

The
Business Journal
PHOENIX

LUXURY LIVING

What
you get
for the
money

A look at what **\$1.5 million**
will buy in six Valley cities

At Home with Plaza Cos. CEO Sharon Harper
Inventor's hydrogen house ultimate green dwelling
Mirabel golf community hits a hole in one

ART COLLECTORS

are drawn to works of all colors and sizes



Some people buy paintings because they are the right size or colors.

Not Paradise Valley resident Dr. Michael Caskey, a cardiac surgeon and medical director of cardiac surgery for Scottsdale Healthcare.

"It's got to move you. It's got to be something you like or it reminds you of something, takes you someplace or creates a mood," he says.

Caskey and his wife, Michelle, have a collection of 35 paintings that do just that. Valued at more than \$100,000, the paintings grace nearly every wall of their home.

"Art is like a vacation. But when you

come home, the vacation is gone. With art, it's still with you to enjoy day in and day out," says Michael.

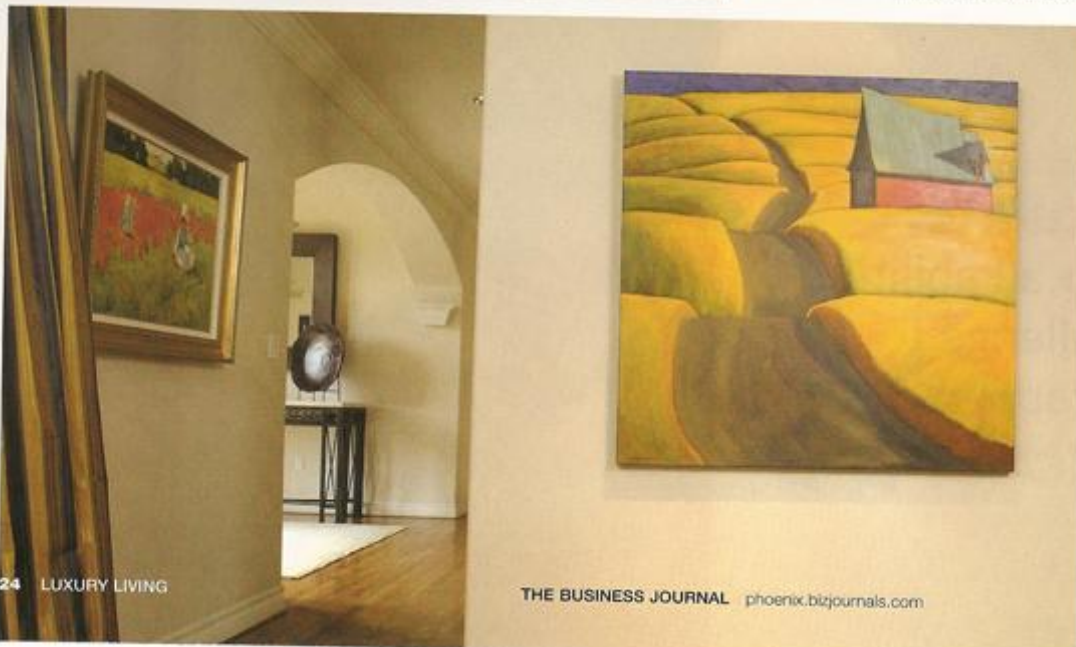
The Caskeys' collection started eight years ago. While neither had a passion for art, their interest piqued as they started buying "things to put on the walls," says Michelle. The couple began buying prints, but once they got an original or two, it became hard to settle for prints. Now, they'd rather save for the "real thing," says Michelle, a nurse who assists during cardiac surgery.

A portion of her earnings is tucked away into an art fund, which the couple gleefully raids while visiting places such as New York, San Francisco and Telluride, Colo. They even splurge now and then at Scottsdale's galleries or art festivals.

A mix of styles

The Caskeys' collection is an "eclectic" and "refreshing" blend of traditional and contemporary styles, says Christi Bonner Manuelito, co-owner of Bonner David Galleries, Scottsdale, who has helped the couple build, hang and light their collection. The Caskeys also had designers help with hanging when they moved into their home and a lighting specialist assist when they remodeled and added on.

Dr. Michael Caskey and his wife, Michelle, share a love of animals, which is reflected by their three dogs and an original Ron Burns painting on the wall behind them. The couple's love of art has expanded over the years and is based simply on what they enjoy looking at each day.



“**Art is like wine.**
Your taste kind of builds.”

— Michelle Caskey,
art collector

The Caskeys say they like “odd” art that draws them in.



PHOTOS BY JIM FOULIN/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Michael calls their collection “a mix” that early on included the vibrant up-close paintings of dog faces by Ron Burns, a part-time Scottsdale resident who now is artist in residence for the American Humane Society. A large painting called “Guilty” depicts a dog with a sorrowful expression and reminds the couple of their pet after an accident on the floor. “It makes me smile,” says Michelle of the painting outside the mastersuite. “It’s my morning greeter.”

Another Burns piece called “Dizzy,” was purchased by the Caskeys for \$4,200 and recently appraised at \$15,500. The artist’s paintings now typically go for \$17,000 or \$18,000, according to Michael. “We got his work early on before he got so famous,” he says.

