

Robert Johnson

A visual storyteller, Robert Johnson immerses himself in the sanctity of the natural environment. In his latest series he has explored Panama and all of its luxuriant and species-rich areas.

"Panama is an area where Northern and Southern hemisphere flora and fauna overlap, providing rich environments in which they flourish," notes Johnson. "The pristine beauty of the cloud forest at Cerro Punta and the numerous species of fish and coral off the San Blas Islands in the Caribbean stand in marked contrast to the emerging development at Isla Boca Brava. The landscape of this dry tropical forest is in transition, frustrating those of us who are ecologically sensitive."

"In addition, indigenous cultures in Panama have maintained many of their ancient traditions, providing an abundant narrative language. I was fortunate to visit several locations while there, learning something of the

art, customs, and mythologies from the different tribes of native Indians."

After an extended stay in Nepal, Bali and India two years ago to study Indian miniature painting, Tibetan thangka painting and traditional Balinese painting have influenced techniques used in his current paintings, particularly the works using gouache. Making notes and intricate sketches on location, Johnson continues to playfully ride the creative current of his imagination, often exaggerating scale and detail. These sketches, combined with his vibrant memory, are the backbone of Johnson's paintings later made in his studio. Johnson received a Bachelor of Science degree in fine art from the University of Louisville, Kentucky and a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from Mills College, California. He has received a number of prestigious grants, including a National Endowment for the Arts/

Southern Arts Federation Grant and, most recently, received an artist-in-residence at Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, Oregon.

Johnson's work has been exhibited in many museums, including North Carolina Museum of Art, Morris Museum of Art, Georgia, Chrysler Art Museum; and Asheville Art Museum, North Carolina. Commissions include a series of paintings whose designs were later transferred onto ceramic tile for the Raleigh-Durham International Airport.