

I have been called many things in my life, but this latest is different, "Patron."
Last evening I attended the final hours of a silent auction for the benefit of the Riverwest Artist Association. As the auctioneer read off the list of winners, my name came up a few times. After the second, "Looks like we have a patron here," was the comment. I consulted, via text, my friend J, "True. You most certainly are."

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"I just never was called that until U so dubbed me just 2 weeks ago. Still getting used 2 the title," I replied. "Enjoy it. It's a good one. And ur efforts are very appreciated. Particularly these days."

I suppose some background is in order. My firm has recently moved into new offices. Large offices. Offices with lots of empty walls, high ceilings, and the sort of vibe which just calls out for art. I have an extensive art collection, but have not purchased much in the past few years because I have run out of places to put it. Walking through the new office space I commented, "We'll need more artwork." "That's your job," my boss fired back. Okay then, I took him at his word and begun an acquisition binge which has only now, with last night's auction, reached its end.



I am not a wealthy man, but I am well off enough to invest some money in art. In these troubled times I consider it to be my own personal economic stimulus plan. Art is a good investment, it appreciates in almost all market conditions and has more intrinsic value to its owner than any paper investment does. Stocks may offer more upside potential (and risk) and bonds may offer more reliable earnings, but they're not much to look at. Art; art is a joy to be around, it betters our lives, improves our surroundings, adds to the human experience, and it appreciates. You can't beat that.

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So, I am now a patron. "Everyone's happy when the collector shows up," I quipped at a recent benefit art sale. Oh, those were the innocent days, when I was merely a collector,

before I undertook this patronizing behavior.Â Well, if I have to be something, I guess being a patron of the arts isn't so bad.

So I encourage everyone to go out there and buy some art.Â You cannot find a better way to inject money directly into the economy than spending it on something created by people with no economic sense of their own (artists) who will immediately take that money and spend it on the essentials of their life.Â Go find a student art show, of which there are always plenty this time of year, and buy buy buy!Â In Milwaukee, go to MIAD, whose senior thesis show is on display until May 9th, or check out any one of the UWM School of Art thesis shows, such as "expose(d)" at the Kunzelmann Esser lofts, or the Union Art Gallery, or Innova gallery.

Or, check out one of the numerous benefit auctions.Â I have attended two of these in the past week, and gotten wonderful pieces of art at ridiculously low prices, all while benefiting good causes.Â You see, not only do artists, as a breed, have no economic sense, but they also tend to be outrageously generous, and give away their work to worthy causes much like a drunken lout dispenses his opinion.