

Entrepreneur, 75, not only lives, works with art, but flies it, too

By TIM O'NEILL
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Car dealer, uranium miner and ginseng importer Frederick Weisman jetted into town Thursday to see his father, long dead.

He flew in his company jet, a Lockheed 221, called the JetStar, painted midnight blue, its fuselage emblazoned with the stars of the Milky Way galaxy.

From Los Angeles, the trip — with a strong tailwind — took 4½ hours. Weisman relaxed with his work, gazing up at the jet's curved ceiling, painted clear-day blue with wisps of clouds floating about.

The outside was painted four years ago by Ed Ruscha, the inside by Joe Goode, both Los Angeles artists.

"I spend a lot of time in the air. My business is on the East Coast. My home is on the West Coast," he said. "I live with art. I work

with art. Why shouldn't I fly with art?"

The 75-year-old entrepreneur brought a canvas with him, smuggled from Leningrad several months ago by American rock musician Joanna Stingray, who is married to a Russian rock singer.

The oil painting, by a young Russian underground artist named Andrei Krisanov, will hang at the Norton Gallery of Art in West Palm Beach, not far from where Weisman's father sits.

William Weisman is seated in an executive's chair near the gallery's information desk. He is on the telephone, his legs crossed, a legal pad in his lap.

"My dad was always on the phone," Weisman said. So he commissioned Duane Hanson, a Davie artist known for his startlingly

realistic figures, to create three bronze portraits of his father. One for each of William Weisman's sons.

"Some people think it's sort of morbid and it gives them the creeps," Weisman said. "But I'd rather have that than a painting."

Another Hanson creation, an old man dozing in a chair, sits beside the fireplace in Weisman's study. It was modeled on Hanson's father.

"If he could do it for his father, he could do it for me," Weisman said.

The sculptures of Weisman's father and the Russian oil painting are part of the Frederick R. Weisman Collection, an exhibition of 70 works that opens today at the Norton for a two-month stay.

They are examples of Weisman's eclectic tastes and his appetite for contemporary art.

"I don't buy art as an investment or to put in a warehouse. I don't buy it unless it really turns me on. It's

got to be good enough to knock something else off the wall," he said.

Weisman has a passion for young artists. Before his collection opens in a city, he combs the galleries in the area first. "If I see an artist who has talent and his work feels good to me, I will buy it," he said.

The works of three Cuban-born painters, bought only two weeks ago in Miami, appear in the exhibition. He encourages other collectors to recognize talent in their own locales.

Weisman has more than 1,000 works of art, many purchased for a few hundred dollars before an artist became widely recognized. His foresight is so acute that a single purchase can boost an unknown artist's career, as it did for a San Antonio painter whose \$800 works were selling in New York and Los Angeles for \$5,000 months later.

"It gives me a lift, and it gives the artist a lift," Weisman said, "but then I tend to not overdo on



SCOTT WEISMAN/Staff Photographer

Art collector Frederick Weisman had his private jet painted dark blue with stars on the outside and then also had an artist paint the inside of the plane.