

There is the business of collecting art and there is the art of collecting art.

The business involves galleries and artist reps and estimates and appraisals. People buy art for all sorts of reasons, including “investment” and prestige.

The art of collecting art is different. The art of collecting art is relational, generative, and rehumanizing. True art begets true art, and the art of collecting art is no different. Investing not in the art alone, but in the artist. Investing not based on a single bottom line, which is vulnerable, but on a triple bottom line, which is a very safe investment. Encouraging, bolstering, cheering, call it what you will—true patronage of the arts is about way more than purchasing a painting.

My hope is to live out the art of art patronage. Even as I continue to make my own art as a writer, songwriter, and actor, I have become deeply enthralled by the joy of investing in others.



Smitha

Both of these pieces hang in our living room. Ruth, Naomi & Orpah hangs over our fireplace and is the first painting a person sees when they enter our home. Mary Magdalene at the Foot of the Cross hangs above our dining room table, where we entertain guests often.

In 2012, I had the chance to fulfill a years-long desire to visit India, when I was invited to participate in an arts and faith conference there. My hosts were phenomenal, and the event they produced—the first of its kind in India, as far as we know—was absolutely wonderful. I gave a keynote talk on what the world needs from artists. One component of the event was an art exhibition in which everyone attending the conference was invited to show their work. These are two of the three from that show that came home with me from India.

I had met the artist before I saw her work, during a break in the conference program, and we had a lovely conversation. Smitha is a beautiful, gracious, kind woman from Hyderabad. She is a mother of two small children, who made several appearances throughout the weekend when her husband brought them by to visit (and so she could nurse their baby boy in between lectures and workshops!) Smitha told me about her work before I saw it, but I was unprepared for how moved I would be when I walked in to the exhibit area and laid eyes on the two pieces she had brought. She had explained that she is a self-taught painter who is focusing on painting women from scripture in traditional Indian settings. Her love for her subjects—women like Mary Magdalene and Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah—was evident as she discussed her work, as was her pride in her Indian culture.

I love the vibrant colors in Smitha's work. I love the way she interprets these women's stories—their pain, their love, their devotion. These works hang in my home as daily reminders of my own call to be a woman of devotion and love in every season of life.



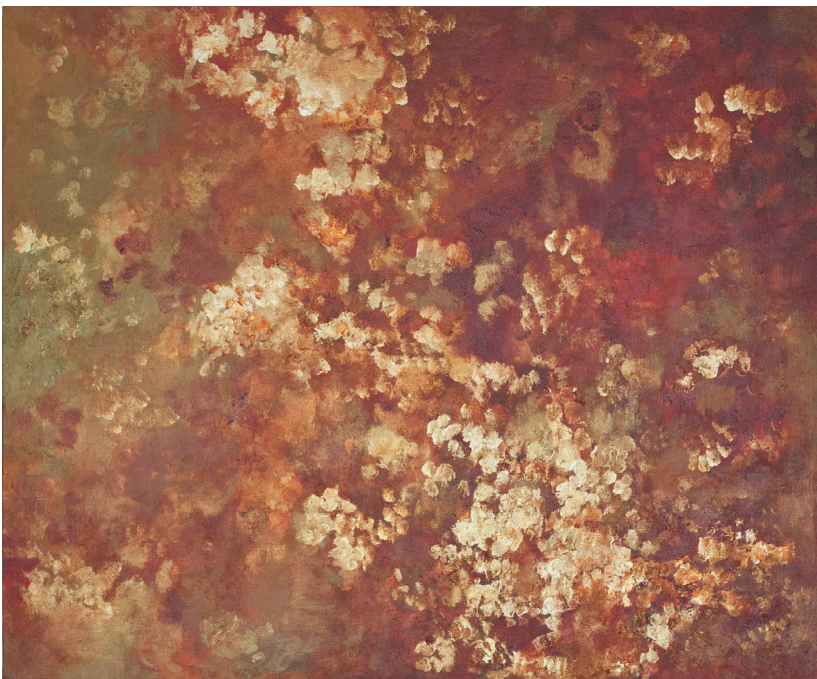
Laine Carlson

The story behind these two paintings is one of my favorites to tell.

In 2008, Laine was a young art student from Minnesota spending a semester in New York City, where she served as an intern at the non-profit arts organization where I worked. From the get-go, I was very impressed by Laine. Her creativity, personality, and work ethic were second-to-none, and I loved working with her. At the end of the semester, Laine invited me to an open studio where she was showing her current body of work. After she had shown me all of the pieces in the show and I had seen her workspace, I asked her, "Is that everything? Is there anything more?"

She looked a little embarrassed as she said, "Well, I have these two other paintings, but my professor told me they were complete shit, so I'm tossing them out." I was taken aback by her professor's comment, and by the fact that it held such power, so much so that she was about to throw away her work. I asked her to show me the "shit."

Laine reached under a table and brought out two beautiful paintings—abstracts that reminded me of autumn in New York. I started to laugh. "Laine, these are gorgeous." She looked a little surprised. I asked if I could buy them. "Please speak to another professor—not the one who called them 'shit'—and tell him that you have an interested buyer. Ask him or her to help you come up with a fair price for these two pieces, and that is what I will pay." A few days later, Laine got back to me with the price, which I gladly paid. These paintings have been adding beauty to my home ever since, first in New York and now in Seattle. And every time someone comments on how beautiful they are, I get to tell this story.



Matthew Whitney

This painting hangs in our bedroom. It is the first painting Karl and I bought together.



