

DALLAS

HOME DESIGN

Fine Homes, Gardens and Gracious Entertaining

New Age
for Antiquity

Reinventing
Renaissance

Eyes on Marrs

VOL 1 NOS 5
MAY/JUNE 2001

DALLAS HOME DESIGN

MAY/JUNE 2001 \$3.95



portfolio

by Paula Telpa | photos by Kevin Hunter Marple

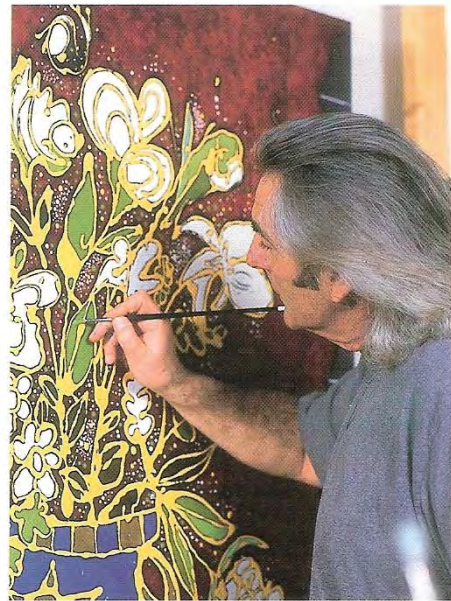
IN LIVING COLOR



Artist Alain Despert
paints from the
palette of his life

In the hands of Alain Despert, fleeting thoughts become lasting and vibrant images that seem to exhale energy into the rooms they inhabit. As brilliant and as comforting as a neon sunset, Alain's life's work has become creating paintings that take on a life of their own. Whether they're hanging in the office of the Dallas mayor or residing in a private collection, the range of masterpieces offers evidence of this artist's unique and powerful vision.

LEFT: This piece, which hangs in Karen Brown's home, is called "Seurat - Une Baignade Asnières" and was part of Alain's Masterpieces Revisited Series from 1998.



above: In his studio, Alain works on "The Blue Vase" with oil, acrylic and enamel on canvas.

"People who own Alain's work very rarely just own one piece," says Karen Brown, owner and director of the Arts District Gallery inside the Fairmont Hotel in downtown Dallas. "Some collectors have as many as 12 or 13 pieces. He never paints on just one subject, so [collectors] can have a whole range of paintings that are by Alain, but are all of different themes."

The Arts District Gallery serves as Alain's home base, a showcase gallery where he not only displays his work, but creates it. Although he exhibits all over the world, and is negotiating a major museum tour abroad for later this year, it is in the quiet elegance of the Fairmont that his brushes breathe life into flat canvas boards.

"I paint every day," says the French-born artist. "I always have ideas. I can't wait to get up in the morning and come to my studio, because in my head I'm always working, even when I sleep. I have a very good idea of what I want to do."

Those ideas translate well from deep within the artist's mind to their final resting place. Working in oil, acrylic and enamel, Alain designs two-dimensional universes that are part fantasy, part reality, and purely original.

"His work is very addictive and very transfixing," offers Nancy Emmitt of Southlake who, along with her husband, Nick, owns four works by Alain. "He has a style that really takes you in. Every time we go into his gallery, we're drawn to another piece. We've been shopping art galleries for several years and collect quite a bit of art, but Alain's work is very different from most artists. I see his style as one that is really going to go places in the next few years."

Alain's artistry has that kind of impact on those who experience it; in fact, it is that kind of response that launched his career just more than a decade ago. He was living in the tropical Tahiti paradise of Bora Bora, managing a hotel and painting as a hobby. When the editor of *Town and Country* magazine stayed at Alain's hotel and eyed his handiwork, the artist's life changed literally overnight. Alain's paintings were featured in the magazine's 1990 cover story on Bora Bora, and the editor encouraged Alain to head to New York and pursue life as an artist. Taking the editor's advice to heart, Alain left behind three decades of hotel management, moved to the Big Apple and lived in an artist's loft with another painter.

"I was not thinking at all, I just went," he says in retrospect. "But I left it all. I knew I was finished with the hotel [industry] and I would paint now."