The Caskeys also have several abstract pieces by Max Hammond of Scottsdale, whose work hangs in the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, city of Mesa and elsewhere. The pieces are among the couple’s favorites for their colorful abstract scenes.

Completely different in style is the Caskey’s elegant yet bold series of three paintings by Mesa artist Dyana Hesson. The paintings show a progressively opening rose, which is accompanied by a bud in the last painting. “It’s like a life story,” says Michael.

The piece that Michelle considers “closest to museum quality” is one by Howard Post, an Arizona native whose work is part of the Smithsonian collection. Called “Pasture Out Back,” the piece’s trees, farm house and cows are “simplistic” with a “prairie feel,” says Michael.

“Michael and Michelle enjoy all types of art. They enjoy the way it makes them feel and being around it. It’s a direct reflection of them,” says Bonner Manuelito.

The big, unusual and the related

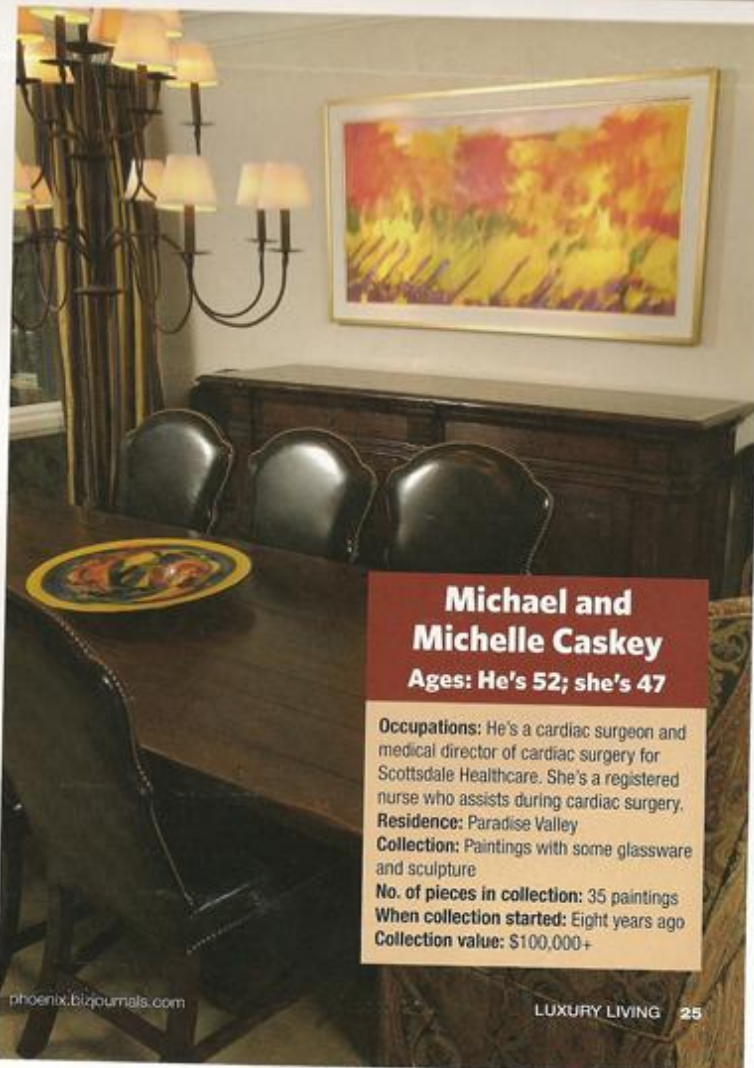
While the Caskey’s collection represents various styles from local artists as well as artists from California, England and elsewhere, it also shows off Michael’s affinity for the large — such as a Hammond piece measuring 72 by 96 inches — and unusual.

“I like odd art. There’s something about it that just makes you look at it,” he says, pointing out a portrait of a female with an unusual expression and proportions that he has dubbed “Twisted Sister.” Another piece has funky, tall yellow and red houses while another features a duck. “I’m drawn to it, but I don’t know why,” says Michael.

Often, the Caskeys will have a painting in one room and a similar “sister” painting by the same artist in another. “You buy one and like it so much. You’re drawn to it and see it every time you go by or sit in a chair with a glass of wine,” explains Michael. “You’re so taken with it, you want another.”

The couple’s passion for art, however, extends beyond paintings. One of Michelle’s latest finds is “Chauncey,” a happy 5-foot bronze rabbit with large ears in the entryway that she’s compelled to pet when she comes home. She also collects glassware, including a piece with a red heart inside a bubble of glass — appropriate for the Caskey’s careers — that was brought back from Italy.

“Art is like wine,” says Michelle. “Your taste kind of builds.”



Michael and Michelle Caskey
Ages: He’s 52; she’s 47

Occupations: He’s a cardiac surgeon and medical director of cardiac surgery for Scottsdale Healthcare. She’s a registered nurse who assists during cardiac surgery.
Residence: Paradise Valley
Collection: Paintings with some glassware and sculpture
No. of pieces in collection: 35 paintings
When collection started: Eight years ago
Collection value: \$100,000+