

Davis Morton

As a painter, I've never known how to describe myself by any one particular phrase or label. Having borrowed from many disciplines, all I've ever tried to be is just a school of one, as an individual. But when I attempt to describe my work to other people, I've found that labels are inescapable. After almost 30 years of watching my work evolve, I can see how my paintings appear to be a combination of Realism and Impressionism. So, lacking a better term, I've called myself a Realist/Impressionist. To me this is a reasonable description for my style or technique, but it doesn't describe the spirit of my work.

My goal has never been to paint reality just the way it is, and I've never tried to paint my initial impression of it. Lately I've realized that my view comes from the other end of the spectrum. I've been trying to paint reality the way my subconscious sees it. Acknowledging this dependence on a subconscious view, I tried calling myself a surrealist. But with no flaming feet or melting clocks in my work, and no succinct explanation, this new label only made an understanding of my work more difficult. What follows, will hopefully clarify what I see as a connection.

My most poignant dreams have not been nightmares. They come with soft distortions and muted sounds instead of screams, and whether this qualifies me as bring a surrealist or not, this is the way I paint. Rather than the surrealism of Dali or Magritte, I feel closer to the surrealism of Vermeer or Edward Hopper. By filtering the reality of their own times through inner vision, they both said something about time itself, without a dependence on the fantastic or grotesque. Their work is strong because it's subtle. Like them, I don't paint my dreams and I don't invent my own dream-like images. But I do use dreams as a reference, along with another conscious phenomenon, that taps my subconscious view directly.

To me, memories often seem like dreams. When we think of a childhood home, we may remember our room, the yard, events, etc. With effort, many other details surface that seemed forgotten. But many times, the most vivid memories of such a place are spontaneous and unsolicited. They come in a flash of recognition, with almost photographic clarity, and like odd dreams, the conscious mind may dismiss them as being weird and insignificant. Rather than remembering things that we deem worthwhile, sometimes things emerge that defy our sense of logic.

Instead of visualizing the "Norman Rockwell" dinner scene that we might like to see, our subconscious mind might represent that moment with the image of a gravy ladle, or the corner of a room. Or it could be the image of an obscure plastic chair, rather than the Sistine Chapel, that makes us feel like we're on a recent trip to Rome.

For the purposes of my work, these unsolicited memories not only look like my dreams, they serve the same larger purpose. Everything from the subconscious is an affirmation that we are seeing more of reality than we think. Using the subconscious view as a guide, I take photographs of things that strike me in a similar way. Then I use these images and my drawings to do my paintings. If a waiter from France would do better in New York, I'll put him there. If a distortion or mistake suits its' space, it's left uncorrected or it's enhanced.

Both in the mechanics of what I do and, in my thoughts, I do my best to let openness direct my actions, instead of intellect. I don't want the shallowness that comes from trying to be deep. But I'm also not waiting for a Zen-like trance or inspiration. Being open, I'm free to think while the painting follows its' own direction. I enjoy interpretation. It's interesting to analyze why I liked my composition to begin with, or why the significance of a simple object changes when it's painted. I'm intrigued by other things that almost can't be changed, like the odd stillness of something that should be moving, or a certain likeness that looks like someone else. Elements always show themselves as symbols when I paint. Preconceived ideas and opinions always change and grow. But as in the best of dreams, I know that I've done my best work when my final message is a mystery.

What I don't try to say in my paintings has always been much clearer. I've never tried to make a social statement or teach anyone anything. I don't try to amuse or shock anyone. And I've never tried to paint a charming frozen moment. Although I still can't find an acceptable label or description for myself, I do have a good idea of what I'd like my work to be. I'd like it to be like a living moment, with a past, present and a future that moves on,



unresolved, saying something indistinct. Not just about the reality that we all see, or my impression of it, I'd like my paintings to say something of its' essence. I'd like my work to haunt.

Biographical Information:

Davis Walter Morton IV was born in Bronxville, NY, on August 24, 1948. His childhood was spent in Bronxville and in Chevy Chase, Maryland. He went to private schools in New York and Baltimore, until getting married at the age of 16. At that time, Morton started painting seriously, working full time, and going to high school and then college at night.

In 1969 he joined the Montgomery County Police Department, in Maryland. He retired in 1989. In the 20 years spent as a Policeman, Morton was the police artist for 18 years and worked as an investigator for 14 years in the narcotics, robbery, sex and homicide sections. Since 1992, Morton has been able to devote all of his time to painting as his sole career.

EDUCATION

Due to early responsibilities, Morton was unable to attend art school. Other than one anatomy course, taken from Frank Wright at George Washington University in 1979, Morton is a self-taught artist. He received his bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Maryland in 1977. Since 1975 he has traveled yearly to visit the galleries and museums of Europe, Asia, South America and Africa to further his education.

GALLERIES / AFFILIATIONS / EXHIBITIONS

Zenith Gallery Washington, DC current

"American Arts Quarterly" Magazine (article published, Winter 2002)

"American Artist" Magazine (article, December 2000)

"America's Most Wanted" Washington, DC (six drawings aired)

Antreasian Gallery, Baltimore Md. (show July 2005) www.antreasiangallery.com

Art Effects Gallery, Merion, PA.

Arts Club of Washington, Washington, DC (show 1997)

Art Network Group, Bethesda, MD (publisher)

The Athenaeum, Alexandria, VA (Realism show 2001)

Baltimore Choral Arts Society, Baltimore, MD (show 2001)

"Baltimore Magazine" ("Thames Street" published in article September 2005)

Beresford Gallery, Boyds, MD and Saratoga, New York

Capricorn Gallery, Bethesda, MD

CNN "Wolf Blitzer Reports" (Live interview, October 2002)

Cudahy's Gallery, Richmond, VA

David Adamson Editions, Washington, DC

Fine Arts and Artists, Washington, DC

Fellus Gallery, Washington, DC

Fisher Gallery, Washington, DC (show 1997)

Foxhall Gallery, Washington, DC

Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, DC

"Hillrag" Magazine ("Tango #2 appeared on cover, February 2005)

Joseph Keiffer Inc., New York, New York (Agent)

La Petite Gallery, Annapolis, MD

Mckissick Museum, Columbia, SC (shows 1999, 2001 Norrell collection)

North Dakota Museum of Art (show 2001)

Ontogeny, Potomac, MD (Phyllis Beek-Agent)

Occidental Grill, Washington, DC (show May 2001)

Pandion Gallery, Fishers Island, New York ("Sporting Art" show)

Paper - Rock - Scissors Gallery, Baltimore MD

Portrait Representatives, Towson, MD (Jean Trout-Agent)



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Rablen West Gallery, Vero Beach, Florida ("Polo Paintings" show)
Somerville-Manning Gallery, Greenville, Delaware
"US Artists" show, Philadelphia, PA (Joseph Keiffer)
Veerhoff Gallery, Washington, DC
White Canvas Gallery, Richmond, VA www.whitecanvasgallery.com
WTTG-FOX NEWS (Live interview, October 2002)

PUBLICATIONS

A Different Way of Viewing Art by Davis Morton, May 9th, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Different-Way-Viewing-Art-ebook/dp/B07CZYBJ1Y/ref=la_B07D21P2KH_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1529770131&sr=1-1

