

The South Wall

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If someone asked whether I am an artist, I'd answer, "No." Then I'd look at the south wall of my living room.

It began as a bland wall. I painted it a deep—but not dark—burgundy to display artwork. It was fine. During a recent redecoration, however, it became the frame for a three-dimensional work of art.

I placed a handsome burgundy-and-gold striped fainting couch along the wall, the kind that evokes movie stars of the 1930s and '40s. Against the deeper burgundy, it sings. A purple throw draped lazily over one corner beckons retreat and rest.

Above it I put a numbered lithograph of a landscape of Hanalei Bay, on the northern end of the Hawaiian island, Kauai.

I was flying to Hawaii, and in the airplane magazine, I saw this picture. It captured me then...and still does 40 years later.

Three mats and a carefully chosen frame deepen its invitation. I find it evocative, mysterious, beckoning. When I see it, I stop and look—really look. I let myself find my way into the scene.

I've hung it not at the prescribed eye level, but much closer to the fainting couch, so it invites one to see.

To the right of that is a gorgeous piece of amethyst. Its deep purple entrances me, then softens into lighter shades along the crystals. It's on a pedestal and the geode is 12" wide and 25" high. A luxurious piece.

When I saw it in the store, I immediately went up to it and wrapped my arms around it. It was very expensive, but I couldn't leave it. While my beloved John was wandering around the store, I kept connecting to it. Because it had been in the

store for a couple of years, the owner gave us a fabulous deal. It had been waiting for me.

In the daylight I get to see the deep purple with all its craggy crystal pieces. It's an asymmetrical shape that beckons discovery. At night, when I have a gallery light focused on it, it comes alive and the purple glistens. It also creates interesting shadows on the wall.

The gallery light sits on a scarred, round, plain wooden table. A large pink quartz crystal tries to hide the light. In a serendipitous moment, I placed a piece of two horseshoes bent into intertwining hearts—and it worked. It was a gift to John, and opens my heart when I see it.

To the right of that is the Queen chair. Of course deep purple and gold. The moment I saw it, I knew it was mine. It's not plain, it has soft curves and looks regal.

When I sit in it, my back lengthens and my neck rises. I inhabit my body differently—more majestically—surveying the kingdom with benevolence.

It has a lighter-purple scarf, soft and sheer, draped over the arm and seat. It's a blend of regality and femininity.

Above it is another piece of art I bought 40 years ago. It's an authorized reproduction of Paul Chabas' painting *September Morn* that I bought in the French pavilion at a World's Fair.

When I look at this serene, dreamy, tastefully done nude of a young woman standing in calf-high water, I relax. I see her innocence, her femininity, and her unselfconsciousness about her body—not on display but just being. I want all of those in me when I look at my body.

Again, it's not eye level and her body is positioned above the highest point of the chair, so it moves the eye up to the painting or down

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to the chair. Together: regal, innocent, feminine, inviting.

At the far left, a cherrywood pedestal with a round, green marble top—another piece that has followed me for decades—has finally found its place. A tall vase overflowing with red flowers and greenery gives me the pleasure of an extravagant upscale hotel arrangement. It feels decadent but delightful.

Above that is a watercolor I created and framed. It's an abstract full of aliveness and yet has gentle swirls. I have loved it for decades, yet somehow never counted its creation as evidence that I was an artist. Now its blues and greens lead the eye into Hanalei Bay. The purples bring the whole wall together, and the soft reds bring out the large bouquet of flowers below.

Just like one sits in a museum to study a piece, I sit and partake in the visual feast. The composition feels full without being crowded, spacious without being empty.

It has beauty everywhere. I find it strangely relaxing—looking at my south wall.

I immerse myself in it. It entrances me. My breathing slows, my belly opens. Together it is mysterious, evocative, and satiating. It caresses my eyes. It feeds my soul.

It keeps me in the present—nowhere to go, nothing to do, just filling up. It seeps into my being, calming me, satisfying me, and creating a sense that all is well.

I've realized I've created a 3D art piece that honors free, handmade, scarred, and expensive pieces equally. The wall embraces relationship, not status. I knew how to make these disparate things belong together.

Another realization: the wall reflects parts of me I do not always name or embody: dramatic but soft, regal without stiffness, sensual without display.

I look at my south wall and understand: the art is not only in the objects. It is in the eye that knew how to bring them together.

Yes. I am an artist.