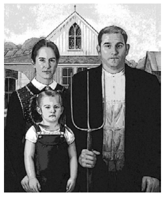
Art Adventure | Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski

The Art of Architecture



What do Louis Sullivan, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Antoni Gaudi have in common? They all created architectural masterpieces. How is a masterpiece defined? It's timeless. It evokes the same emotions from the day of creation to the present, no matter how many years have passed. In a sense, all masterpieces have the Mona Lisa smile.

Every home contains a masterpiece whether it's the scarred hunting rifle, the silver tea service with a missing lid, or the grandfather clock that doesn't tick tock. On the flip side, some homes are considered masterpieces. Driving through the historic areas of Hammond, Crown Point, Gary, and especially Chicago one sees these masterpieces even though the home is in need of restoration.

Dave Van Dyke is a well known builder in Northwest Indiana and Florida who wants his homes to stand the test of time. His family has over 75 years of building experience. He constructed his first house at the age of 15 and has never stopped.

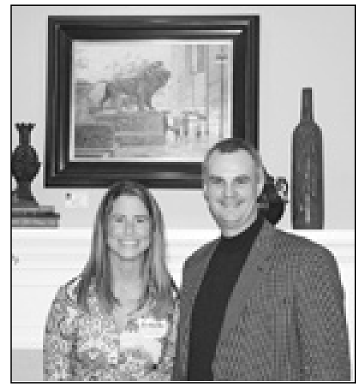
"Stonebridge" in Schererville captures his idea of what a timeless community should look like. Recently, The Steeple Gallery of St. John was invited to join in an open house "The Fine Art of Living" at Stonebridge to celebrate art and architecture. It was a great celebration.

The builder described the architecture as "European inspired from the previous century with over-sized crown moldings, fluted columns, palladium windows, and tray ceilings." These architectural details add a presence to the home and create a vast space for fine art.

This event created a non-threatening environment both for art collectors and home buyers, i.e., no pressure to buy. When someone is purchasing art in a gallery, there's always the concern of "Where will it look best? Does this really work in my home (modern art in traditional home)? What should I hang over the couch, fireplace, dining table?" The two houses combined modern, antiquarian, and contemporary images in an understated elegance. This allowed home buyers a rare look at the upper-end (over $500,000) of homes in Northwest Indiana.

Several area newspaper and magazine representatives interviewed the artists, the gallery, the builders, the art collectors, and the guests. The digitals were flashing despite the rain and wind. The relaxed, informal atmosphere was more like a neighborhood party than a builder's open house.

If you want to see how original fine art complements a fine home, please visit Precision Construction at 1001, 1007 WillowBrook Dr., Schererville, on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday from 1 to 6 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday by appointment; Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. through March 25, or schedule a tour through gallery by calling 219-365-1014.



Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski and Dave Van Dyke.

Contact Sam at The Steeple Gallery at (219) 365-1014 or at samowner@sbcglobal.net.

Financial Focus

Use 'ladder' to climb above interest rate worries

Interest rates are constantly changing. But how do rising or falling interest rates affect your investment strategies?

There's no simple answer, of course. If you own stocks, higher interest rates could be a cause for concern, because when interest rates rise, it becomes more expensive for companies to borrow to expand their operations. As a result, these businesses may feel a squeeze on their profitability – and their stock prices. And yet, some businesses are much more affected by rising interest rates than others, so, as an investor, you can't really base your actions on a blanket statement such as: "Higher interest rates are bad for all stocks."

The situation is a little different if you own fixed-income vehicles, such as bonds. When interest rates rise, the value of your bonds will fall. That's because no one will want to pay you the full price for your bonds when he or she can buy new ones issued with a higher interest rate. To sell yours, you'd have to offer them at a "discount" to their face value. On the other hand, if interest rates fall, the value of your existing bonds will rise, so if you were to sell them, you could get a premium price.

Of course, if you're like many people, you don't buy bonds just to sell them. You want to hold them until maturity, when you can expect to get your principal back, assuming it's a quality bond and the issuer doesn't default. And, along the way, you've gotten regular interest payments, which you can use to supplement your cash flow or to reinvest.

However, even if you do plan on holding bonds or certificates of deposit (CDs) until maturity, you might want to pay some attention to what's happening with interest rates. After all, if you depend on bonds or CDs for some of your income, and rates are down when these investments mature, you could face a difficult choice: Should you purchase new fixed-income vehicles at current rates, or should you "park" your money somewhere and hope for rates to rise again soon?

Fortunately, you can find a better solution than either of these options. How? By building a "ladder" of fixed-income investments. To build a ladder, you purchase a variety of fixed-income vehicles [any combination of corporate bonds, U.S. government-sponsored enterprise (GSE) and/or Treasury securities, municipal bonds or certificates of deposit] with a wide range of maturities – short-, intermediate- and long-term.

Once you have established a bond ladder, you are prepared for both rising and falling interest rates. When rates are rising, the proceeds from your maturing bonds can be used to invest in new ones at higher levels. When market rates are falling, you'll continue to benefit from the higher rates offered by your longer-term bonds.

In addition to helping you productively reinvest your maturing bond proceeds in all interest rate environments, a well-structured bond ladder may, over time, help you increase the income you earn on your fixed-income portfolio. And, at the very least, by regularly reinvesting part of your portfolio in all market conditions, you may be able to smooth out your returns.

See your financial advisor for help in putting together a fixed-income ladder that can help you meet your needs.

Column courtesy of Michael Dexter and James Baltzersen of Edward Jones Investments.