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Questions and Answers

What is photorealism and why paint in that style?

Photorealism is a term that was coined by New York gallery owner Louis Meisel to describe work that was so lifelike and complete in every way that it looked as if it could have been taken with a camera. Photorealism transcends realism in that it incorporates additional visual devices to give the illusion of depth. These techniques include using out of focus areas and lens flair. The question that frequently arises with this style of work is simply why not simply take a photograph of the subject. The answer is more obvious than most see. Consider the quality and impact of a photograph of a great piece of art. No matter how good the photo is, there are always elements and emotions that cannot be captured by the camera. On the same very basic level, photorealistic painting surpasses photography in a similar way. Photorealistic painting takes subject matter and infuses life into it that is difficult to achieve photographically. On a more complex level, photorealistic paintings do not need to be derived directly from a single piece of photo reference. Often in my work many pieces of reference come together to form the image on the canvas. The ability to accurately see and create colors and effects are what ties the work together into a believable image.

What tools and medium are used for your work?

The vibrancy, strength and durability of waterborne paint have replaced the use of most of the other types of paint in my studio. Waterborne paint was developed as an environmentally friendly alternative to solvent based automotive paint. Because it is intended as a paint to be used in rapid collision repair, a large amount of tints were introduced that were very readily intermixable, making it excellent as an artists' paint. In addition, the paint is a fluid with binders and flow mediums that aid its ability to atomize when sprayed. This makes it an excellent paint to be used with an airbrush. The airbrush is the primary tool that I use to apply paint. This tool offers an incredible amount of control in the application of paint. Seamless washes of color and the ability to subtly adjust tone and value are the hallmark of the airbrush. Use of this tool in addition to traditional paintbrushes gives incredible flexibility.

How do you choose the subjects for your work?

I try to view everyday objects with an eye toward composition, color and perspective. Things that we glance at in our everyday lives and dismiss without a thought, often become the best subjects for my work. My goal is to present and capture the viewer with a familiar object and draw them in to the incredible variations in colors, textures and beauty that are found in these subjects.

How long does it take to create a painting?

The painting determines the answer to this question. Complex paintings can take hundreds of hours. The goal is to have the patience to work through all the elements in the image with equal attention. Seemingly simple objects can have very subtle yet complex surfaces and colors. The translation of those elements accurately is what solely determines the quality of work.