When we met, Karl lived in Seattle and I lived in New York. I was in Seattle on business and was meeting two colleagues at Top Pot in Queen Anne the morning I was flying home. These guys—Lance and Jeffrey—had gone to college together, along with Karl, who happened to be at Top Pot at the same time we were meeting there. Lance and Jeffrey introduced us and we all enjoyed breakfast together before I headed to SEA-TAC and back home to New York. No one, including Karl and me, thought anything of that chance meeting, but over the course of the following weeks, we connected through Facebook, email and telephone. For the next eight months, we each made several cross-country trips, ultimately getting engaged and married exactly one year and three weeks after we met.

On one of my visits to Seattle, while we were dating, Karl and I attended the opening of an emerging artist there named Matthew Whitney. We had met Matt through Lance as well, and had become fans of his work. I knew I wanted to buy one of his pieces. After we had seen all the work at that exhibit, Karl and I both kept coming back to this piece. We were not yet engaged, but we both knew we would be.

While we didn't talk about the fact that this painting would eventually hang in "our" home, we did discuss the fact that it was our favorite piece in the show. We paid for the piece before we left that night, and Karl "held it for me" until I moved to Seattle shortly before our wedding.

Matt has become a friend as well. I have been to a salon at his studio in Seattle, we met for coffee during one of his trips to New York when he was en route to Vermont to start his MFA program, and when Matt was raising funds for his project "The Tourist," we were delighted to be among the many people who invested in that project. Through many conversations, and as I have continued to follow Matt's journey as an artist, I am consistently impressed by his thoughtfulness, creativity, and commitment to his craft.



Prittam Priyalochan

This piece is one of six small portraits painted by Prittam, an Indian artist based in New Delhi. During my visit to India in 2012, I had several incredible and providential meetings, one of which was with a man named Stefan Eicher, another keynote speaker at the Sinai Summit in Bangalore.

Stefan runs a gallery and arts program in New Delhi. Before the conference in Bangalore, Stefan posted an image on his Facebook wall showing the conference poster, which had my picture and name as well as his and the other speakers. A little while later, I received an email from

my sister-in-law Joy, who is married to Karl's brother Keith. It turns out that she and Stefan are old friends (and Facebook friends) and she was tickled to discover that her old friend and her new sister-in-law were speaking at the same conference in India!

Shortly after arriving in Bangalore, before the conference began, I met a small gathering of people for breakfast, and one of them was Stefan. We became fast friends, as I learned about his wonderful work with artists in New Delhi. His talk at the conference was very deep, and I was richly edified by what he shared. A few days after the conference, Stefan invited me to join him and another friend to journey to an art ashram outside of Bangalore. I spent several hours in a car with them, learning about how Indians navigate their way to new places (drive straight for a while, then stop and yell the destination out the window to a stranger on the street, who will point down the road and say, "Go straight." Somehow, this always leads you to the right place.)

During that journey, I shared with Stefan that I was leaving the next day for New Delhi, where I had been asked to speak at another conference. I had not heard from the organizers in several weeks, so I did not know who was picking me up from the airport or where I would be staying. I was trying not to sound as anxious as I was feeling, but I know I failed. Stefan took pity on me and offered to make some arrangements.

When I arrived in New Delhi, there was a car waiting for me at the airport with a friendly driver and my traveling companion and friend Berenice, who had been on a different flight. Together, the three of us drove to the art district of Delhi, where Stefan had arranged for us to meet up with Prittam, a painter who had graciously agreed to give us a guided tour of his studio and some of Delhi's best galleries.

We spent several hours with Prittam that day, meeting in a café and then visiting his studio. I can't explain how beautiful that experience was. Prittam's generosity of spirit and graciousness to us were among the highlights of my time in India. We talked for hours about his work, he let me take photos in his studio, and he even let me interview him on camera for a documentary I hope to someday make. Prittam's work is deeply stirring, as he explores many themes facing his life as a brother, friend, son, uncle, Indian, artist, and more.

There were several pieces in his studio that I was very drawn to, but I kept coming back to six small portraits of girls. Having already spent more money on art than I had planned on that trip, I asked him how much he would sell those portraits for. He told me the price in rupees—a fair price, to be sure, but as I calculated the exchange in my head, I knew that this would be an expenditure beyond my budget.

I walked around his studio for a while and considered the cost. There was really no question whether or not I would bring those pieces home with me. Prittam's story—his journey as an artist—had left an indelible mark on me, and I couldn't go home without something he had made. I looked at how much I had with me in rupees and asked Berenice if I could borrow some from her, which she graciously let me do. "I would like to buy these works, Prittam," I said. "Please tell me about them."

Prittam was visibly surprised—and moved that I wanted to buy his work. He had agreed to show two strangers who love art around Delhi as a favor to a friend, and by the end of our time together, we were friends, too.

As he carefully wrapped each portrait in brown paper for me to bring them back to the states, he told us the story of these works. They were portraits of Indian girls, inspired by Prittam's niece, whose mother had died when she was very small. Prittam's mother had helped to raise her ever since, and he is a loving and doting uncle, and very proud of her.

Hearing him talk about his niece and these portraits made me even more grateful that he let me take them home. I explained to Prittam that I support an organization in India that works to end human trafficking, and especially focuses on helping girls and women who have been victimized in some way. I told him that I would hang the portraits in my office at home as a reminder to pray—for the girls of India, and for him, too.

I did.

And I do.



Narboo

I have never met Narboo, a.k.a. Brandon Baker, but over the past year, I have fallen in love with his work, which I discovered when he had a show at my favorite coffee shop, Dubsea Coffee in Seattle's Greenbridge community in White Center.

