

ESTRADA FINE ART NEWSLETTER – October/November 2009

President Obama proclaimed October as **National Arts and Humanities Month**:

“As a people, we have an unlimited capacity for self expression and personal interpretation. While we may not always agree with what we see or hear, it is our open-mindedness that commends the artistic struggle behind the creation and our curiosity that pursues its vision. This month, we honor this artistic spirit that lives and breathes within every American. Creativity and a thirst for understanding are the fuel that has fed our Nation’s success for centuries, and they will continue to be well into our future.”

On Loan to the White House

According to the *New York Times*, Jacqueline Kennedy was known for her love of Cezanne and Hillary Rodham Clinton for living with paintings by Kandinsky and de Kooning as well as glass by Dale Chihuly. The Obamas have made a wider, more interesting and diverse selection.

Is this a cultural revolution – where the Obamas are decorating their living quarters with modern and abstract art? Other recent first families have hung a few modern pieces, but none have approached the scope of this collection. Richard Feigen, a private art dealer in New York, scanned the list and pronounced it “highly sophisticated.” “We feel we have someone now in the White House who is saying that culture is an important part of this country.”

Working with Michael Smith, the Obama’s interior designer and the White House curator, William Allman, the Obamas have borrowed dozens of works for the first family’s living quarters and office areas. Pieces selected were in storage at three Washington museums: the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Gallery of Art and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

One of the most interesting choices which has titillated Southern California art lovers is a word painting by the California artist Ed Ruscha (1937) entitled “I Think I’ll...which deals with the subject of indecision. The work depicts a fire-red sunset against which Mr. Ruscha has painted phrases like “Maybe...Yes...” and “Maybe...No...” and “On Second Thought.”

They have selected paintings by German-born Josef Albers (1888-1975): his famed “Homage to the Square” series in shades of gold, red and lavender. He was named a Bauhaus master in Germany in 1925. After moving to the U.S., he began teaching at several institutions and was named the Director of the Department of Design at Yale University in 1950.

They also selected two paintings by Alma Thomas (1891-1978), an African American artist and one of the lesser-known artists. Her paintings “Skylight” and “Watusi (Hard Edge)” are a pair of beautiful blue and yellow abstracts. She is known for her post-war paintings of geometric shapes in cheery colors.

The news of the bold and modern choices is exciting the art world and should provide a significant boost to the arts in general. While many rooms in the White House are well endowed with artwork, President and Mrs. Obama have made a conscious

decision to live in their private living quarter with an avant garde and sophisticated collection.

Remember too – we have lots of interesting artworks on the website at <http://www.estradafineart.com>.

Also, if you ever have questions, I will always be happy to help.

- Geneen Estrada

Geneen Estrada is the owner of Estrada Fine Art. We represent established mid-career artists. More information can be obtained at www.estradafineart.com.