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Tony Tye/Post-Gazette photos

**Dealer
does more
than just
sell artwork;
she helps
decorate
with it**

Melanie Werner of Galerie Werner in Sewickley chose a series of 1950s Picasso lithographs, above, as a more contemporary counterpoint to a French impressionist painting, top of next page, that she suggested for the living room of an Edgeworth home.

A N A R T I S T I C match-maker

By Kevin Kirkland
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Two engineers, husband and wife, looked at 20 photographs of paintings they might hang over their living room fireplace.

They have very different tastes: He likes landscapes. She prefers portraits. Only one painting attracted them both: "Jardin des Buttes-Chaumont," an

impressionistic French oil of a family outing in a park. The circa 1920 painting by Marguerite Ghy-Llem now hangs in that place of honor in their French Norman home in Edgeworth.

It's another success for Melanie Werner, owner of Galerie Werner in Sewickley. More than just a dealer of fine European art, Werner prides herself on matching families and artwork and showing people how to incorporate

art into their homes. The Edgeworth client, who asked that her name not be used, said she was a little surprised that Werner did more than just sell her artwork.

"I could have just walked out with those lithographs under my arm. I wouldn't know what mats, what frames are appropriate."

The lithographs are a grouping of six prints made by Pablo Picasso in the

1950s that hang over a bold striped sofa across from the fireplace.

"I wanted to balance the other art with something more contemporary," Werner explained.

She had the series framed in silver leaf with hand-wrapped linen mats and placed them over the sofa. Decorators Kay Wiegand and Betsy Wiegand-Wentz of Kay Wiegand & Associates dressed this "happy room" in cream and butter yellow with dark wood furniture. They worked with Werner on placement of the artwork, which also includes two smaller impressionist French paintings on another wall.

"It was a really nice dialogue," Werner said. "They were open to me placing the art. Some decorators feel they want to do everything."

In a hallway, under a picture light, is another of Werner's acquisitions for the couple: a circa 1910 painting of two girls and a boy by Alfred-Marie LePetit. When Werner ran across it at a Paris market, she thought of the Edgeworth couple's three children. And though the husband doesn't like portraits (they're too personal), the image's fauvist style



Years ago, Werner bought "Panorama de Thun," an engraving showing a river valley near Zurich, Switzerland. When she discovered that the Edgeworth family had lived outside Zurich for 2 1/2 years, she knew the piece had found a home. It's now on a wall in the second-floor office.

Werner, a native of Sharon, Mercer County, said she has always loved European art, even as a child visiting art museums with her family. While living in Paris for a year-and-a-half, the marketing, advertising and public relations specialist continued to seek out art for her own collection and began taking

classes in art history at the Louvre.

"I've been told I have a very good eye. I thought if I could do it for myself, why not do it for other people?"

Since moving back to Western Pennsylvania 21/2 years ago, Werner has been flying back to France every six to eight weeks to bid at the famous Drouot auction house in Paris and haggle with French art dealers.

Though she is not fluent in French and is one of the few women in Paris' male-dominated art market, she says she jumped in and began to learn the ropes, making a few mistakes along the way. But she can also count more than a few coups, when she got fine paintings at bargain prices. Most of the oils on canvas in her gallery, which is moving to Beaver Street in Sewickley this summer, range in price from \$5,000 to \$10,000, but there are also works priced lower and significantly higher.

Werner's specialty -- European works from the 18th to the early 20th centuries -- fill the gallery in her Sewickley home. About half are bought with no specific client in mind.

"The battle is between things that are highly saleable vs. things that are unique. I have some things stored away for years. And then someone comes along and it's perfect."

Werner continues to look for artwork for the Edgeworth couple, who have made 10 corporate moves in 25 years. Looking at blank walls on either side of the fireplace in the family room, Werner suggested six small, early 1800s paintings she has that show German soldiers in uniform.

The client said that if she likes them, they'll probably stay on those walls forever. Though she'll occasionally move a piece of art to make room for a newer acquisition, she doesn't like change for change's sake.

"My goal in life is to get everything set. Then I have more time for fun," she said, laughing.



A circa 1910 painting by Alfred-Marie LePetit decorates a hallway in Edgeworth