At first glance, Narboo's art struck me as whimsical and light, and much of it is—delightfully so. But as I visited his exhibit at Dubsea Coffee in White Center in 2012 and spent time with his works there, I was impressed by how many of his pieces, though whimsical and light at first blush, reflect tremendous depth, soul, and emotion. (A visit to his Flickr stream—<http://www.flickr.com/photos/narboo>—will tell you two things about Narboo: he is prolific, and he has a gift for tugging the heart strings in even the simplest sketch, such as the one he did in response to the Sandy Hook shooting victims, which got me all choked up.)

There were two pieces in that exhibit at Dubsea that I fell in love with. One of them, a very poignant painting of a homeless bear sitting in front of a freshly-flattened forest, was sold by the time I saw the show. The other one was this little guy, which I have the good fortune of looking at every day while I work at my desk. There is something about the expression on his face—the eyes tell it all—that I completely relate to.



Martin Dominguez Ball

I own two pieces by this artist, but I did not know when I bought the second one that it was his work. In 2008, the non-profit arts organization I was working for held a silent art auction as a fundraiser, and Martin donated the ink on wood drawing of a woman. I fell in love with it and began bidding. I think this is the first piece of art that I bid for and won, and it made me a fan of art auctions for charity. I loved being able to support the organization and have such a gorgeous piece adorning the wall in my home.

When I got this piece, I had just met Martin, who looks like he should be in a rock band (as it turns out, he is.) But his wife, author Joan Ball, and I had begun a friendship earlier that year. It was such fun to realize that the art I loved the most in that auction was made by her husband, who is a key character in Joan's wonderful memoir, *Flirting With Faith*. The following year, the organization held another silent auction, and once again I bid on my favorite piece and won—not realizing until later that Martin had painted this one as well!



The two works are quite different. One is a beautiful silhouette of a nude woman done in pen on wood. The other is a man playing guitar, looking as though he might come from Martin's native Venezuela—or perhaps Spanish Harlem, where I lived for several years. The first piece reminds me of my own femininity and the beauty of the female form. It is the only nude I own (so far) and I absolutely love it.

The second piece reminds me of the men who used to bring their congas and guitars to the playground near my apartment on E. 112th Street and 3rd Avenue in Manhattan, filling the streets with wonderful music late into the hot summer nights. I would often stop and listen as they played mostly for their own enjoyment, but never minding the audience that would invariably congregate. Some danced, some sang along in Spanish. While I knew I was an outsider looking in, I never felt unwelcome. Spanish Harlem was very good to me, and I am grateful for having had the chance to live there, where my neighbors called me *hermana* and looked out for me when I was walking home late at night.

Since painting these pieces, Martin has begun an MFA program in Vermont, where he continues to hone his craft as an artist. The drawing of the woman hangs just outside our bedroom, and the painting of the guitar player hangs beside my desk, where I see it while I work.



Ryan Stander

This piece, from Ryan's 2012 solo show at International Arts Movement's Space 38 | 39 gallery in New York City, is one of the newest additions to our collection. It is one of a growing number of pieces I bought while traveling and carried back on a plane.

For over four years, I hosted a podcast called IAM Conversations, where I interviewed engaging artists and writers and other thoughtful and creative people. While I didn't know it at the time, Ryan's interview would be my last one as host of IAM Conversations. It was December 2012, and I was wrapping up my time working for IAM, and Ryan had a solo show going up there. As part of our effort to promote the show, as I often do, I scheduled an interview with the artist. Before conducting the interviews, I always did a lot of research, reading as much as I could find online about the person I would be interviewing. So by the time I actually had Ryan on the phone, to talk about *Occluded Witnesses* (the name of his exhibition), I had already become interested in his work.

Ryan works in mixed media—in this case, old photographs he has found at flea markets and yard sales. He explained during our interview that, in his family, photographs are important. Before scanning and sharing photos was so easy, he recalled some heated discussions with some relatives over who would get certain family photos. So when he first stumbled upon a box of old family photographs at a flea market over a decade ago, he was shocked. Calling photographs “certificates of presence,” he was troubled by the idea of these photographs being separated from anyone who knew the stories of the people depicted in them. What happens to us when our stories are separated from our images? What happens when the memory of certain people is lost in the course of human history?

I love art that begs questions about what it means to be human, what our stories mean to our legacies, and how family history is recorded. I also love that the photos in this shadow box are of people I will never know. Whenever I pass by it hanging in the main hallway of my home, I am reminded that all of us are part of a sea of humanity, generations of witnesses to the miracle of life. We were all conceived in our mother's wombs, we all learned to walk and to talk and work and worship—and some day, we'll all be gone. Ryan's work challenges me to consider my own legacy. When my own emblems of human existence are long gone, will the work I have done and the investment I have made in this world continue to bear good fruit for the next?



Makoto Fujimura

I met Mako for the first time in the Starbucks at the northwest corner of Union Square in Manhattan, while I was working as the executive assistant to the CEO of a major global prestige beauty company. We were introduced by my good friend, Bryan Horvath, because they were building a leadership team at International Arts Movement, the non-profit arts organization Mako had founded and Bryan was helping lead, and Bryan thought I might be a good fit.

He was right. From the moment I met Mako and we began talking, I knew friendship with him was a special gift. During the course of that conversation, Mako said to me, “How is it that we have not met before? I feel so grateful to know you.” I was speechless at that. It was I who was grateful to know him.

His spirit of generosity and posture of humility have been hallmarks of my friendship with Mako, whose list of accomplishments in the art world is lengthy. He served as a presidential nominee to the National Council on the Arts, his work is exhibited in numerous galleries and museums worldwide, and his Four Holy Gospels illumination commission was Crossway Publishing's extravagant way to mark the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible—just to name a few of his impressive credits.

