

A PAINTER'S JOURNEY

JASON WALCOTT

Somewhere along the line, every artist gets the call to creativity. For some it comes later in life. For others it comes as a child and stays, or is put away until it is rediscovered in middle age. For Jason Walcott, that calling came at a young age.

Most children enjoy drawing at some point and have their first gallery show on the front of a Frigidaire, but for Jason the urge to be creative was always more than just childhood fun. Ever since he was a small tot he has been creative in some way—from drawing and painting to making illustrated books, putting on plays and writing music, all before the age of 15.

Jason started out as most children do with his coloring books and crayons. However his paternal grandmother, known as “Bubby” was a hobby artist herself and helped point him in the direction of more serious painting. At one point around the age of six, during a visit to his grandparents house, he got into her art supplies and began happily painting away until it was time to clean the brushes. Upon seeing this, Bubby patiently explained to a frustrated Jason that you can’t rinse oil paints with water. From that moment on, oil paint took on a mysterious and



magical quality that has stayed with Jason to this day. The next day his grandmother took him to the local college bookstore and bought him some acrylic paints and a small oval canvas to paint on, but it was to oils that he would eventually return one day.

During high school, Jason’s ambition was to become an architect. He was (and still is) fascinated by the design of 3D space and the unique aspect of architecture that combines functionality with aesthetics. While in high school he even drew out an entire fictional planned community just for fun. By the time he got to college and enrolled in the first few semesters of classes required for Architecture majors at the University of Maryland College Park, Jason realized it was the design and creativity that were calling to him rather than the complicated math



and physics. It seemed only natural that Jason should leave the architecture program and refocus on fine art.

After taking a year off to reassess his goals, Walcott returned home to his parent's house in New Jersey and transferred to Kean University. It was at Kean that he enrolled in the Fine Arts program and graduated cum laude in January of 1997 with a BFA in Illustration.

Soon after that he packed up his car and headed west to California. Having visited the Golden State on vacation in 1993, Jason knew then and there, California was where he belonged. During his years at Kean, he never lost sight of that goal to relocate to the west coast.

Jason was born in Trenton, Michigan in the early 1970s. His parents had lived on the east coast briefly before Jason was born and decided to return to Pomona, NY in the autumn of 1975 with the then four year old Jason. They lived there until August of 1977 when Jason's dad needed to relocate to New Jersey for work. It was there in Morris County that Jason lived and grew up until graduating from high school. Contrary to numerous jokes, northern New Jersey is a beautiful area of the state consisting mostly of farmland and only light to moderate development. Being exposed to the natural surroundings of the area gave Walcott an appreciation for the beauty of nature and so early on he was drawn to the landscape as a subject for his artwork.



In addition to this, through painting workshops in his college years he also came to love the still life as well. Walcott now concentrates

mostly on still life work but still finds joy in the landscape and has also recently begun to explore plein air painting. A sub category of landscape painting that offers a full range experience for the senses, plein air paintings can enhance an artist's studio work as well.

When Jason first arrived in California, he worked

for a signmaking company and then as a graphic designer at a printing company before eventually becoming self employed as a font designer. Always endeavoring to work at a job that was creative, for a time Jason was less focused on fine art and spent more time on his fonts and graphic designs. When his typeface designs were noticed in early 2003 by a company called Veer—which sells online fonts and stock photos to designers and ad agencies—his fonts ended up becoming their first exclusive



in-house product line known as Jukebox Fonts. He continued to create designs for Veer for the next eight years. Many of Jason's fonts have appeared in commercials, media, magazines and products including Disneyland park merchandise,

HGTV & Food Network programs, film titles, Nora Roberts book covers, Hershey's packaging, Southern Comfort ads and many more. The success of those font sales allowed Jason to purchase a home in north Orange County as well as devote more time to his first love, which is fine art and painting. Being a

typeface designer requires both creativity and discipline due to deadlines for new design submissions to Veer, and the technical aspects of making sure the typefaces function properly on all computers. This was a great learning experience for Jason as it later translated into the ability to show up every day in his studio, paint and be diligent in his motivation to perfect his craft. His four-bedroom home allowed him to use one of the rooms as a dedicated art studio which is one of the most important things an artist can have in their lives.

While Jason has always been fascinated by painting both landscapes and still life, it was in late 2011 that he decided to devote most of his creative energy into still life works. Using a shadowbox system that he sets up in his studio with a spotlight, this allows him to create the lighting and composition for his works that he is seeking. Rather than merely copy the still life arrangement, Jason's goal is to convey a certain feeling with his work and reinterpret the arrangement—in a sense “enhancing” real life. For Jason, painting is all about light and how it illuminates a subject as well as imbues it with a particular mood. Beauty, stillness and quiet joy are always the main goals for his work.

Jason works primarily in oils, but in early 2012 discovered that soft pastels are also one of his favorite mediums. He now works in both media depending on his mood and the needs of the artwork. Soft pastel offers a different experience from oils as they are much more tactile and immediate. They have a direct connection



with the artist through physical contact that is somewhat removed when using a brush. The pure rich color of pastels and their long-term permanence makes them a fantastic medium to work in.

Jason has won several awards for his work including First Place in the Pastel division of the Orange County Fair—a juried exhibition to which he has been accepted every year he has applied.

In his spare time when he is not creating art he continues to design fonts as well as do freelance graphic design. Jason

also loves to bake and has become famous among his family and friends for the holiday cookies he sends out each December. Among his hobbies, his most unique and unusual is his great passion for collecting vintage Halloween decorations. Primarily focusing on semi mass-produced American and German Halloween decorations made between the two World Wars, Jason's displays of his collection in October, have become a source of fun and joy for him and his friends. Several of the rare pieces in his collection have been featured in books on vintage Halloween collectibles. Being an artist, it is the delightful graphics and design of those pieces that draw Jason to them.

For Jason, there is no greater happiness than the feeling of creating. One comes to realize after a time, that the end product, the painting, is just a fringe benefit. The true lasting joy lies in the process—in the journey.

