

Art in his blood

Selfpublished book features man's works, parents' collection

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McALLEN — Two statues by Gabo and Pevsner greeted Kirk Clark. A Picasso and a Chagall hung on either side of the door. The 16-year-old was enthralled. His parents, Dorothy and Charles, had taken him to Zurich, Switzerland, on a trip to learn more about the “concrete” school of art. In the home of renowned Swiss sculptor and architect Max Bill, Clark fell in love with art, collecting and the unique thread that ties different works together. “I spent an amazing day going through his studio,” said Clark, now 61. Finally, he worked up the courage and asked if Bill had purchased all of the masterpieces that hung in his mountain-cliff home. Bill’s answer forever changed Clark.

“I traded my artwork with other artists for them,” Clark said Bill told him.

There’s a touch of awe in his voice, even now as he retells the story. That day in 1962, Clark learned about the thread that ties artists together.

His parents already knew about that thread. They spent a lifetime weaving artists and influences together, finding the commonalities among artists and getting to know the people behind the works.

“My dad was an alchemist,” said Clark, whose father established the Clark Chevrolet dealership in McAllen. “He could see the influences (one artist had on another).”

Over the years, Clark has continued his parents’ legacy of collecting art, traveling all over the world for it, but he also has found a form of expression in making his own art.

In March 2006, McAllen’s International Museum of Art & Science featured a compilation of Clark’s works, along with parts of his parents’ collection and a piece by his daughter, Anne Clark-Lawson.

That project spun into Celebration of Spirit, a book he recently self-published that features both Clark’s art and his parents’ collection.

The book also tells the story of how Clark’s parents began collecting and the research that went into their collections. The book features more than 300 color images, several testimonials and texts related to the Clark artistic legacy.

Clark’s work reflects a journey, much like the voyages his parents took in their art collecting.

His art seems to evolve over time. He finished his first oil painting at the age of 10 and has spent much of his life creating art.

His works tend to be metaphysical, which makes it challenging for some viewers to understand. So Clark began writing poems to accompany some of his pieces, and from there his writing blossomed into books. Clark estimates he has 3,500 poems he’s penned at home.

But Celebration of Spirit is his first attempt at writing a book — and the magnitude of the project sometimes overwhelmed him.

“I wanted to give up four times,” he said. “But I felt the Shepherd’s crook on my neck. You’ve got to beat through the resistance.”

With the help of a translator and two editors, [Clark](#) eventually beat his way through and produced a 140-page book, full of his family's history, art and legacy. "I wanted it to reflect my love for my family," he said.



Joshua Vince/The Monitor

[Kirk Clark](#), a local artist, holds a cross he made with two of his paintings Tuesday at the International Museum of Art and Science in McAllen.