

JRB ART AT THE ELMS

Paseo Arts District

THE ART OF TRAVEL

By Joy Reed Belt

February 25, 2021



"Luxiere" Magazine Featuring the Artwork of Denise Duong

Last week when I stopped in at Soup Soup, aptly enough buying some soup, I picked up a copy of "Luxiere," a local Lifestyle and Real Estate Magazine. I was attracted to the magazine because its cover featured an image of a wonderful Denise Duong painting. The inside article about her work entitled, "The Art of Travel," reminded me of the relationship between art and my own travels. For an artist like Denise, travel stimulates creativity. Familiar colors and objects seen in dramatically different settings, makes them see and feel things differently, inspiring them to draw and paint. Although I am not a generative artist, travel stimulates me to think in new and wondrous ways. When I

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travel, my curiosity is unpacked. I delve as much as I can into the art and culture of the place I am visiting.

The more I become immersed in another culture the more I become attached and want to bring elements of that culture home with me. Consequently, I almost always bring some form of art back with me from my journeys. When I visited St. Petersburg, Russia, I was enthralled by the art and architecture. Day after day I visited museums, galleries, and artist studios in an effort to see as much as possible. The day before I was scheduled to fly home, I found a 100 year-old still life painting of flowers that I decided I couldn't live without. Another time, I was in Naples, Italy teaching a course for the University of Oklahoma. I took a day trip to Pompeii. I was fascinated with the artifacts that had been discovered in the archaeological digs. That inspired me to purchase a finely sculpted porcelain creche from an artisan cooperative to bring home.



Plate of the Profile of a Dog from Paris



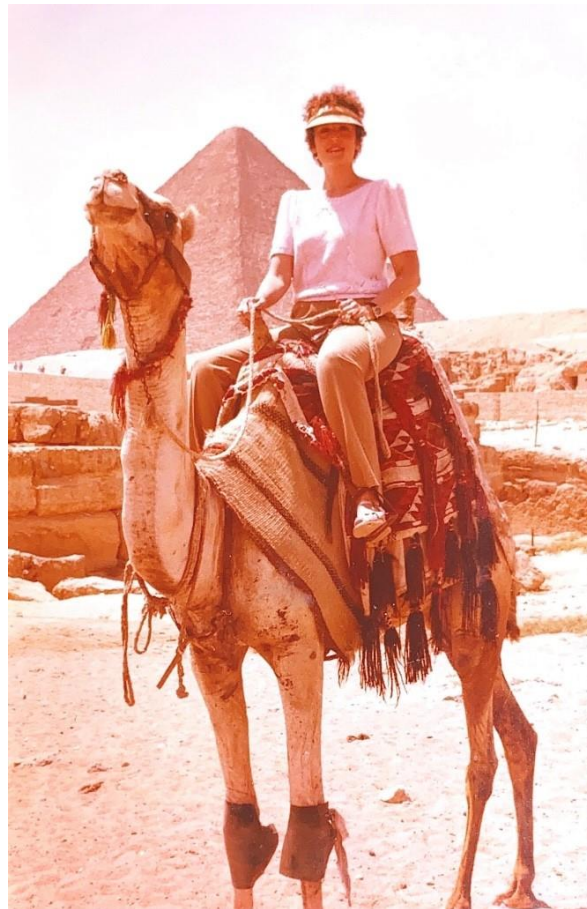
Flower Painting from Petersburg, Russia

In 1978, John Belt and I honeymooned in Mexico, City. One Sunday, it was our good fortune to encounter a group of artists displaying their work in Chapultepec Park. As we walked by, one man called out and invited us to look at his art. John immediately saw a

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painting he liked and asked the man how much it cost. When the man quoted a price, John asked why it was so expensive and the man began explaining the time, the skill and the energy it took to complete the painting. John and the artist got into a animated philosophical discussion about the value of art, and a small crowd began to gather to listen in. When it became clear that I would be there some time, I walked down another path to find food and water. The two men, who were well matched and obviously enjoying themselves, continued to entertain their audience in my absence. I still have the painting that John admired. On another trip with John to England. We drove in a heavy snowstorm from London to Malvern so he could buy parts from the manufacturer for the antique Morgan convertible that John considered the highest form of functional art.

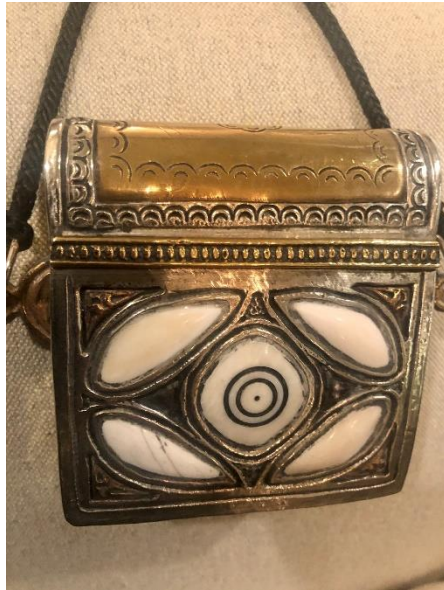


Morocco is one of my favorite destinations. Its marriage of different cultures and religions always produces a total assault on the senses. The first time I visited there

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with a friend I remember thinking I had never seen such vibrant colors, heard such a cacophony of sounds, eaten so many new dishes or seen such a display of creativity. Among the things I brought home from that trip was a silver, bronze and ivory box that women use to carry a Quran. It was much easier to get home than the camel saddle I bought back on the plane from Egypt many years ago.



Silver, Bronze, and Ivory Quran Box from Morocco

Porcelain Creche from Pompeii

When I visit Paris, I always try to go Les Marche de Puce, a huge flea market, outside of town. One could spend weeks and days there and not be able to see everything. On one of my early visits, I bought a Sevres plate of the profile of a dog that I enjoy still. While I don't believe that buying artful objects to bring home should be the intrinsic purpose of traveling, I do believe that when we travel, we open ourselves up to the possibility of experiencing art in new and wonderful ways. I just happen to enjoy the process so much I can't help but bring something tangible back with me.

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