

Art: Grand Rapids Gets It!



Armand Merizon: *Early Spring Morning*, acrylic.

Are you tired of reading about Michigan's struggling economy? Contrary to these reports, some Grand Rapids galleries are posting very healthy sales. While the sales figures may reflect an improving local economy, owners of Grand Rapids art galleries believe other forces are at work as well. The people of Grand Rapids are learning to appreciate, enjoy, share, and invest in fine art.

In the East Fulton business district, Mercury Head Gallery has been selling an exceptional number of original paintings by local artists Armand Merizon and George Peebles. "The week before Father's Day, two brothers, ages thirteen and fifteen, came in and bought a painting for their father. In another instance, a young college student came in and purchased her first piece of art on a payment schedule. This tells me that people are beginning to wake up to the value that art brings to

our lives," says proprietor, Ben Perrin. "I often tell my customers to consider how much money they spend on daily lattes, their cell phones, or a night on the town. In comparison, investing in a work of art offers so much more value—value that will not only last but increase through passing years and generations."

As young professionals begin populating our downtown, they are finding that the art they choose to hang in their new homes makes more than a design statement. Art brings beauty to the eye, enlists the imagination and brightens the spirit. Even though many are at the beginning of their careers, they are giving themselves permission to make an investment that may seem a bit much for their budgets; they realize that the pay-off over time will make it well worth the expense.

In 400 B.C., the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates said, "Ars longa, vita brevis," loosely translated, "Art is long, life is short." His statement about the longevity of art rings true today and should inspire us to consider the place of art in our own lives.

If you've been bitten by the art bug and aren't sure where to find the cure, drop into any Grand Rapids Gallery Association (GRGA) member gallery for instant relief. You'll



Elizabeth Vedrine: *Le Feu Sous La Glace*, oil.

find friendly, knowledgeable staff who will be glad to teach you what good art looks like. They can also help you choose that one-and-only piece that will add value and pleasure to your life. Many member galleries offer "try it before you buy it" programs and interest-free payment plans.

Join those who get it!



Bob Bauer: *Row Crops*, gel ink.