But before I knew him as an artist, he was a friend, and this “letters” piece is a testimony to that: it was his wedding gift to us. During his Four Holy Gospels period, Mako painted numerous square letters in his traditional Nihonga technique, using raw hide glue and crushed precious minerals, painting layer upon layer upon layer. For us, he painted a “C” and a “K” on top of one another—for Christy and Karl. Mako helped to serve communion in our wedding, and his gift to us serves as a beautiful reminder of the preciousness of marriage, where two become one—we cannot tell where the C ends and the K begins.



The second piece we have by Mako is from what I call his “trout period.” It is very meaningful to me for two specific reasons. First, I have a very special memory of walking with Mako during the Festival of Faith and Music in Grand Rapids several years ago. Mako had been invited as a speaker, and I was there to help him and do some public relations work for International Arts Movement. We were walking through a breezeway, pondering some of the “greater ifs” of life and art and faith, and Mako said, “I want to have a tee shirt made that says, ‘Don’t be a catfish.’” I asked him why, and he explained that catfish are bottom feeders, swimming around digesting other animals’ waste. “We need to be trout—swimming upstream, against the current,” he said.

I knew exactly what he was talking about, as we had spent many hours over the course of many months and years, discussing what the artist’s posture toward culture should be—especially artists like Mako, who are motivated by a view of humanity that is informed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As he continued to flesh out his thoughts, he was inspired to write about and paint trout. (See “Trout, the Dow, and Our Bottom Lines” (Part I & II) , which are available at www.makotofujimura.com).

But the second reason this piece means so much is because the man I married is a fly fisherman, and he loves to fish for trout. This small painting of a trout was included in International Arts Movement’s Christmas Small Works Auction the year I got married, and I wanted it for Karl so badly. It was the perfect gift for him, but I would only be able to get it if it was still there when my raffle ticket number was called. By God’s grace, my number was the second to be called, and the trout painting was still there.

It hangs in our bedroom, on Karl’s side of the bed.



Brooke Rowlands

A few years back, I became friends with a man from Oklahoma City named Dave Fuller. We met when he came to New York for an arts conference I was co-producing, and after a few conversations in person, we began a years-long exchange as my friends at International Arts Movement and I talked with Dave about his vision for an arts community in OKC. Out of that friendship, and because of the incredibly rich creative community in OKC, and because Dave Fuller is such a great creative catalyst, "IAM OKC" was born (www.iamokc.org).

For one of their first events, Dave invited me to come out to Oklahoma City and meet with his community. It was such an awesome trip. Dave and his wife, Arlene, are incredible hosts. The artists who are part of IAM OKC are thoughtful and hospitable visionaries, and the creative community they are building there is doing wonderful things.

For Christmas one year, they hosted a Small Works Art Auction to raise money for IAM OKC and support some of the local artists who are involved with the community. I told Dave I wanted to buy a piece in the auction, so he sent me images of the works.

I was delighted to come away with "Lemon Calla Lily," by Brooke Rowlands. It hangs in the "reading nook" that is part of our guest room.

Sarah Browning



Sarah is another artist whom I have never met, but whose art is part of my daily life. She had a solo show at Dubsea Coffee, which is my favorite “coffice” (i.e. coffee shop that doubles as my office on occasion.) For a month, every time I went in to Dubsea, I admired Sarah’s beautiful cut paper art. There were two pieces I was especially attracted to: one was of a woman playing a flute, which I had planned to buy for my mother as a Christmas gift (someone else bought it first), and the other was this one, depicting a harvest scene.

Each time I went to Dubsea, I considered these works. One day, I was just standing in front of this piece, studying it, when I realized that I wanted to be able to look at it all the time.

It reminds me of my desire to live a fruitful life.

It reminds me of all of the agriculture parables and metaphors in the Bible, which are among my favorite passages.

It reminds me of Wendell Berry and his agrarian perspective, which has had a tremendous influence on me in recent years.

It evokes a sense of earthy rootedness.

It quiets my soul.

This piece hangs in our bedroom, where we see it every day.



David W. Tripp

David W. Tripp is one of the most imaginative and prolific artists I know. We met around 2008 or so, when I was visiting with mutual friends outside of Philadelphia. These friends are all part of an arts community there called "The Gathering," and over the course of several years, our paths have crossed many times, when I've visited Philly or when several "Gatherings" would drive up to NYC for gallery crawls and museum visits, inviting me to tag along.

Once, a group of us were at MoMA, and David and I were separated from the rest of the group. For a while, we walked and talked about the art on the walls, but soon, I was curious about David's art. "Do you have your sketchbook?" I asked. He responded, "Of course!" and proceeded to pull not one, but two, from his bag. We sat down in the middle of an exhibit at MoMA and David let me look through every stunning page of his sketchbooks.

The guy is just remarkably gifted.

