

The Poet of Color

Five years ago, Rob Hooper took a leap of faith, leaving his lucrative job as a regional sales manager for a large corporation. For years he had dreamed of trading his life of business suits and constant travel for a more spiritual, creatively rewarding life, and one day he decided to finally pursue that dream. The result has been a very prolific outpouring of images, both abstract and representational. With little formal artistic training, the 39-year-old Hooper instead relies on his own instincts and feelings to guide his process. This striving to be truer to himself has led him to early success, with gallery representation in several major North American cities. I recently had an opportunity to speak with Rob about his life and his art.

Stephen Lindsley: *What prompted you to make such a radical change in lifestyle five years ago?*

Rob Hooper: Well, I began to look around me and noticed that my goals and ideals were not often shared by my peers. I did not want to become just another corporate clone, plus the travel was wearing me down. I turned to painting as a release from that world, and discovered that this was the lifestyle I really wanted.

S.L. *Your work is very lively, with bright colors and positive themes. Where does your imagery come from?*

R.H. A lot of them start as a line drawings. They are often done with a single continuous line, or maybe just a few. When I'm drawing these I practically have my eyes closed. Sometimes what comes out surprises even me, but the emotion is expressed through the

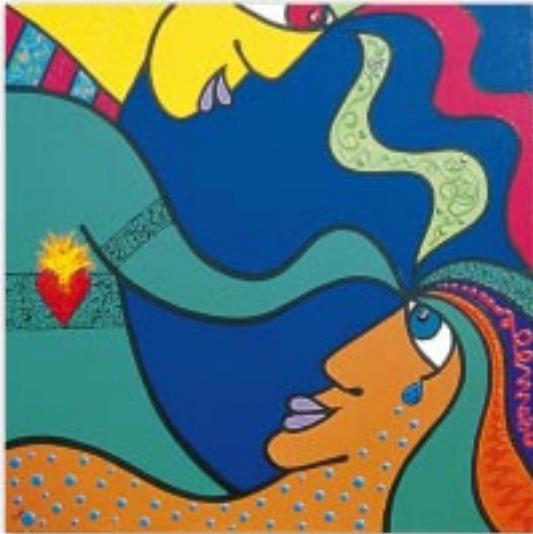
color. In fact, an artist friend of mine that I really respect has dubbed me "The Poet of Color."

S.L. *I think that is an apt description. The color combinations you choose really help establish a mood for each piece. What can you tell me about your more abstract work?*

R.H. I've really enjoyed exploring depth and texture with the abstracts. They are a story in color of that day, that time. One thing I've been doing lately is adding other elements to the work. I did some beach scenes that include real seashells and sand. I have also been experimenting with very small images such as faces that I put behind glass beads attached to the canvas. This makes people stop and take a closer look, drawing them deeper into the image.

S.L. *Your more realistic work has a Pop quality to it, but there seems to be more there than just a superficial reflection of culture. What is your view?*

R.H. I like to refer to it as "spiritual pop art"—not necessarily spiritual in a traditional religious way, but more in terms of emotional connections between the figures I represent, and also the inner visions I see. I like to turn the music up loud in my studio and just start painting. I feel that if



you are true to yourself then you can be more trusting of your subconscious instincts. My images flow directly from a part of me that I don't necessarily control, and they reflect my true state of mind at that moment.

S.L. *You seem to have had very rapid success exhibiting your work and securing representation from galleries. How did you achieve that?*

R.H. I've relied on the sales skills I learned in my former life to make connections with galleries. I usually go in with a brochure of my work and a binder of photos under my arm, and keep a few original pieces in the car that I can show them if they are really interested. Reaction to my work has in general been very positive. □



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