

Artist couple has double the fun



Back to basics: Artists Aaron Memmott and Penelope Moore, together for seven years, have their work for sale at Gallery MAR in Park City. The couple came to town with their two dogs in June.

DAVID RYDER / PARK RECORD

They use Craigslist to trade art for housing across U.S.

By GREG MARSHALL

Of the Record staff

Artists Aaron Memmott and Penelope Moore are pros at trading spaces.

The couple of seven years decided to leave Savannah, Ga., where Memmott had a steady job at the Savannah College of Art and Design, to hit the road last year.

Their first stop was Craigslist, a state-by-state online forum where users post jobs, internships and housing.

"What do we have an abundance of and what do we need?" Moore asked.

The answers were evident just looking around their apartment. They had hundreds of oil paintings from years of study and working professionally. What they needed were places to stay.

"We wanted to travel so we could paint," Moore explained. "So we decided to trade paintings for places to stay."

At first, Memmott was skeptical. But to his surprise, the offers came pouring in from strangers, collectors and friends. Second-home owners in Vail, Martha's Vineyard, even Germany, wanted to barter for art. The couple posted pictures and links to their Web sites to prove that they were

legitimate.

Bill us, the couple said, and we'll leave paintings of equal value in our wake. In some cases, they have been asked to commission works of pets, favorite wines and landscapes in trade. "Some people want specific things: a street scene of Park City, a still life of fruit," Moore said. Others leave choosing art to the artists.

The couple has stayed in a home in Hidden Creek at the Canyons since June and returned Monday from Albuquerque where they stayed in a three-bedroom, two bathroom home for two weeks. Memmott and Moore had never met the owner.

The couple decided to come to Park City because Moore grew up in Salt Lake City and Memmott attended the University of Utah. "We were going with the wind," she said. "We got here and we put our brakes on. Now we're trying to stay."

Memmott's repertoire is, typically, urban. He uses a rich palette to paint scenes of glowing streetlights, nightlife, sections of interstate and parked cars. His canvases tend to be large and he

frequently paints three-piece panoramas. Since moving to Park City, he has painted No Name Saloon and bustling scenes of Main Street.

The consummate city boy, Memmott has forayed into the forest to render aspen trees and other scenes of nature. "I like to give people a piece to take home with them, like a postcard," he said. "People don't realize the

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beauty that's in front of them."

Moore says she also paints her surroundings, but instead of cityscapes, she focuses on bar stools, beer cans, the way wine glasses refract light. "I worked in a bar for years," she said with her glass-is-half-full pluck. "It's important to paint what you see most." Nothing is too ordinary to capture her attention. One of her pieces is called "My Cup of Coffee." She decided to paint it, she says, because it's what she wakes up to every morning.

When Moore and Memmott travel to a new city, they become regulars at local haunts. Rather than painting monuments, they take their digital camera, and their easels, to obscure places and plop down.

Memmott sticks his head out the car window to snap photographs. Moore fidgets with her silverware at fine-dining restaurants, arranging and rearranging, before she takes extreme close-ups. "People think I'm crazy," she said. "I'm at a fine-dining restaurant taking pictures of forks."

Plein air on Main Street

Aaron Memmott posted himself on the sidewalk on Main Street one day this summer and kicked out his easel. He was in

the middle of a project when MAR gallery owner Maren Bargreen approached him. "I literally ran into Aaron Memmott on the street, in mid-July," Bargreen wrote in an email. "On the street, his level of concentration piqued my interest and his pallet choice was bright and intense." She said that the painter's Main Street scenes "capture the light and energy of a perfect Park City night: out on the town, grabbing a bite and enjoying the sights."

Moore followed up with a visit to the gallery and, soon after, Bargreen decided to represent the couple. They have to move out of their current home in November, and say they'd like to stay in Park City.

Bargreen hopes they do. "They've been trekking around the country searching for the next best place," she said, "but I hope that they are able to park their art trailer for a while and settle down in Park City."