



The Business of Selling Art

BY MICHAEL ROBB

When Marcella Dankow, '94 BCom, first opened her business, Art Works Gallery and Framing Centre, ten years ago in Fort McMurray, she found it frustrating that some of her customers simply wanted to purchase a piece of art that would “match the carpet and the couch.” Marcella was not in the business of home décor; she was in the business of selling art.

She made a commitment to show local artists by selling water colours by Carol Breen, soapstone carvings by Brian Clark, oil landscapes by Shirley Thomas, uniquely styled wood carvings by Robert McDonald, and stunning acrylics by one of Canada's foremost aboriginal artists, Alex Janvier.

Marcella not only set out to provide a voice for the local artistic community, she was determined to create a market for them. One customer at a time, Marcella also set out to raise the level of artistic knowledge among her customers and dispel the myth that Fort McMurray is devoid of culture. Her first years were tough; it wasn't always easy to pay the rent. Nevertheless, she persevered and sought to convince people that original art was unique and could be an expression of their own personalities. “A techno-town that hasn't got art, hasn't got heart,” she says.