

Interview with Omesh Cain

Omesh Cain was born in Tobago and raised in Cambridge England. After two decades painting in Europe, he has returned to the Caribbean, where he continues to paint.

Omesh Cain has travelled around the world exploring and observing different cultures. These influences have helped shape the artistic expression and vision in his vibrant work today. His work is largely figurative and is often characterized by big hands and feet, large exaggerated proportions and warm, bold colours.

Omesh creates works of art that infuse the senses with colour

and form. There is delight in observing the unique way he works with his subject matter, leading us on an artistic narrative of translucence, beauty and vision. With his ability to express himself with shades of colour, light and dark he captures a unique luminosity. There is a sense of the magical, the naive, and the innocent in his work, and a passion for revealing the wonder in life.

He works with both acrylic and oil paints, and is currently working on a new series of wood carvings and Bronze sculptures.

How and when did you get started painting?

I started painting fifteen years ago while I was travelling in India. I stayed in a house with a beautiful garden and wanted to paint the magic of the early morning light filtering through the foliage. So I bought colours, canvas and brushes and spent many days quietly sitting in the shade painting. From that early period in India I was hooked and produced a series of nature paintings.

Did you have any formal training or is it something that came naturally for you?

As a teenager my mother recognised my creative interests and took me to life drawing classes. I have not had any formal training as an artist but I have always been creative in many different crafts.

Who/What inspires you when you're painting?

I love the work of earlier Artists Modigliani and Gauguin. Studying the way how other artists have worked with their portrayal in form and colour can be helpful to give some ideas. But the best for me is to simply take brushes in hand and begin to paint and then within a very short time I become totally forgetful of myself and captivated by the creative process itself.

What materials do you prefer to work with and why?

The slow drying time and creamy texture of oil colours make them perfect for fine detail work and creating multiple thin transparent layers. Quicker drying Acrylic colours on the other hand are great for bold and fast expressive painting styles where new effects can rapidly be added, building layer upon layer in a short time. I am now painting with acrylic colours. A new thing I have discovered since coming to Tobago is carving in wood. I love the animated feeling of my life size wood carvings which I then paint. I am also working on some smaller figures for casting in Bronze which are presently in production.

consistently finds the passion to paint or do you go long stretches without painting?

I can never go too long without painting. If I am travelling or unable to work I will make a lot of drawings and prepare new ideas. Then when I am back in my studio, the colours will fly and new images will appear on the canvas.

How would you say your style has evolved over the years?

I have gradually shifted from the energetic nature painting from my early works to now painting figuratively. I still love to use a vigorous and bold approach, especially in initial stages of building up a new painting, but after many years of experimenting and exploring different techniques, I have developed a painting style which is more a complimentary blend of the earlier "spontaneous free flow" approach, together with elements which are more considered and thought out.

If you weren't painting for a living what do you think you'd be doing?

I have been a professional mountain bike racer in Germany, and in the Fiji Islands I worked as a dive Instructor, but primarily over the years I have worked as a carpenter. Finally after discovering that there is an artist at my core, there is nothing else that I would wish to do. Knowing and experiencing the source of creativity pouring fourth on the canvas fills me with excitement. This is my passion and what I want to do.

How has travelling the world influenced your work?

Travelling the world and experiencing many different cultures and traditions has supplemented an expanding of my understanding and given me a deeper appreciation for the rich diversity in the different cultures that are part of the human heritage. While travelling, all of the senses are literally bombarded with new and unusual stimuli. There are so many sights and smells, the festivals and dress, the music and culture. Travelling abroad necessitates a softening of our expectations of how things should be, and a curiosity and appreciation arises in observing and experiencing how different we all are. So much has been seen, heard and felt and later in quiet contemplation the impressions are turned into ideas for the canvas.

What is 'Source beyond Senses' about?

This is the title for my first solo exhibition in Tobago. It describes the energy of creativity which enters me while I am painting. It is an experience where I somehow dissolve and go beyond my senses so an expression which is original, fresh and unique can appear.

How long and why did you return to Tobago?

I was born in Tobago 50 years ago while my father was the Anglican minister in St Patrick's church in Mount Pleasant. My Grandfather was also from Trinidad and growing up in England I knew that at some

point in time I would have to come back to my roots.

How would you describe your most recent work?

My newest painting "the illusion of free will" is like a riddle waiting to be solved, and every person will need to find their own interpretation as to its meaning. From the beginning of this painting I have deliberately abandoned all ideas of what it is going to be. Rather I have entered into developing this work with an openness to allowing the unexpected to happen. Layer by layer I have infused the canvas with colour and energy continuing to add and build up different effects, waiting and watching for an idea or a form to appear. It all happens of course by my own hand, but (very importantly) without me steering the direction or knowing where it is going. I describe this process as "going beyond mind".

What do you do in your down time?

I play in the Tobago drum group Hands of Rhythm. Lining on the beach.

The Art exhibition "Source beyond Senses" with paintings and sculpture by Omesh Cain opens at 4pm on October 20th at the Pasta Gallery, Pigeon Point road, Tobago. One day painting retreat with Omesh on 5th October in Mount Irvine, Tobago. Contact: www.omeshcain.com




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