



## **CRAIG ALAN**

Craig Alan was born in 1971 in San Bernardino, California. Though always drawn to art, Alan's creativity did not fully develop until his family transferred to New Orleans as a child. The vivacious culture nurtured Alan's capacity for detailed visual interpretation. Inspired by the city's enthusiasm for creative expression, he began exploring his own innovative impulses.

Alan's earliest experimentation took the form of street portraiture, an endeavour that helped him perfect his flair for replicating the human figure and afforded the budding artist a sense of economic security. He saved his portrait earnings to pay for school and art supplies. Though he always planned to pursue a formal art education, Alan continued to develop technically and conceptually through his own diligent studies.

During his sophomore year at the University of Mobile, Alabama, Alan undertook vigorous training in art. His enthusiasm for his studies immediately propelled him into the scholastic limelight. With a focus on studio arts, Alan earned an area award for academic excellence. The University's most prestigious exhibition, "Art with a Southern Drawl," featured 42 of Alan's pieces, chosen from a field of more than 1,600 submissions.

A minor concentration in theater further diversified Alan's craft, imbuing him with additional techniques in makeup and set design. This blending of disparate influences and media is visually apparent in all of Alan's works, which demonstrate a broad knowledge and appreciation of the human form as well as the colorful world these beings occupy. Combining his skills into elaborate textures, hues and compositions, Alan's artwork reveals a technical sophistication as well as an elaborate imagination.

Alan's collections run the gamut from abstract expressionism to haunting, graphic realism, each one a reflection of its creator's unique vision. His prolific career is a culmination of artistic knowledge and a keen aesthetic sense, one developed not through intensive schooling but deep within recesses of this artist's brilliant mind.

Craig Alan's art is exhibited across North America and in Europe where he has established himself as a singular voice in the visual arts industry.

## **\*THE WORK**

Craig Alan is an artist with a restless eye, pushing the boundaries of visual expression without constraints. Alan's body of work references numerous styles from pop-surrealism to magic realism to neo expressionist abstraction and representation. His most recent work, which he refers to as the Populus series, steps outside the tropes of those well-worn formal enterprises with strikingly original images created from hundreds of tiny figures on a white ground.

At first glance the paintings look like aerial photographs, though a closer inspection reveals that they are painstakingly hand-painted. The images had their genesis in some photos Alan was taking of a wedding party from a high-rise balcony. "Later on that evening I noticed, in one shot, the group of people appeared to have formed an eye. That's all it took to get the gears moving fast, that one photo is what started it all," according to Alan.

"Each piece will contain a range of 400 to 1,800 people in it depending on the type of work it is," says Alan. The creative process is labor intensive: "I can spend anywhere up to 150 working hours and beyond on one section of a painting depending on the size however, I like to work on more than one painting at a time, I like the challenge, and it sparks new ideas."

These images have a real "wow" factor to them that comes from the realization that the larger picture is composed of so many intricately rendered figures. "It's rewarding for me as an artist to watch people's reaction to my work and to see them get such enjoyment out of it," says Alan. He hopes that viewers of these paintings will realize "that we are all part of something greater than ourselves, and if we work together, we could achieve greater balance . . . not in a religious sense but rather a universal sense."

Alan's other work is entirely different from the Populus series. In the series referred to as Novel Anthology, Alan uses a combination of traditional representational techniques to create literal visual metaphors, portraying children and animals and anthropomorphic images as well lingering in the deep woods and dark interiors. In other images the figure has been removed, leaving ghostly dresses floating on atmospheric grounds Alan prides himself on his eclectic creative process, which is reminiscent of an "old-school" post-modern approach to painting.

According to Alan he isn't really working from this type of conceptual base; rather he's simply utilizing a myriad of creative approaches to keep his painting fresh. "I am a student of the arts and will be until I pass," says Alan. "I love to study and practice technique. These paintings are an extension of the abilities bestowed upon me."

*\*Nashville Arts Magazine, "Craig Alan: The Future Is Not Written", Accessed June 26,2017(Edited Version)*