

Gift of Art Gives New Life to Law School Walls



Fred Nicholas manages both his real estate developing firm, Hapsmith Co., and the Sam Francis estate from a Venice studio stocked with Sam Francis' paintings and lithographs.

As a first-year law student at the University of Chicago Law School, Frederick M. Nicholas '52 found that he enjoyed the law — but was “enamored” by art. With his recent gift of 20 artworks, most by the renowned abstract expressionist Sam Francis, Mr. Nicholas is sharing his excitement about art with students, faculty and staff at the USC Law School.

“I went down to the school and there was nothing on the walls,” says Mr. Nicholas, sounding slightly shocked. “I said, ‘You’ve got to have some art.’ The pieces I gave are really special. We carefully picked them for USC. I wanted students to have something interesting on the walls around them, to have the opportunity to see some good pieces of art and to appreciate the work of a great artist. I feel like it brightens the atmosphere and brings some excitement to the building.”

The gift, valued at \$325,000, includes 17 lithographs by the late Mr. Francis, whose bold, colorful abstract works hang in museums and galleries throughout the world. Mr. Nicholas also donated lithographs by Andy Warhol, Ellsworth Kelly and Niki de Saint Phalle. The work is being exhibited throughout the Law School.

Mr. Nicholas, a '47 journalism graduate and '52 law graduate of USC, began appreciating art as a World War II soldier in Europe. “I made it my business to see as much art as was available, which wasn’t a lot during the war,” he says. When he began law school in Chicago, he visited the Chicago Art Institute every week; when he transferred to USC Law School in 1950, he was already growing a small collection of work.

Even as he pursued a successful business career — he practiced law for nearly 30 years, founded Public Counsel, and now runs a real estate developing firm, the Hapsmith Co. — the arts have remained a focus. He led the development of the new Museum of Contemporary Art building and its annex, the Temporary Contemporary; he has served on MOCA’s board of directors since 1981 and was chairman for five years. More recently, he has worked with other community leaders to help plan and build the new Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles. As executor of the Sam Francis estate, Mr. Nicholas is working with museums, galleries and private collectors throughout the world to disperse the hundreds of paintings and lithographs that remained at Mr. Francis’s death in 1994.

“My work now is a wonderful climax to a long involvement with art and artists,” Mr. Nicholas says. “It’s very rewarding for me because I’ve learned the depth of the art intellectually, how [Sam Francis] did his work, what he thought about when he was working. I wanted to share that with USC. I’ve always felt an appreciation to USC Law School because it helped me a lot in my life. It taught me discipline. This was a way to give back.”

Barnett Gift Enhances Law School Ties to USC Marshall School of Business

Faculty of the USC Law School and the USC Marshall School of Business have new support for interdisciplinary research, thanks to an endowed faculty research fund created with a \$500,000 gift from Matilda Barnett, a generous friend of the Law School.

The Gabriel and Matilda Barnett Faculty Research Endowment in Law and Business will fund research and writing, the development of new courses, and other faculty projects focusing on law and business. The endowment honors Mrs. Barnett’s late husband, Gabriel Barnett, who studied law at USC and was a successful entrepreneur and businessman.

“Thanks to Mrs. Barnett’s generosity and foresight, the Law School has the opportunity