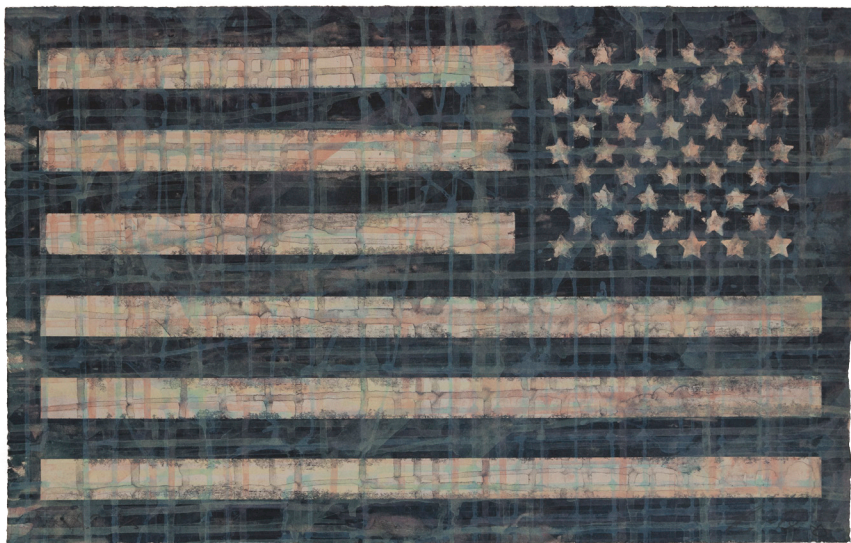
His drawings are surreal yet poignant. He has done several series that require time to study, ponder, and reflect. At first glance, some of his stuff could be written off as "strange." But for those who are willing to take the time, we find an insightful and very true commentary about life.

My first piece of David's art was a gift—we shared a meal together with a few other friends, and afterwards, he surprised me with this print. It was a truly unexpected treat, and I was so touched by his generosity.

Our friendship has grown over the years, as we have corresponded about art, faith, and life in general. I have purchased more of his artwork, and he has given me more gifts (like the 2011 Edition poster, "Zombie Cavewoman Christy," a "happy, singing, paleolithic undead urbanite", which is also available as a paper doll).

In 2011, David published the first volume of his "Sketchbook" drawings, and I had the immense privilege of writing the introduction. I continue to follow his journey both personally and professionally, believing that the world is a better place because people like David are faithful to their creative calling.

This piece hangs in the first-floor entrance to our home, just outside Karl's office.



Ron Kelsey

The first time I ever spoke with Ron Kelsey, he was calling International Arts Movement from the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.

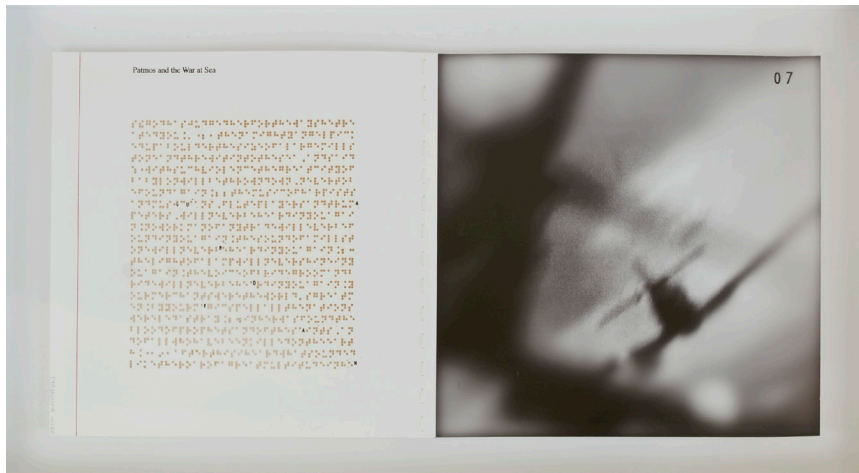
Ron is a gifted artist who is also a soldier on active duty in the United States Army. While serving one of his tours in Iraq, Ron's grandmother sent him a care package that included a copy of Makoto Fujimura's book, "Refractions," which Ron read while sitting outside of Al Faw Palace. Years earlier, in 2001, Ron was doing an art internship with Mako at his studio in New York City when two men turned jets into bombs, taking out the World Trade Center. After becoming active duty and entering the theater of war, Ron had put his artistic pursuits on hold. But when he read "Refractions," something in Ron was stirred up. He began to dream about how to fully embrace his dual calling as a soldier and an artist.

From that conversation and many that followed, Ron spearheaded the launching of a new movement called "Reflections of Generosity," which is now housed under IAM's "Shalom Projects." The movement included a book of "wartime epistles," a traveling art exhibit honoring soldiers and their loved ones, and ongoing discussions dedicated to supporting and encouraging the military community.

The first major "Reflections of Generosity" event took place in 2009 at Fort Drum Army Base in upstate New York. A number of artists and musicians, including my friends Makoto Fujimura, Jay Walker, Gerda Liebmann, Leigh Ann Dull, Joyce Y. Lee, and me, traveled to Fort Drum to be part of the opening. I wrote and performed a song for the event, along with two other singer/songwriters—Kyla Kelsey (Ron's wife) and Christa Wells—who both remain friends to this day.

Also in 2009, Ron received a "nonprofit military commission" for a lithograph to benefit thirty Soldiers coming home from Iraq. This lithograph is from that commission, and was a gift from Ron for my participation in the project. It depicts an Infrared Flag (IR Flag), which is part of a Soldier's uniform designed to protect them from friendly fire.

When I consider the Polaroids of my life, my memories from the Reflections of Generosity event at Fort Drum are some of my favorites. I am so grateful for Ron's passion and effort on behalf of the military community, and grateful that I got to be part of it in some small way.



Alastair Whitton

I am so proud to have this piece of art hanging in my home.

In 2010, I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Cape Town, South Africa. I had been invited to attend a large conference there that lasted for nearly a week. Since I didn't know when I would get back to that part of the world again, I decided to stay an extra week after the conference to visit with an old friends I hadn't seen in years and take in some of the sights.

Kate and I had met years ealier, when she was volunteering as a nanny in New York for some mutual friends of ours. When she was not "on duty" taking care of their little boy, Kate would often hang out with me. We had some really fantastic adventures together in NYC while she was there, but we had largely lost touch in the years since. When we reconnected, I discovered that Kate was married with two small children, still living in Cape Town. She and her husband, Wouter, graciously agreed to let me stay with them for a week.

