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Shannon
Robinson



Kim English (b. 1957)
Walking through Buenos Aires
2009, Oil on canvas, 27 x 26 in.
Photo: Ken Juliano

SHANNON ROBINSON says that her “passion is to encourage everyone to become a collector because patronage is a moral imperative that requires us to nurture the creative genius and spirit of our living artists, who bring beauty into this world.” Based in Evergreen, Colorado, Robinson retired from her legal practice in 2006 and dedicated herself to promoting the special calling of visual artists in her role as president of *Windows to the Divine*. This is a nonprofit foundation that — among other goals — provides hospitality, financial support, and networking opportunities to artists. Its most visible activity is the annual invitational exhibition it hosts in the Denver area, the proceeds of which benefit the foundation, which also organizes plein air painting events and salons for collectors.

Robinson is a seasoned presenter on collecting and art history. In her popular talks at museums and other venues around the country, she explores why people collect, how the global art market works and who its key players are, which factors affect pricing, and which practical tips and principles work best. She herself has been collecting for 30 years, and still owns her first purchase, a painting by Scott Burdick. Today she has more than 200 oil paintings and sculptures, primarily by living artists, some famous, some not yet. Not surprisingly, many of these works were acquired through the annual *Windows to the Divine* exhibition and sale.

Robinson says her collection has particular depth in the work of Kim English, Ron Hicks, Quang Ho, Danny McCaw, and Jill Soukup. Also represented are Kathy Anderson, Dan Beck, Jim Beckner, Stephanie Birdsall, Gregory Block, Scott Burdick, Lu Cong, Robert Coombs, Dianne Massey Dunbar, Scott Fraser, Charles Fritz, David Gray, Nancy Guzik, William Hook, Ramon Kelley, Andrea Kemp, Daniel Keys, Calvin Liang, Terrie Lombardi, Michael Malm, Dan McCaw, Desmond O’Hagan, Sandra Pratt, Mary Qian, Ron Richmond, Don Sahli, Robert Spooner, Daniel Sprick, Nancy Switzer, Karen Vance, Kevin Weckbach, and Vincent Xeus.

Early in her collecting adventure, Robinson was “driven by color and then subject (primarily figures),” but — as usual in life — her emphasis has changed. “Now skill and concept are more important to me than genre,” she explains. She feels fortunate to have

developed relationships with nearly all of the artists represented in the collection, and is pleased to recall a particularly happy moment with kindred spirits: “About 10 years ago, we invited a small group of artists to paint on our farm and to join us for lunch. We were delighted when a dozen artists arrived without paint brushes, and instead gifted us with a memorable, four-hour story-swapping celebration of art and life. Since then, the foundation has hosted an ‘artists only’ gathering every year to encourage exactly that kind of camaraderie and dialogue.”

Fostering camaraderie among collectors is important, too, so on the afternoon of November 13, 2015, the foundation is set to host a symposium, *The Renaissance of Realism*, at the Denver Art Museum. On offer will be several panel discussions, lectures, and programs regarding the global art market and the future of realism. The event’s target audience is explicitly collectors, and its primary “take-away” will be the launch of a national online community, *Collectors for Connoisseurship*. The day will conclude with the opening of a show at Gallery 1261 nearby featuring 10 “rising stars” and the *Windows Top 10 Realist Masters*: the aforementioned Cong, Fraser, Gray, Ho, Soukup, Sprick, and Switzer, as well as Robert C. Jackson, David A. Leffel, and Sherrie McGraw. For details, please visit windowstothedivine.org, and rest assured that, even if you are not able to visit Denver this November, the foundation will organize similar symposia every other year in different U.S. cities.

Robinson keeps busy with other activities, of course: she currently chairs the community board of Denver’s Mizel Museum, and is an active member of the Denver Art Museum’s *Friends of Painting & Sculpture*. “With the resurgence of ateliers and classical art training nationwide,” she notes, “we are witnessing an unprecedented increase in the number of remarkably talented young representational artists entering the global art market.” That means it’s a great time to be buying art, and Robinson looks forward to introducing more like-minded collectors and artists in the months and years ahead.