

The Endur

ser·en·dip·i·ty

[ser-uhn-dip-i-tee]

noun

1. an aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident.
2. good fortune; luck.



"The Chef at Leisure" Original Oil on Canvas

"The story seemed very apropos to the chef's personality; garrulous and charming, he's a born storyteller."

It is not always easy to explain art or its purpose in the world. It is illogical, emotional, and intuitive. Its popularity often relies on personal taste, public opinion, or, in the case of one particular painting, an unexpected second chance. Somehow, art finds a way.

A local art collector, John, first became familiar with the art of Christopher M. at Exclusive Collections Gallery in the Historic Gaslamp District. Upon seeing the classic *Savor the Moment* by the "Painter of Chefs", John knew that the painting would make the perfect gift for a good friend. John explained, "It's a picture of the chef just leaning back, you could tell it was a hard day's work, and he's smelling the wine... Just by the expression on his face he is saying essentially, 'I got the job done.' And that painting just really hit me..." With this introduction to the artist's work, John purchased the painting and became a fan of Christopher M.

One day much later, John decided to visit Croce's in the Gaslamp. He set the scene, "I'm watching my favorite jazz pianist, it's a Thursday night, and I get done eating dinner and having a couple beers. I walk out on the sidewalk to [...] walk home and there's a guy walking down the sidewalk holding up this - with what looks like a potato sack." Having collected original works of art for many years, this bundle, about 50 feet away, began to peak his interest. He recalled how he received paintings from Peru unstretched and rolled up and he began to suspect, "That could be an original oil painting." As he drew closer to the street vendor, he found that his suspicions were true.

He inspected the work in front of him. Surely, this must be a fake? However, with a strong composition, heavy brushstrokes, and skilled use of color, John knew that it was real. After looking at the painting, depicting a chef at leisure, he immediately knew that

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this was a Christopher M.

"You know this is stolen, don't you?" he confronted the vendor.

Of course, no one would admit to selling stolen goods. John, afraid of spooking the man and losing the painting, paid him the desired \$20 and took possession of the Christopher M. He was incredulous: "In my head I'm saying 'I can't believe this!' I'm going to help somebody out here because it has been stolen. It needs to go back to the rightful owner. \$20 is a small price to pay to really give somebody back something that is their property."

John headed over to the gallery to meet with Tony, the Gallery Director at Exclusive Collections. He greeted him saying, "Hey Tony, I have something else I need to have you get framed for me..."

"Oh really, what do you have this time?"

"Oh, just take a look..." he said as he handed it to him. Not even a third of the way unrolled, John received the reaction from Tony that he was looking for when he came in to surprise him. After explaining the situation, both of them were convinced that it had been stolen, so Tony went to work to investigate the painting's provenance. In order to do so, he went to the source: artist Christopher M.

Christopher recalled the painting exactly. It was an original oil painting created from a visit to Atlanta for a very successful art show, portraying Kevin Rathbun, proprietor of Kevin Rathbun Steak, Rathbun's, Krog Bar, and the new KR Steakbar in Atlanta. Christopher affirmed, "This particular painting depicted Kevin Rathbun at the bar with a patron who was also a good friend. The story seemed very apropos to the chef's personality; garrulous and charming, he's a born storyteller. But some paintings suffer some birthing pains... There were elements of the painting that stubbornly resisted my efforts to realize the piece as I envisioned it. Most particularly, it simply didn't conjure the feeling that I wanted it to. This is a very indefinable quality, but every painting must have it."

Christopher took the painting back to his home to try to give it that life that he felt it needed. Despite his greatest efforts, it failed to meet his rigorous and abstract requirements. With a little frustration, he decided to put the matter to rest: "I did what artists have always done to pieces which fail to take life. I sanded it down, ripped it from the stretcher bars and threw it in the dumpster. After that I didn't give it another thought. I assumed it had been returned to

mother earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Right?"

Wrong. Though Christopher may not have foreseen this future, someone else found merit in this discarded struggle, and decided to resurrect it.

This fared well for John, however. As luck may have it, he purchased an original work of art that happened not to be stolen after all. John decided to keep the painting in his collection, one day to be passed down to the next generation. It fit in well with his philosophy on collecting art. He believed, "If it doesn't connect with me, if there's not a story behind it, I won't buy it. It's got to really hit me. It should be you hanging on the walls." John's careful eye, collecting experience, and strong relationship with the gallery helped him to take home a painting with an unbelievable story. Perhaps the work of art did not have that "indefinable quality" that the artist was looking for, but it had something that carried it on to a collector's home. Somehow, art endures.



John, a Christopher M. art collector, brings his newest discovery to EC Historic Gaslamp Gallery