When I got to their house, we were chatting about my goals for the extra week I was spending in Cape Town. I told them I wanted to visit Table Mountain, the Slavery Museum, and Robbin Island... and that I wanted to connect with some local artists/galleries and visit the South African National Gallery. Kate mentioned that a friend of hers from church was an artist, and she offered to put us in touch.

I phoned Alastair Whitton and introduced myself, only to discover that he already knew who I was, because he was familiar with International Arts Movement and my podcast there, IAM Conversations. He graciously agreed to meet me the following day and "show me around." We agreed to meet at a coffee shop near a gallery where he had a solo exhibition at the time.

Before going to meet Alastair the next day, I went to the South African National Gallery, where one of the exhibitions featured selected pieces from the 8th Bamako Encounters African Photography Biennial exhibition, Borders. I studied each piece in that exhibition carefully, fascinated by the range of perspectives and aesthetics represented there.

As I was looking at the work and reading the information about each piece, I suddenly realized that some of the pieces I was looking at were by Alastair Whitton—the man I was meeting for coffee later that day. I had no idea he was such an accomplished artist! One of his bodies of work is entitled Patmos and the War at Sea, a series comprising thirty-three individual archival pigment prints. Several pieces from that project were selected for the Bamako Borders, which had been shown in museums throughout Africa.

I had the chance to see all of Patmos and the War at Sea, because that was the show that was up at the gallery we visited together later that day. Alastair Whitton showed me beautiful hospitality that day, spending several hours talking with me about his journey as an artist and introducing me to several other galleries and artists in Cape Town. Over coffee, I interviewed Alastair (our conversation, along with a slide show of Patmos and the War at Sea, can be found on www.internationalartsmovement.org) and he was very generous with his time and insights.

Alastair and I finished our tour at David Krut Projects' gallery space, where, at my request, Alastair showed me some more of his artwork and works by others. As we were finishing our visit, Alastair pointed to a wall of his works from the Patmos series. "I'd like for you to have one of these pieces," he said. "Please select one to take home."

I was so touched by his generosity. I had inquired earlier in the day about the price of his work, trying to ascertain whether or not I could afford to buy it. (I could not.)

To this day, Alastair's generosity, along with the generosity of others toward me over the years, is instructive. I want to go and do likewise.

This piece is entitled "Guardian," and it hangs in the main hallway of our home.

Shweta Kanhai

I met Shweta Kanhai in Bangalore at the Sinai Summit, a conference produced by friends from India's Integrated Arts Movement (IAM), where I was invited to deliver a keynote address. I arrived at the conference center early, and since I didn't have any assigned tasks, I sort of walked back and forth between the exhibition gallery and the lecture hall, greeting people and generally growing more and more excited for the first session to begin.

It was while I was walking back and forth that I first met Shweta, dressed in the gorgeous, colorful traditional clothes that make India such a beautiful place. I was impressed by her boldness and her confidence as she told me about her work, some of which was included in the gallery at the conference. Over the few days of the conference, we spoke several times, and her passion for her faith and her art was contagious. I was so delighted when she agreed to sell this painting to me.

"Benny's Guitar" was painted in homage to Indian musician Benny Prasad, who plays a custom-built instrument that combines guitar, harp,



and percussion. What Shweta did not know was that Benny was actually going to be performing at the conference! It was a treat to see her painting and then, later, to see the actual guitar, and, more importantly, to hear it played. I think the painting means so much more when you can "hear" the music while looking at it. While India has a rich and long history of art, this painting represents India's current artistic culture, marrying ancient traditions with modern innovation.

I love the rich colors of this painting. We originally hung it in our living room, but one day I came home and it was gone. Karl had moved it to his workspace, where it now hangs above his desk.



Laura Marks

I moved to Seattle shortly before marrying Karl in 2011. After I arrived, Karl and I decided to spend some time visiting worshiping communities (a.k.a. churches) in and around the area of Seattle where we were going to live and take our time finding a place to call “home.” The third church we visited was Mount View Presbyterian, and by the end of our first visit, we knew that we had found “the one.”

What we didn't know right away was that, despite the small size of the congregation, this was a church rich in artists, including writers, painters, photographers, filmmakers, designers, musicians, and, when I joined, an actor.

Laura is one of the artists. But before I even knew she was an artist, Laura was one of my first new friends in Seattle. She and her husband, Terry, welcomed Karl and me with open arms. We began sharing meals together in each other's homes, and Laura and I began meeting up for

coffee (though not nearly as often as either of us would like to!) I also volunteered once to help drive students to a workshop for the AIGA Link Program, where Laura is the Program Director.

Then one day, when we were having dinner at the Marks' home, I got to see Laura's art studio and finally see some of her artwork.

Her works are exquisite: rich, lush layers of paint cover her (usually quite large) canvases. The first time I visited her studio, Laura was working on a painting of a dove, which now hangs at the front of Mount View's sanctuary, directing our eyes and hearts toward the Holy Spirit as we join week after week in worship. After seeing and falling in love with several of Laura's large works, I asked about the price on some of my favorite pieces.

They're pretty expensive.

And worth every penny.

About a year later, I was looking for a large painting to hang in my office, which would serve as a beautiful backdrop for when I am on my frequent video conference calls. I asked Laura about this, and she offered to let me borrow one of her large paintings. But when they dropped it off, it was so large it didn't fit in my office! So we “temporarily” hung it in our bedroom, where there was one bare wall that was just begging for artwork. About a week later, having lived with the painting, having it be the last thing we saw before bed and the first the we saw in the morning light, Karl said, “We gotta find a way to keep Laura's painting.” The next time I saw her, I told her we'd love to buy it, but couldn't afford to pay for it all at once. She suggested an installment plan, saying that another friend was doing the same thing. I loved that idea!

