



Bonner David Galleries

EMBRACING THE ENERGY OF ART

Writers Lara Piu and Amanda Christmann
Photography by Scott Baxter

Throughout history and across cultural divides, there has always been the idea of the yin and yang, Shiva and Shakti or heart space versus head space. No matter the name, it has little to do with gender, but rather the idea that two separate yet complete energies can come together and form a synergistic whole. The idea is nearly universal—and it is the foundational approach for one of Scottsdale’s most successful art galleries.

Bonner David Galleries, founded 15 years ago by Christi Bonner Manuelito and Clark David Olson, is something unique in the art world. Unlike other galleries, Christi and Clark have thoughtfully interwoven dual collections of traditional and contemporary art to show not only that the styles can exist in harmony, but that they should.

Together, the friends and business partners have cultivated a marriage of sorts between contemporary and traditional art, finding common ground in the capacious range of human emotions elicited by both.

They do it by focusing on the human element: the artists. Even the gallery’s name reflects this intent: “Bonner David” is a combination of Christi and Clark’s middle names, an intentional move to avoid using their own first names. “We wanted it to remind us that our artists come first in our gallery,” Christi explains.

Through Bonner David Galleries, they have accomplished a remarkable feat, bringing together a family of artists whose work represents several mediums, multiple continents, and distinct styles—both contemporary and traditional.

Christi, an artist herself, earned fine art and art history degrees from the University of New Mexico. She notes, “People often grow up in a background where there’s one or the other, but we take the time to explain the art and why someone might react to a

piece. It opens a door for that person. Art opens people up to being more receptive to different ideas and experiences.”

The concept seems apropos for the two gallery owners, considering their vastly different backgrounds.

Christi was raised in Santa Fe. The beauty and mystery of the mountains and mesas provided terra firma for her love of art, while her grandmother instilled an appreciation for the timeless connections it provides.

Clark grew up in the Midwest surrounded by a very different, yet similarly beautiful view, literally and figuratively. His family was of modest means, but his parents cultivated in him an appreciation for human creativity. He still recalls times his parents made room in their budget to purchase special pieces that inspired them.

Clark loans out paintings from his personal collection like most people share books. A fine art aficionado since he can remember, he has a private fine art compilation that exceeds 100 pieces.

“I’ve collected art since the 1980s when I moved here from the Midwest,” says Clark, who also collects art when he travels. “I used to come to nearly every art walk. I loved them.”

It’s no surprise that Christi and Clark were both drawn to the art industry, which is how they met. One evening over cocktails at AZ88, the two dreamed out loud of a next-generation Old Town Scottsdale gallery.

“We said, ‘We can do this,’” Clark recalls. “We thought, ‘We can treat our artists really well, and we can do something different.’”

In 2002, Christi and Clark opened Bonner David Galleries at 7040 E. Main St. in the heart of Old Town Scottsdale. At first, the



Experience

The Best of Bonner David
15th Anniversary Show
Nov. 10–29 Celebratory Gala
Nov. 10, 6–9:00 p.m.
Bonner David Galleries
7040 E. Main St., Scottsdale
480-941-8500
bonnerdavid.com



gallery was a little more than 2,100 square feet; now the show space boasts more than 4,000 square feet of some of the finest paintings and sculptures.

The gallery represents a curation of stunning pieces created by gifted well-known artists, including brilliant landscape artist Romona Youngquist, noted colorist Claudia Hartley, renown botanical artist Dyana Hesson, highly collected abstract artist Max Hammond, and Quim Bove, known for his colorful work with resin. In addition, it features the work of more than 30 other talented local, national and international artists.

“We only take people who are full-time artists,” Clark says. “These are not people who dabble in art; these are people who have art degrees—who have studied it and really know art.”

“What makes a person’s collection really good is that they have both [contemporary and traditional works], and we wanted to demonstrate that you can have both in your home side-by-side,” Clark adds.

Today the gallery continues to illustrate this concept. A traditional still life oil painting by Jane Jones hangs in the same room as a Liz Tran piece, featuring explosive, brightly-colored geodes. The effect is an elevated, holistic art experience.

Every piece displayed in the gallery is meticulously hand-picked by Christi and Clark. “If I wouldn’t buy it, why would I hang it in the gallery?” Clark asks.

“We’re very particular,” Christi expands. “It has to touch you emotionally.”

Looking around the gallery, this is clear. From the solitude of

subdued stills to the joy of bright, modern form, the works on display invite and nearly urge connections through emotion, inspiration and imagination.

“There are certain pieces for certain people,” Christi says. “There is some sort of energy between a person and a piece of art. Sometimes a collector will fall in love with a piece and we know the piece was waiting for that one person.”

In October, to kick off its 15-year anniversary, Bonner David Galleries hosted a multi-sensory experiential event in which clients were introduced to the gallery’s African Shona sculptures through a blindfolded, guided tour. “Their sensual, tactile quality is one of the features of their rare beauty,” Christi explains, adding that this year’s schedule will expand to include similarly unique events.

This month, the Best of Bonner David 15th Anniversary Show will feature the best new artwork by each of their 40 artists. The event has been a year in the making.

They will also continue to participate in the area’s Thursday night Scottsdale Art Walk tours, which they say provide great opportunities to educate people on importance of art in day-to-day life.

“Maybe it reminds you of something in your past, or it is something you aspire to,” Clark says.

Like the yin to his yang, Christi adds, “Once you realize how to use art in your own life and your own environment, it just feeds you daily.”

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