

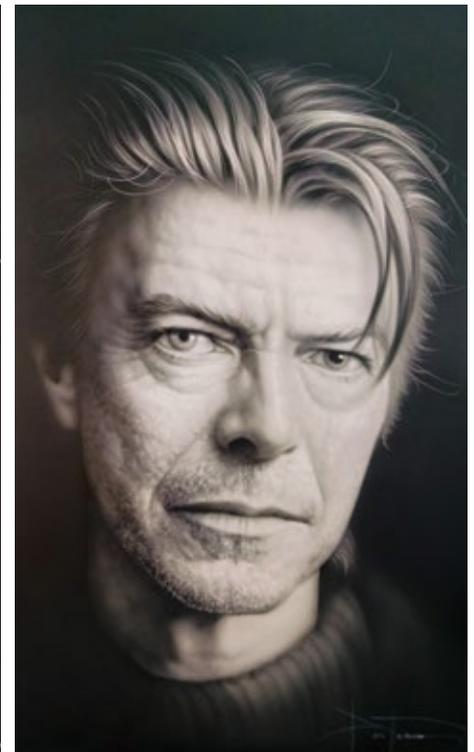


UNDER PRESSURE

A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY AIRBRUSH REALISM

While conducting research to produce this exhibition, a well-seasoned painter told me that his New York dealer advised him not to tell anyone that he uses airbrush because it could hurt his reputation. I told him it's time to come out of the closet. Airbrush is a hip medium that has been around for over a century, and is used today to produce a broad range of work, the best of which endures as fine art.

DAVID J. WAGNER, PH.D. CURATOR/TOUR DIRECTOR



AIRBRUSH HISTORY

Francis Stanley, who with his twin brother became famous for the Stanley Steamer (a precursor to the gas-engine automobile), patented a simple “atomizer” airbrush to colorize photographs in 1876. An instrument called the “paint distributor,” which relied on a hand-operated compressor to supply continuous air, was developed in 1879 by Abner Peeler “for the painting of watercolors and other artistic purposes.” Charles and Liberty Walkup of Mt. Morris, Illinois, paid Peeler \$700 for the invention, patent, and world rights in 1881. A commercial prototype was developed by Liberty Walkup who re-patented it under a name suggested by his wife Phoebe: “air-brush.” She would go to found the Illinois Art School in Rockford where airbrushing would be taught. In 1891, Charles Burdick, of Madison, Wisconsin, revolutionized the air brush. His invention, which was patented in 1892 was the first internal mix, double-action airbrush similar to those used today. It contained paint somewhat like a fountain pen, and featured an index finger trigger with the air supply

re-positioned through the bottom, which improved balance and control. Burdick’s invention was represented by Thayer and Chandler, a Chicago mail order arts and crafts retailer, at the 1892 World Columbian Exposition. Burdick subsequently moved to London a year later and formed the Fountain Brush Company which he renamed in 1900, Aerograph Company, Ltd. Olaus Wold, a Norwegian immigrant who had worked for Thayer and Chandler and did the majority of its airbrush design work, formed his own company in the late 1890’s: The Wold Air Brush Company. In 1912, he patented an airbrush that sprayed a flat-fan pattern which is still used today. He and other pioneers, notably Jens Paasche, another Norwegian immigrant, contributed additional improvements which collectively enabled the airbrush to play an essential role in the democratization and commercialization of art in The United States and beyond. In 1904, Paasche acquired half interest in World Air Brush Manufacturing Co. and then with his brothers found Paasche Brothers. In 1906 he bought them out and in 1916 incorporated Paasche Airbrush Company. Anest Iwata, with roots in Japan dating back to 1926, is one



of the largest producers and suppliers of spray painting equipment including airbrushes worldwide today.

One reason that airbrush has a bifurcated reputation, is that it has been a go-to medium for years for commercial artists who have produced a broad range of work beyond fine art, illustration and photo restoration including animation, body art, make up, tattoos, clothing particularly t-shirts, cakes, fishing lures, boats, snowmobiles, aircraft, and the broader, so-called Kustom Kulture, a neologism used to describe vehicles, styles, fashions, and art of those who drove and built custom cars and motorcycles in the United States from the 1950s and '60's hot rod culture of Southern California forward. You name it, and airbrush artists seem to have covered it in one form or another. As would be expected, many commercially successful airbrush artists possess incredible skill, but most lack true artistry, which is one of the chief reasons why the medium has been maligned by some high-brow aesthetes over the years.

In the world of fine art, Man Ray (1890–1977), who was an influential force in the Dada and Surrealism art movements,

employed airbrush in the production of his work. Alberto Vargas (1896–1992), the pioneering artist who had emigrated from Peru to the U.S. after studying art in Europe, used airbrush in combination with watercolors, to produce his signature pin-ups. His mastery of the airbrush was acknowledged by Airbrush Action Magazine in 1993 when it began awarding its annual Vargas Award “to honor world-class artists not only for their work but for the inspiration and influence that they have had on airbrush users world-wide.”

THE EXHIBITION

MASTERS OF AIRBRUSH is a survey of contemporary realism by some fifteen exceptional airbrush artists from throughout the nation and beyond, who have not only been invited to participate in the exhibition, but who will also curate works for the exhibition to represent their breadth, depth and achievement over time. A preliminary list of exhibiting artists includes (in alphabetical order): Dru Blair (Blair, SC),



A.D. Cook (Las Vegas, NV), Don Eddy (New York, NY), Fonzy Greaskull (Fullerton, CA), George Green (Lake Oswego, OR), Mike Lavalley (Snohomish, WA), Kirk Lybecker (Beaverton, OR), Noah (Orange County, CA), Marissa Oosterlee (Katwijk aan den Rijn, The Netherlands), Alan Pastrana (Plainville, CT), and Cesar Santander (New York, NY). A special tribute to Steve Driscoll is also being planned following his shocking, untimely death in June 2018. These artists were chosen because of their high level of achievement, their consistency, and their on-going commitment to a medium which has given not only given them focus but also been the focus of their work.

NOTES: Artworks pictured represent artists who have committed to participate. Actual exhibition artworks may vary. Various historical facts in prospectus Airbrush section were drawn from airbrushmuseum.com, airbrushinformation.net and other online resources.

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Masters of Airbrush is available on a first-come/first-serve basis.

CONTENTS: 50 Original Airbrush Paintings in a Range of Size, Subject, and Style

FEE: Mid-range exhibit rental fee plus shipping and in-house and in-transit insurance

AVAILABILITY: Available for duration of eight weeks or longer

SUPPORT: Education, Press, Registration, and Retail

EDUCATION: Lectures, Demonstrations, Workshops possible for a fee and travel-related expenses pending scheduling

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

David J. Wagner, Ph.D., Curator/Tour Director David J. Wagner, L.L.C.

OFFICE: 414.221.6878

EMAIL: davidjwagnerllc@yahoo.com

WEBSITE: davidjwagnerllc.com

Member: American Alliance of Museums and International Council of Museums

For exhibit updates, visit: www.davidjwagnerllc.com/exhibitions.html#AUP

Above: Don Eddy at work in studio, photo courtesy of Vincent Zambrano. Front Cover: Cesar Santander, at work in studio.