So this is the first piece we bought incrementally, but my guess is that it is not the last. It hangs in our bedroom, where it will stay.

Alison Stigora



I don't remember exactly when or where I met Alison for the first time. But I do remember that I fell in love with a charcoal on paper drawing she had made when I saw it in one of International Arts Movement's juried art exhibitions several years ago. That got my attention, but unfortunately it sold before I had a chance to even consider buying it.

Sometime after that, I was making a trip through Philadelphia to visit friends and thought I would reach out to Alison. I had emailed her to express interest in her work, and she had written back to tell me that she had other drawings that were from the same series as the one I wanted, and that she would be happy to let me see them. When I passed through Philadelphia, Alison and I met up and I bought the piece you see here.

From then on, though, we stayed in touch. Knowing that she made frequent trips to New York to visit museums and galleries, I had invited Alison to stay with me if she ever wanted to spend more than just a day there. She took me up on it at some point, and we sat up talking about art, guys, life, and faith. It was a lovely friendship that has carried on for the last several years.

Jay Walker, another artist who has work in this show, is a close friend of Alison's. They met while they were in the MFA program at Pennsylvania Institute of Fine Art, and they have had several opportunities to exhibit together over the years. Jay and Alison were among the artists who were part of Reflections of Generosity, and Jay traveled to Fort Drum for the opening. At the opening after-party, Jay and I were chatting about the future, doing some dreaming together about the possibilities, and he mentioned an idea he and Alison had for a group show at International Arts Movement's Space 38 | 39, a beautiful gallery space in Manhattan's Garment District. Just a few moments later, Makoto Fujimura joined us, and, not knowing that Jay had just told me about their idea, suggested that perhaps Jay might curate a show at "our" space.

That moment of synchronicity resulted in HUMANIZATION, a group show curated by Jay Walker and Alison Stigora at Space 38 | 39 the following year. Since my office was also that gallery space, I worked alongside

their art for at least a month. They did a remarkably good job of using the space, installing, among other pieces, one of Alison's massive sculptures of burned wood in, and emerging from, the telephone booth in the space.

A few years ago, someone from another non-profit organization contacted me. They were forming a special invitation-only, all-expenses-paid arts retreat for women under thirty who were artists of tremendous promise, and they asked me for nominations. Alison was the first person who came to mind, and she did, in fact, go on that retreat.

As her career has continued to grow, I have traveled to see her (amazing, breathtaking) solo exhibitions.

While this drawing is a very manageable size for hanging on a wall—it currently resides on the wall between our front door and living room window—it is only a hint of what she creates from large burned wood, stacked together, winding around and through one another, a meticulously formed tangled mass, often reaching from floor to vaulted ceiling.

Because most of her exhibitions are on the east coast, and I live in Seattle now, it's quite difficult for me to get out to her shows now. But I follow her journey with rapt interest, rejoicing at every announcement or PDF of a show card that hits my in box.



Jay Walker

My journey of friendship with Jay Walker is very intertwined with what I have just shared about my relationship with Alison. I met Jay in a church in Media, PA, when I was there visiting our mutual friends David and Angie Sacks. Having spent the night with David and Angie, I decided to attend church with them before hitting the road again en route from NYC to my parents' home in Virginia.

After church, we ran into Jay and his friend, David W. Tripp (also in this show), and David (Sacks) introduced us. All of them, along with Alison and a handful of other artists, had started a community for artists they dubbed "The Gathering." Meeting monthly, the "Gatherlings," as they came to be called, met to talk about one another's work, discuss an article or video related to the arts, and pray for one another.

We began corresponding regularly via email. Through my work with International Arts Movement, I had begun to come alongside similar communities of artists all over the world, and we found it helpful to talk through the ins and outs of facilitating a sense of community and camaraderie among artists. I offered Jay and his fellow Gatherlings a macro-perspective, sharing ideas and suggestions I had collected along the way, while they offered me a place at the table as an honorary Gatherling and taught me things I could pass along to other arts communities, from Oklahoma City to Bangalore, India.

Over the years, I would get text messages from Jay letting me know they would be coming to Manhattan to visit galleries and museums, and he always invited me to join them. I don't think he ever understood how much it meant to me that he invited me to tag along. I knew so little about art, and Jay and the others were always so gracious toward me to welcome me—and my many questions.

Once, at MoMA, we walked into a room where there was a huge detail blown up on the wall, and I commented that it was reminiscent of Monet. They looked at me with a combination of compassion and incredulity before bursting into affectionate laughter. "Christy, it is Monet." Even though I felt a little foolish, I also felt entirely safe in my ignorance with them. They, who knew so much, never looked down at me, but rather made themselves available to me, to talk about art and teach me some new ways to "see."

I treasure the times I have spent with these friends. On one visit through Philadelphia, Jay and his wife, Gabby, invited me to visit them and spend a night in their lovely house and tour the barn that served as Jay's art studio. In their home, I noticed a sculpture that I was immediately intrigued by and asked about it.

It was one of Jay's sculptures, part of a large body of work he has developed and exhibited over the years—faces carved into tree trunks. He let me take that sculpture home with me, and I mailed a check soon after.

Later, I visited the Abingdon Art Center to see Jay's solo show there, where many more of his face sculptures were shown. I also got to see one he carved into the trunk of a tree that was still rooted to the ground, a commission that has become part of Abingdon Art Center's permanent collection. It was almost mythical, reminiscent of a fantasy film where wood nymphs abound and pixies hide among the branches of trees that have faces and come to life.

