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FEATURED ARTIST

christopher stoll

INTERVIEW BY SAMAR ALKHUHAIRI

With a background in photography and the appreciation for 18th century French still life master Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, 20th century American painter Wayne Theibaud, and Dutch Baroque painter Jan Vermeer. Christopher has developed a style of contemporary realism, focusing on object portraiture. He transforms banal objects of the past by practicing traditional "old masters" painting techniques, to feed the modern day eye.

Your paintings are brilliant, in fact the first time I saw them I was under the impression they were digital illustrations, which after learning about contemporary realism, it all began to make sense. Can you tell us about how you started painting? How you developed your style of contemporary realism?

I was always interested in painting and drawing. As a child, I took private art lessons, which focused heavily drawing skills. Later, studying art history, I always found myself interested in the still life paintings of the past, but found them out of touch with the modern world. It was the technique and skill of the artists that I found fascinating. In studio art classes I focused on photography, in a dark room, very hands-on, but I still participated in painting classes, finding myself gravitating toward the work of Wayne Thiebaud.

After learning about his work, I felt a connection on how painting can still be meaningful. It took several years to really learn how to paint. I found myself using a very traditional "old masters" style of painting, several layers, lots of glazes and building up the painting. But my subjects are something that can only be understood today.

How long does it typically take for you to finish one painting?

A painting can take anywhere from 1 to 3 weeks, depending on complexity.

Prior to painting, you were working in the photography department. Did you used to be a photographer or did you just work within the photography department? Your bio mentions "being immersed in the rapidly changing and technical world of photography, he left to pursue the painting studio, where the digital world was shut out and the tradition of oil painting honored," what about the digital world made you feel like you couldn't continue practicing traditional analogue photography?

I used to both be a photographer, and work in a photography lab. As a photographer I only ever used available light, I never worked in a studio setting. This made me understand natural light, and the way it falls on subjects. I use that understanding in my painting.

I was working in a photography department in an art college as it was making a transition from analog to digital. During this time, the analog (slow, patient, observant) style of working was giving way to the digital (fast, techno-centric, impatient) style of working. It was then that I decided to return to painting. Being in a dark room would be fun, if I ever had the chance again, but painting is king in my world now.

I've noticed the objects you are typically vintage, what is your creative process in selecting these objects? Do you typically work by setting up your object and the lighting, use photographs as references, or freestyle?

Having a real-world personal connection to the objects I paint is important. It's important for any artist to have a real-world connection and understanding of their subject. The objects always come with a story, or a path that leads them to my studio. I have the objects need to be in the studio, some of them are found (those are the best ones) some of them are borrowed and some are gifts. I don't set up the lighting, I use northern light, through a studio window. This is where my influence from Dutch masters comes in. I do use photographic reference for very difficult subjects, like the typewriters, and when I am very busy in the studio and have several pieces in the works.

















