

The Gift of Art

by Rowan Beaird

From a distance, it's difficult to tell if the sculpture is wood.

The grains of pine look like brushstrokes, the furls of seafoam green paint draped like folds of fabric. When you get closer, you realize the reverence the piece has for its materials—there's a traditionalism to its focus on craft, but an undeniable modernity to how the wood is treated.

Like any great piece of art, alum Dan Gunn (MFA 2007)'s *Mount Pleasant, Tall Sherbet (Green)* surprises you. Like any great piece of art, it's brought people together.

The sculpture was one of dozens of pieces featured in the SAIC Art Auction, in which School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) faculty members and alums donated pieces to raise funds for student scholarships. The event was an incredible success—[raising \\$641,000](#)—thanks to the School's generous community of supporters.

Among those supporters were Greg Cameron and Greg Thompson, who purchased Gunn's piece. They were both thrilled with the opportunity to fund scholarships. "We believe in the power of education and the importance of access to an education," Cameron shared. "SAIC is a really exciting part of what an international city like Chicago needs. We need a great school to provide space for asking the questions that maybe don't get asked in museums or galleries or collectors' homes."

Cameron, who is the president and CEO of Chicago's Joffrey Ballet, and Thompson, a PR and public affairs executive, are both deeply immersed in Chicago's art scene. One of Cameron's first jobs was at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where he happened to work alongside Monique Meloche (SAIC 1991–94)—SAIC Board of Governors member and owner of the Monique Meloche Gallery, which donated Gunn's piece alongside the artist.



Meloche was thrilled to participate in the auction. “It opens up an opportunity for students who can’t normally afford a fine arts education,” she shared.

Greg Cameron and Greg Thompson

Meloche first saw Gunn’s work at the Lloyd Dobler Gallery, a now defunct, alternative space housed in an apartment. “I was completely drawn to it, and I wanted to know more,” she said. Since then, she’s staged five shows of his work. “There’s a lot of humor that’s found in the works, but also a sincerity and tenderness. The piece that was donated is a really solid representation of everything he’s thinking

about...painting, nostalgia, and a serious reverence for the tradition of craft.”

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Thompson and Cameron actually first encountered Gunn at Meloche’s gallery several years before. “We were just really, truly enthralled by it,” shared Thompson. “That draping and the elegance of it, and the fact that it was made with this hard surface. People often look at wood as crafts, but [Dan’s work] elevates it to art.”

In their home, Gunn’s piece will serve as a reminder of the SAIC community they support, but it will also—of course—stand alone as simply a remarkable work of art. “You know, it’s not a painting, it’s not a sculpture,” Thompson shared. “And at the end of the day, that’s what Greg and I want to look at, something that pushes the limits of what we think art can be.” ■



Monique Meloche