I have many more fond stories of my adventures with Jay Walker and the flock of Gatherlings he can often be found with—attending art shows in PA and NY, running around Manhattan late at night during art conferences we were both part of, and taking long walks on the property he and his wife, Gabby, lived on. I am grateful for the many things he has taught me about art—and about friendship.



How To Support Artists

1. Buy their work. If you can't afford to buy it all at once, ask about paying them in installments. I have never known an artist to refuse this, if they know and trust you.
2. Ask about their work. "What are you working on now?" is a great question. When they tell you about it, ask more questions. Give them a chance to talk about their work. It actually helps them to talk about it and hear your feedback.
3. Sign up for their mailing lists.
4. Go to their openings. If you can't make it to the opening, go to the show some other time and let them know you went.
5. Tell other people about their openings. Share the links to their web sites or their shows on your Facebook and Twitter feeds.
6. Brag about them in general, even if they don't have any shows at the moment. Sometimes I'll just share an image by an artist I love on my Facebook wall and talk about how much I love their work. This is tremendously encouraging to most artists.
7. Ask to visit their studio. I have had some really beautiful conversations with artists in their spaces, where they have works in progress. Once, when I was in Walla Walla, WA, I visited my friend Squire Broel's studio, and I learned so much about his process and body of work. When I was in Cape Town, South Africa, I had the tremendous gift of being a dinner guest in the home of Philip Barlow and his wife, Sandy. After dinner, Philip showed me his studio, and it was a wonderland to me, with all its jars of paints and brushes and canvases and works in progress. Jay Walker's workspace was a room in a barn, and as I looked through his works from over the years, I got to see how his work had evolved, and what themes he continuously explored. Also, there is just nothing like seeing an artist's work in person!
8. Introduce them to others. Occasionally, I meet people and think, "They really need to know so-and-so." For people who are asking some of the same

questions, or wrestling with some of the same issues, there is power in numbers! My friend John Robertson is an artist in Houston, TX, who co-leads an art community there called Imago Houston. When I knew he was going to New York, I introduced him via email to a friend who is doing similar work there, and they met for coffee. It was a time of encouragement for both of them, where they could glean from one another's experiences and go away with a sharper vision for their respective communities. If you think two artists should know each other, they probably should. Introduce them!

9. Support their Kickstarter or Indiegogo campaigns. Even if you can only afford to give a small token, if their project is well-done, give something to help them make it a reality.

10. Invite them to go to a museum with you and give you their own guided tour of the work. Last year, I was meeting with a small group of artists in Seattle, and I mentioned that I was planning to head to the SAM (Seattle Art Museum) after our meeting, and would love for any of them to join me. One woman, artist Jackie Van Noy, came along, and it was such a gift for me to view the work with her. She knew so much about the artists in the show, and was able to give me a context that I simply would not have had otherwise. Later, she told me it was really fun for her to be with someone who was so curious. Win/win!

11. Host an exhibition of their work in your home. My friends Lance and Abby Mansfield are faithful art patrons, and they have taught me a lot about how to support artists by their example. I know of at least two private art shows they have hosted, and they have invested much more time, money, and energy in supporting the work of many artists in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, not least of which through co-founding www.byfor.org.

12. Invite them to be part of something you're doing. Perhaps you can't pay them a ton, but offer them something. My friend Alex is an emerging photographer, and when I needed some new publicity photos recently, I hired him to shoot them. (Likewise when I needed images of my art work for this catalog!)

This is just a starting list of suggestions. There are a bunch more! I'd love to hear from artists who read this—what are some ways you would feel supported and encouraged? And patrons, what are some of the creative ways you have built up the artists you love?

Love their art? Get to know them a little better.

Alison Stigora (Philadelphia, USA) www.alisonstigora.com

Alastair Whitton (Cape Town, SA) www.alastairwhitton.com/

Brooke Rowlands (Oklahoma City, USA)
www.facebook.com/brooke.rowlands.art

David Tripp (Philadelphia, USA) www.davidwtripp.com

Jay Walker (Philadelphia, USA) www.jaywalkerstudio.com

Laine Carlson (White Bear Lake, MN, USA)
www.saatchionline.com/profile/89271

Laura Marks (Seattle, WA) www.gildymarks.com/

Makoto Fujimura (New York, USA) www.makotofujimura.com

Martin Dominguez Ball (New York, USA) www.martindb.com

Matthew Whitney (Seattle, USA) www.matthewwhitney.com

Narboo (Seattle, USA) www.narboo.com

Prittam Priyalochan (New Delhi, India)
<https://www.facebook.com/prittam.priyalochan>

Ron Kelsey (US Army, Reflections of Generosity)
www.facebook.com/ron.v.kelsey

Sarah Browning (Seattle, USA) www.sarahbrowning.com

Smitha (Hyderabad, India) www.facebook.com/smitha.mathew

Shweta Kanhai (Haryana, India)
www.facebook.com/shwetakanhai.estudiodivino

Very special thanks to Rainy Day Worzella (www.rainydaystudio.com) for designing this catalog and Alex Collier (<http://threeweight.wordpress.com>) for photographing the work. Thanks to Sibelle Nguyen of Dubsea Coffee (www.dubseacoffee.com) in White Center for hosting "Close To Home" and Chuck and Janis Lindley of Made To Create for helping hang the show.

To see the images in color, read these and other essays, share your own stories and suggestions on art patronage for people of modest means, and stay in touch about other "Close To Home" exhibitions, please visit <http://everythingchristy.wordpress.com/close-to-home/>.