



CREATING YOUR PERSONAL MASTERPIECE



“Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.”

— Michelangelo

One day years ago, my young son stared at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. While the popes may have been awestruck by the ceiling, my son was unimpressed. “I could paint that,” he scoffed.

Perhaps, with the right tools, he could! Did you know that many famous artists of old used a tool that helped them outline their drawings? The tool was known as the *camera lucida*. The *camera lucida* would cast the shadow of an object on a page or surface so that the artist could perfectly outline the object. With the precise shape of an object outlined, the artist knew exactly how to complete the project.

Some purists thought the use of the *camera lucida* was a bit like cheating. Yet the results from using such a tool, in the hands of skilled professionals, are stunning. Many masterpieces have been created from using the *camera lucida*.

So, what does this tool have to do with you?

Almost all new clients I meet own their assets arbitrarily. For example, the beneficiary designations of retirement accounts and life insurance policies have much in common with spilled paint on a modern art canvas. If a couple is married, the allocation of assets between spouses often is lopsided, like a Pablo Picasso portrait.

Why is this asset ownership mess so common? Simply put, not everybody knows and understands how to paint like a master, and not everybody sees the big picture about how assets should be owned. Most people need a *camera lucida* to help them outline the facts and give direction on how their assets and beneficiary designations should be arranged.

To address this common problem, I’ve devised something of a modern *camera lucida* to simplify

asset ownership. Using various colors and a basic spreadsheet, my tool outlines suggestions on how assets should be owned and how beneficiary designations should be made. Asset allocation become as simple as a paint by numbers landscape.

This tool is especially valuable as the years pass. My *camera lucida* can easily be updated and revised as life situations change – change in state or federal law, change in health, change in wealth, change in state of residence, change in marital status, sale of a business, or other life events require adjustments to your balance sheet. The *camera lucida* can often be used to revise asset ownership in the future.

Clients and their financial advisors can easily update their balance sheet information. The new information, plus any changes in circumstances, can then be analyzed under the facts and laws as they exist in the future.

There is beauty in thoughtful and elegant effort that withstands the test of time. With the right tools, building your personal masterpiece is easier than you think.



Touched, nearly, by the hand of God.