



# 5 Places to Buy Original Art

*Taking the stigma & mystique out of art buying*

## 1. Local Art Shows & Festivals

### *advantages*

There's no place like home! I am lucky to live in an area rich in art and music culture. Chances are, you also live within reasonable range of events highlighting your local culture. Art fairs and pop-ups are a fantastic resource because often the artist is present. They're able to convey their process and methods, and offer you insight into their work. This creates a connection between you and the art's creator, and automatically builds in a story about the art's procurement. Another advantage is that if you favor the style of a particular artist, but the artist doesn't have their entire repertoire at the event, they could invite you to their open studio or to other local events where a larger selection of their art is featured.

There will be multiple artists represented in one location, so you're sure to have a wide variety of styles and sizes and mediums from which to choose. Sometimes artist will have sales or discount offerings at events, also. *However, it's never, ever, ever acceptable to "haggle" on the price unless initiated by the artist.*

If an artist has a particular style that you gravitate towards, but the subjects are not grabbing you, it's acceptable to ask if they ever do custom work. Some artists will work with you to accommodate your special request.

*If you follow an artist on social media, they will most likely have a list of seasonal events at which they are selling. (If you attend an event because you saw it on an artists' social media feed, please let them know!)*



**HELPFUL  
TIP**

### *disadvantages*

There is a short time to decide, as festivals and pop-ups are temporary. Best to come somewhat prepared as you won't always have the luxury of "time to think it over" and return later to purchase. And if you do return later, the item might have already sold.

## 2. Social Media

### *advantages*

Hey, look! You're here! You're looking for art via social media! There are so many SM platforms (websites, Facebook, Facebook Marketplace, Pinterest, TikTok, Instagram, Etsy, etc.) for you to browse for art, and meet artists who work in virtually any medium. The most obvious advantage to this method is the accessibility to vast amounts of art, from around the globe, and searchable by the most obscurely specific criteria. Social Media algorithms will aid in presenting you with art whose subject is of interest to you. You can learn about the artist's story in detail through their blog, website, and feeds.

## disadvantages

The screen is the great equalizer. Even though the size and medium of a piece will be indicated in an online listing, it is difficult to convey texture, weight, dimension, materials used, and even true color via digital media. Also, shipping may be costly and even detrimental to the art. A good art site will offer information to address all these potential pitfalls. When buying art online, carefully review the artist's policies on shipping, insurance, costs, payment methods, and delivery expectations. Be sure you know how to contact them if a problem arises.

*Follow hashtags of art styles that interest you, and algorithms will place art in your feed. Some of my favorites are #stilllife #contemporaryrealism, #oilpainting #modernportrait #multimediacollage and, of course, don't forget to add #artforsale.*



### HELPFUL TIP

## 3. Art Galleries and Artist Co-ops

### advantages

Galleries are tried and true meccas for original art. They have procured the finest art pieces, in a wide variety of mediums and sizes, displayed with adequate lighting, and include plenty of information about both the art and artist. In the case of a co-op (some galleries are operated in a cooperative system among a group of artists), most of the time at least one of the artists will be your host. There can be anecdotal stories you would not hear in other purchasing scenarios. In contrast to #1 (Local Art Shows & Festivals), this is a slower, quieter shopping experience. Some galleries will contact you by email (with permission) when a particular artist you like brings in new work or will be demonstrating at the gallery.



### HELPFUL TIP

*Don't forget to visit galleries while traveling. The beautiful art you purchase doubles as a remembrance of a wonderful adventure. Not the ubiquitous shotglass or tee shirt! This souvenir will forever memorialize your favorite trip, and is much more sustainable.*

### disadvantages

You may feel some pressure to purchase when you visit a gallery. However, please, do not feel awkward leaving without making a purchase. Mindful acquisition of art means sticking to your plan of only purchasing art YOU truly desire for your space.

In order for galleries to make a profit, they price art at 30% to 50% over the artist's set price. This could (not always) result in art sold at a higher price at a gallery. (However, you're also getting a premium shopping experience, with plenty of customer service perks.)

## 4. Fundraisers

### advantages

Fundraisers, like silent and live auctions, are a fun way to purchase original art because you are simultaneously supporting a worthwhile cause and taking home original art you love. And, of course, there is loads of positive energy involved in taking home a piece of art that both speaks to you emotionally, and whose purchase has also benefited someone else. It's the perfect synergy of connection, purpose, and story.



### HELPFUL TIP

*Set a budget before going in for the purchase. Auctions are exciting! Waking up the next day with regrets is a fast way to deplete the experience of its positive energy.*

## disadvantages

Though you are supporting a worthwhile cause in your community, and that is AWESOME, you are not directly supporting the artist financially. In some cases, the artist will be present at the event. If you're able to meet them, I recommend thanking them for their generous donation and picking up one of their cards so you can peruse their website and give them a follow on social media. This means a great deal to the artist. Also understand that the price you pay for art at auctions can fluctuate wildly. Sometimes the art sells for well under the value for the piece, and sometimes the piece can go for far more than it is valued. Value is an ambiguous concept, of course; only you can truly assess how much money you're willing to part with to be able to have the luxury of owning that which you treasure.

## 5. Thrift Stores & Estate Sales

### advantages

An often-overlooked resource, finding original art second-hand is like finding a diamond in a pile of manure. I once found a coordinating SET of two gorgeous framed original botanical colored pencil sketches dating back to the 1920's at my local Goodwill store for \$6 each. My heart was beating so hard, I almost ran out of the store without paying! Secondhand stores will sometimes have beautiful unique original art that was given up by its owner for a variety of reasons. However, this does not deplete its value, especially if it's something that lights YOU up. You just never know what you're going to find. Sometimes, at estate sales, there are entire collections that a family has procured over a lifetime, up for grabs to a very lucky shopper.

*I always carry a list on my phone of sizes I'm looking to fill on my walls. (See my other FREE GUIDE - What Size Art to Buy for Your Wall). I also never leave home without a tape measure.*



### disadvantages

To find your "diamond" in the pile, you must sift through a LOT of less appealing (and dusty!) pieces, with no guaranteed results. Learn to embrace the thrill of the hunt. Also, when you find your "diamond", there might be some repairs needed, or an outdated or dilapidated frame that needs to be addressed. Or no frame at all. Having the vision to look past the dust and grime helps a lot. The cost of repairs and reframing will be balanced by the smaller price point of your thrifted find.

In a gallery or art show, pieces will be clearly marked with the artist's name, medium, and size. In a thrifting situation, it is highly unlikely you'll be privy to any valuable information whatsoever. Turn the piece over and search the back for info. Take a photo and do a Google search of the signature (if legible). You may be able to employ clever investigative skills to determine the origin. It might just be an unknown artist or a student piece. When in doubt, use your mindfulness. If it speaks to you, take it home!

*Please email me at [amy@amywheelerartist.com](mailto:amy@amywheelerartist.com) and let me know if these tips helped you. I'm interested in your stories about acquiring original art you love and proudly display. Where did you buy it, and why? Where do you display it now? Send me a photo with your story and you could be featured in an upcoming blog post.*