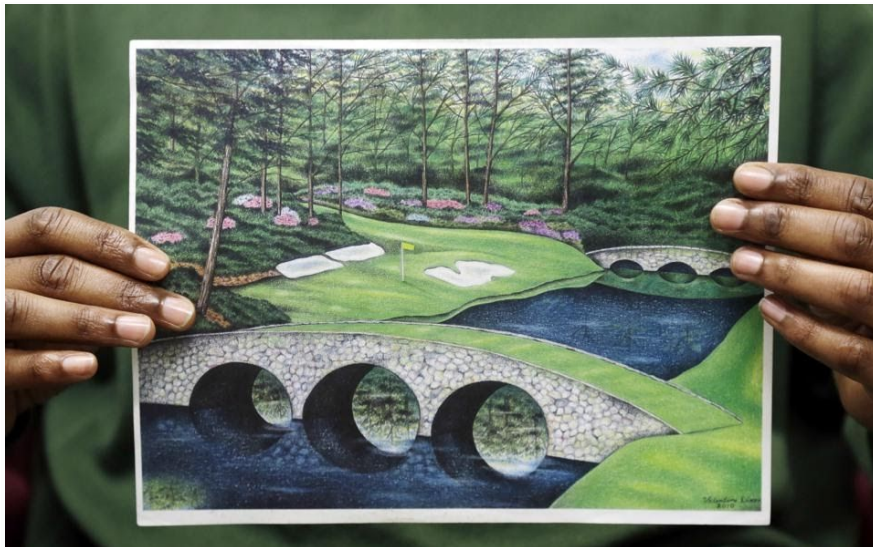


Michelle Obama Bought Barack An Original Valentino Dixon Drawing For Christmas

Mike Dojc
Dec 26, 2020.



Michelle Obama purchased a drawing of Golden Bell, the 12th hole at Augusta National rendered in rich colored-pencil as a Christmas present for Barack. The vivid depiction of the iconic golf hole guarded by Rae's Creek and a trio of greenside bunkers is the work of artist Valentino Dixon who was exonerated in 2018 after spending [27-years behind bars](#) at Attica Correctional Facility for a crime he did not commit. While Dixon who was raised in downtown Buffalo never even came across the sport of golf, he became enthralled with depicting course scenery after a warden at Attica who noticed Valentino's drawing talent gave him a photo of ANGC's famous par 3. A fellow inmate who was a golf enthusiast then lent Dixon his Golf Digest issues and he began drawing verdant fairways and greens which provided an escape from the monotony of prison life.

Obama was reportedly touched by Dixon's story after watching a segment on the artist this fall on HBO's Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel. Looking for a

one of a kind gift for her golf loving husband, she purchased “Augusta The Beautiful,” a 20-inch-by-30-inch rendering of the hole that plays a starring role in every Masters tournament.

"I hope that you love your gift, and maybe one day you and the family can come draw and talk with me," said Dixon in a video recording he made for the former President to accompany the present.

“We have received several inquiries since the sale was reported. Because Valentino’s story is so incredible, his media attention does tend to generate activity over and above the gallery’s day-to-day promotion of his work,” says art dealer Andrew Edlin whose eponymous [New York gallery](#) carries Dixon’s work.

According to Edlin, Dixon’s original drawings are priced in the \$2500-10,000 range for modest sized works on up tens of thousands for his larger pieces. While the Obama sale certainly helps move the needle, it doesn’t instantly pop a painter’s average price the same way a positive earnings surprise will generally move a stock.

“One sale, in spite of the prominence of the buyer, doesn’t move the market. We have already raised his prices a few times based on demand. It’s the cumulative effect of more collectors stepping up due to the excitement generated by events like the Obama sale that invariably leads to higher prices,” says Edlin.

Being included in the personal collection of former President Barack Obama is another major sign of validation for a rising artist whose work has already been exhibited at New York’s Drawing Center and the Burchfield Penney Art Center in Buffalo. His acclaim in golf circles also led to an invite to the Masters in 2019 where he was greeted by Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus.

“When I met Tiger Woods, I told him he was going to win it. That was a huge day in my life and I met Jack Nicklaus later that day and he compared me to Nelson Mandela because of my spirit,” says Valentino Dixon.

“This surpasses that. I don’t have a description for it. This is every artist’s dream to be on a former President’s wall. It doesn’t get any better than that,” adds Dixon.