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Jamie Perry

American, b. 1962

If you sense a bit of Edward Hopper in Jamie Perry's figurative paintings or a bit of Maynard Dixon in one of his landscapes, you've identified two of his inspirations in terms of style. In terms of subject matter, the native Southern Californian finds daily motivation from "being observational," he says. "It's little things I notice while driving around that immediately conjure up a painting in my head."

The idea for *Painting a Brighter Future*, for example, came to him when he saw two men stripping a billboard on a stormy day. In his interpretation, the subjects, under a dark and ominous sky, are painting a sunny day on a billboard. "I like to take an otherwise common scene or image and create a painting that can have humorous undertones or be thought-provoking," he says. "An art museum patron sitting on a bench, head down before a Jackson Pollock-type painting, is a prime example. Here you have this artwork with a furious splattering of paint, yet a person is slumbering in front of it."

Jamie began his painting career in the commercial realm — creating product/branding illustrations for magazine ads. When he grew tired of working with art directors who requested multiple changes (occasionally asking him to revert to elements he had previously shown them), he transitioned to fine art. "I decided to paint what I like to paint, which was minimal landscapes with a Midwestern theme," he says.

Though he grew up in Claremont and now lives in Colorado, Midwest settings (e.g., a lone farmhouse on flat land) appeal to his minimalist aesthetic. At the same time, he attributes his love for symbols of the American dream and lifestyle to "growing up in Southern California where there's so much opportunity."

Jamie further explains why people in his paintings are "faceless," where the viewer stands behind or above the subject, and why the men typically wear suits and hats and sometimes hold an open umbrella. "It adds an air of mystery. I want to leave it up to the viewer to interpret who the person is," he says. "And I like '40s and '50s attire, so a lot of my paintings have a retro theme, even though they might show a modern setting."

Another recurrent element in his work is his French bulldog, Ace. *The Introduction* shows a suited man slightly bent to speak to a dog, whose head tilts slightly as he listens. For the background, Jamie chose a Midcentury Modern carport in Palm Desert.

The process for him begins with what he calls “brainstorming.” He then makes a rough sketch and determines whether he needs to photograph a model, after which he makes a more detailed sketch that he transfers to canvas. He usually is in his studio by 6:30 a.m., working until his wife returns from work around 6 p.m., but continuing until 10 p.m. when he is preparing for a gallery show. But he does not paint in a quiet isolation.

“I don’t think I have ever worked on a piece where I was not listening to music. I like all kinds of music,” he says, noting that he may listen to reggae one day and music from the ’40s or country the next. For years, Jamie concentrated solely on landscapes. The first painting he sold — at an outdoor show in Lake Tahoe — showed long, late-afternoon shadows of a couple of trees stretching across a road that vanished in the distance. “I sold six or seven pieces out of 12 at that show,” Jamie says. “At my next show in Park City [Utah], I got picked up by CODA Gallery.”

That turning point in his life came about 10 years after a segue when he worked as a stuntman in Hollywood. “I grew up riding bikes and motocross and watching Westerns where guys are falling off horses and buildings,” he recalls. “A couple of friends and I started jumping off roofs [onto pads they made]. Then we went to Hollywood and met some top stunt guys, including Hal Needham and Dar Robinson, who took us under their wing and taught us a lot about the business. “I started thinking, ‘As I get older, this is going to be harder on my bones. I’ve always had a love for art, so I am just going to do that full time.’”

He still, however, maintains a fondness for movies. “If I couldn’t paint, I would be a filmmaker,” he says, adding that he especially loves comedies. As for the rewards of life as a full-time artist, he views it more like a film’s scenery than its dialogue. “Just the fact someone would make it a focal point in their house is the best compliment,” he says. Notable collectors include actors Paul Rudd and Kevin Nealon, the Boeing family, DuPont, and the Los Angeles Dodgers.