His quiet assuredness may be part of what made his career take off; upon arriving in New York, he saw a magazine advertisement for Absolut Vodka and, at the bottom of the ad, found a phone number for the company. He called, took his work to them, and was selected to participate in the company's now-famous "Absolut Artists of the '90s" series.

A career that had laid dormant for more than thirty years now caught fire, and Alain skipped right past starving artist and went straight to acclaimed innovator. He often creates paintings in series, such as his "Cars of the Fifties," "Masterpieces Revisited" and "The Divine

©2000 Howard Behrens, Media Arts Group, Inc., San Jose, CA

HOWARD
Behrens

Bellagio Garden

THOMAS
Paintings

©2001 Thomas Kinkadee, Media Arts Group, Inc., San Jose, CA

Clocktower Cottage

ROCKBROOK
STONEBRIAR
Just off Center Court,
469

GALLERY
MIDWAY N
BROADWAY S
FISHERMAN'S W
NORTHGATE

888-

"Up to one year, same as cash"



efforts of such acclaimed artists as Keith Haring and Roy Lichtenstein in the series, whose proceeds aid the mentally retarded.

Alain has traveled all over the world, and draws on those sights to create many of his works, such as the "Ocean Drive" series, which immortalizes Miami's South Beach in brilliant color. Upon moving to Dallas two years ago and setting up shop in Karen Brown's gallery at the Fairmont, he created a series that shows his view of Dallas. It includes everything from Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk sporting a 10-gallon hat to the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders to landmarks like the Belo Mansion and the Pegasus atop the Magnolia Hotel.

"He has a style
that really takes
you in. Every
time we go into
his gallery,
we're drawn to
another piece."

— Nancy Emmitt

"I like the architecture of Dallas," he says. "This series was my vision of the city. It's about the culture, the mix of cowboys and sophistication. I like that, and wanted to paint it."

His work obviously made an impact on the city; his portrait of Ron Kirk hangs in the mayor's office and can frequently be glimpsed on television when

the mayor is interviewed. Alain then was selected to design a champagne bottle for the Millennium Auction for Vintage Dallas last year, and his imagination yielded yet another look at the famed red Pegasus, this time against a cobalt blue sky surrounded by the Dallas skyline.

"Whatever painting I'm doing at the time, it's my favorite," he says. "There's not much time to reflect on past paintings; I need to concentrate on what I'm doing. And considering I stated late, I have to move faster than anyone else. At 17, I

could take time. I can't do that now."

His breakneck creative pace has led to prolific output; his new series, "The Chalkboard Series," goes on display at the Fairmont gallery in May, and this summer he is painting a 1,600-foot mural at the hotel to represent its connection with downtown culture and the arts. When Michel Roux, of Absolut Vodka fame, needed a campaign for his new distilled spirit, called Absente, he commissioned Alain to create the painting.

"There is something happening for me

every month," the artist comments. "I don't have time to plan things, because it happens by itself. I think I was born to do this."

*Alain designs
two-dimensional
universes that
are part fantasy,
part reality,
and purely original.*

Those who see his work would agree; with "The Chalkboard Series," Alain blazes a new trail, creating large-scale works designed as if they are part of an art class. Each painting appears to reside on a blackboard, and in the corner, written as if in chalk, are the series name, genre, title, medium, size, date, price and artist name. Currently there are nine paintings in the series, but Alain says he could add to it if it is as successful as his previous endeavors. He even toyed with the notion of doing a self-portrait for the Chalkboard Series, something he hasn't yet done but no doubt would bring a fresh new perspective to the genre.

"I've never seen a series like this done before," says Karen, who is Alain's partner as well as the director of the gallery. "He does such innovative things and his use of color is really something he has become known for. I think that's part of why people collect his paintings; the art feels good in their home. It's like coming home to a dog at the end of a long day; it's just going to cheer you up and make you feel better." 🐾



inspiration — ideas — arrangements — gifts — delivery

M. BOUNTIFUL
a flower shop

214.821.3311

2903 N. Henderson