical, beyond the realm of the ordinary and into a state of mind where we feel transported to another plane of understanding, a place where our emotions can respond to a higher level of meaning. The ordinary becomes more than just a physical representation. In some way, it enlivens our spirit.

Sir Roger Scruton, philosopher and author wrote:

*We all know what it is like suddenly to be transported from the ordinary world of our appetites, to the illuminated sphere of contemplation. A flash of sunlight, a*

*remembered melody, the face of a loved one...these dawn on us in the most distracted moments... and suddenly life is worthwhile. These are timeless moments in which we feel the presence of another and higher world.*

*Art can take an object and transform it by the creative act to become something else, a vivid symbol of the human condition and one which makes a bond between us and the artist. Art presents reality by transforming it into a symbol of itself. So it isn't just the plain undoctored reality before you, it is something that has been made into an articulate presentation of itself.*

*We look to art not just to present the things around us but to redeem them in some way by finding in them a meaning which is greater than the ordinary eye can observe.*

When you see art that is beautiful, it speaks to your soul, lifts you up, makes life more bearable, enjoyable, thoughtful. Beautiful art can give you a real sense of enjoyment when you see or hear it.

Beauty is a remedy for chaos and suffering. It displays human life as worthwhile.

When you purchase art that is beautiful, you are investing in your well being, the development of surroundings that will enliven you, lift you up, present meaning to you that you can enjoy. Don't settle for artwork that depicts ugliness as a virtue, the distortion of the human as just a meaningless result of chance in the universe or the degrading of life and its struggles. Because of the impact our surroundings have on our well-being, you should make choices that will encourage you, bring you to a point of deeper reflection, or just cause you to pause and behold the beautiful.

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## SUMMARY

We have considered the mistake made by an art buyer who purchases work that is not practical, or meaningful, or beautiful. So how do you determine before you set out to buy if the art presented to you is right for you? If a piece of art fails any or all of the tests suggested here, should you still buy it?

I would suggest that you review this list of challenging questions and determine which of these factors is most important to you. Shop armed with a purposeful view on how to decide. Art is not a purchase you have to make hastily. Take your time. Go back to the dealer and look again. Arrange to bring the painting or sculpture home and see if you can live with it. Discuss it with others that are close to you and get their feedback. With the right preparation, your next art purchase can be the most enjoyable and important decision you make to pursue a love of owning beauty.

For more on owning and enjoying beautiful pieces of art, go to [www.jasondrake.com](http://www.jasondrake.com) and follow my blog there. You will be presented with a well rounded perspective on the world of art and art for your world.

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### **Image credits:**

*Pg 2 - Grandfather Mountain Reverie - oil on linen, Jason Drake*

*Pg 3 - Breezing Up - oil, Winslow Homer*

*Pg 4 - Self Portrait with Beret and Turned-Up Collar - Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn*

*Pg 5 - The Scythians - oil, N.C. Wyeth*

*Pg 6 - Christina's World - Egg tempera, Andrew Wyeth*

*Pg 7 - The Swan at Mayview Lake - oil, Jason Drake*