

I have collected native art all my life, as my father was a collector who planted the seed. I first became aware of Norval Morrisseau around the early 80's, when I was introduced to him at a home of a friend in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He was staying with him and used a large room in the house to paint in. This is where I had a chance to see him at work for the first time. It was shortly after this that he went to Kenora to sell some of his works to a large fishing resort on Lake of the Wood and wound up in jail.

After that episode I began to collect his paintings.

A lot of my friends and work associates lived on and worked in or around native reserves, so this gave me access to large volumes of artwork at little expense. These pieces were mostly lesser known artists, but the odd piece would show up by Carl Ray, Roy Thomas, Lloyd Kakepetum, and even Morrisseau. This was always a nice surprise as I would pay the same for each piece no matter who was the artist. I found myself with hundreds of paintings by such a large array of artists that I decided to begin to trade them with other collectors, I used to joke that it reminded me of trading baseball cards when I was younger.

By the mid 90s, I owned some five hundred pieces by more well known artists, including Morrisseau.

With a failing business and a newborn child, I decided to sell off my collection.

I contacted literally every auction house in Canada testing the market. Finally when I realized there was no real market other than galleries which in my opinion would take forever. I settled with doing business with a few auction houses in Southern Ontario because I have paid little and in some cases no money for the artwork my expectations were not market value but to break even or just better.

I know a lot of collectors, dealers, owners and in some cases artists in Northern Ontario Region and at no point in doing any sort of business with these people have I met anyone who tried to muscle their way into my business. It wasn't until I ventured into the Toronto world that I had this happen to me.

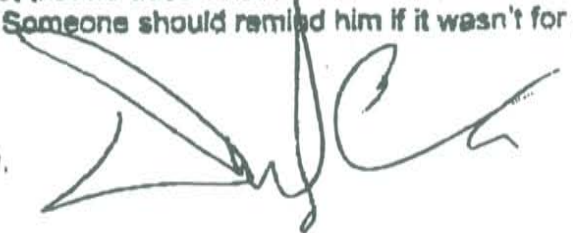
Donald Robinson has sold over fifty paintings that once belonged to me. He did not sell them for me but for other collectors whom I did business with.

He took 25 to 30 per cent for the resale of these pieces and I was told they sold for seven to eight thousand each. Not wanting to cause any animosity between these collectors and myself I did not contact Mr. Robinson to utilize as an outlet for sales. The collectors friendships are more important to me than selling some art so I sent Randy Potter paintings by mostly Norval Morrisseau to sell at auction. It was shortly after this that I had my first contact with Mr. Robinson. He told me to leave the auction house and to do business with only him and he could make me more money. Normally I would have taken his offer but it was the way he said it, more like a threat than an offer. I told him I wanted nothing to do with him and that in the future it would be better not to use threats to begin a business relationship. He has tried several times since then to contact me. The paintings are real and the tactics he used are low down if not dirty. A collector friend of mine has been sending pictures to Norval Morrisseau and getting them authenticated, these were once in my collection. The Globe and Mail article on Morrisseau with the painting 'Battle for Life' on the front page was a part of my collection. The painting in the Prime Minister's office was part of it as well.

I'm sure you get the point.

I am frustrated to say the least, that people like Donald Robinson have such control over the market that he does what he wants and does not care who he hurts or what damage he does. Someone should remind him if it wasn't for small collectors he wouldn't exist

Sincerely,



Every painting that I brought to
EMPIRE AUCTIONS is a genuine original
piece of art, painted by the signed
artist. Every Norval Morisseau painting
I brought to EMPIRE AUCTIONS was
painted by NORVAL MORISSEAU.



DAVID VOSS

Oct 29 2001

Re: Sue Patterson, Randy Potter

I have done business with a lot of people and at no point in time have I come across a more greedy individual than Donald Robinson. Since selling several collections of various artists, including Norval Morrisseau, I have never been contacted by someone who wanted me to do business with only them, so as to profit from someone else's labour as I have been by Donald Robinson.

I have sent consignment to Randy, knowing full well the pieces being originals and true to form. Norval Morrisseau has lived in the Thunder Bay and surrounding areas the majority of his life and Donald Robinson knows this full well. He also is fully aware that Norval Morrisseau painted thousands of paintings and sold them in this area in order to survive. Because I have contacted and collected hundreds of original paintings from collectors and others, there should be no reason for a self-absorbed art dealer to profit from my labour. I believe the statements made by Donald Robinson to the press to be an attempt to gain total control of the native art flow through the Toronto area. If he will not rescind his statement, I am prepared to lay a suit with several dozen art collectors and also stand to lose profit and respect. I am sure he is not going to be prepared to defend his statements to the point we are now ready to pursue this.

Sincerely,

Dave Voss