

15 MINUTES

Space 39's owner shares passion with public

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
Florida Weekly Correspondent

Space 39 art gallery owner Terry Tincher shares a Jan. 19 birthday with the famous French painter, Paul Cézanne. This coincidental symmetry, he said, intrigued him since his youth.

"I would love to own a Cézanne," Tincher said.

Although he has yet to acquire one, he does own, among many other artworks, an original Robert Rauschenberg oil painting, given to him by the artist in exchange for work Tincher's company - Tincher Concrete Construction, Inc. - completed for Rauschenberg's home on Captiva Island in 1989.

"We make curbs and gutters and sidewalks," Tincher said. "That's what we do."

Space 39 is at this time open to viewers by appointment only, in The Patio de Leon, between First and Main Streets in downtown Fort Myers. Originally, it was the ticket booth for a vaudeville theatre ("a huge, wooden theatre," Tincher said), all of which burned to the ground in 1925, except for the space that he now owns. It is a Morocco-styled building, with its arched doors and curled columns - "Moorish," he calls it.

"I'm very proud of this place," Tincher said. "It's a hobby for me. I love this gallery and I have the luxury of doing what I want with it."

"I love the size and space. I like that it's compact. I have a little under 2,000 square feet."

That space feels like a lovely modern apartment. Passers-by may peer in through big windows at the art, wood floors, white couches and track lighting. It smells like paint because Tincher is coating much of the wall space with a deep, dark shade of gray, which he said will



Terry Tincher

PHOTO EVAN WILLIAMS

produce a background that "brings out the art."

Since it opened in 2005, Space 39 has displayed a wide range of works, both local and international, from Florida Gulf Coast University art director Scott Snyder's deep-fried Beanie Babies, to local artist Vyd, to a high-profile exhibit of rocker Marilyn Manson's watercolors, to famous 20th century art icons like Roy Liechtenstein, Jean-Michael Basquiat, Keith Herring, Andy Warhol, and Rauschenberg. Sketches by Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali have appeared as well.

"There is a solid core of art folk and collectors [in Southwest Florida] that have awesome collections of contemporary works," he said.

Tincher spent his youth in Hamilton and Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from high school in 1974 and went to The University of Cincinnati, where he majored in Liberal Arts and collected Japanese wood block prints.

"It was milquetoast," he said of his hometown of Hamilton. "A super secure, white-bread existence. We were totally isolated from any big grief."

He moved to Fort Myers in March 1982 to

benefit his fledgling concrete construction business; Cincinnati was not the most hospitable of markets.

"It was '79 and '80," Tincher said. "Jimmy Carter was President. Interest rates were 22 percent."

His first job in Florida was at the Forest Country Club in South Fort Myers.

"That was the boondocks back then," he said.

The concrete construction business was a success, and the freedom that success bought, along with a long-running interest in art itself, led to his eventual ownership of Space 39. Tincher said a friend in Miami knew every artist in town.

"We thought it might be fun to have shows and parties. I jumped right in...there is an unlimited supply of talented artists here."

Tincher himself is crazy and fun: a free-spirited hard worker with a playful smile who describes himself as a simple, not a complex person. If he could never own a Cézanne, he said, his second choice might be Vincent Van Gogh.

"He really didn't care about what people thought of his style," he said of Van Gogh. "The simplicity and special-ness of that style - it's something everybody can understand."

"Art is an idea that's exemplified in its most concise form. The moment, the mood, is honed down. Like in a play, there can be two lines of dialogue, but the meaning is..."

He stopped.

The meaning is possibly indescribable.

Tincher plans to complete a deal before the year is up, he said: sell the concrete construction business and enjoy his life and all the art, both real and painted, that fills it up. ■

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