



Troy Crisswell

Troy Crisswell spent his childhood days in Montevallo, Alabama, enjoying the freedom to roam safely about the town on foot or bicycle. Crisswell was five when his father passed away with a bad heart and he moved with his mother and brother into a large, comfortable house on Ashville Road with Pop and Granny, his mother's parents. His interest in drawing and painting became apparent in his early teens as he and his good friend sat together at the table in this house cartooning cynical and exaggerated figures among psychedelically spewed backgrounds.

At Indian Springs High School in the late 1960's he easily fell into painting and more organized drawings. In 1971 he began art studies while attending Birmingham Southern College, but after nine months he took off to play electric guitar in rock bands mostly performing in the Northeast. When several years of this musical interlude left him restless and out of money, he returned home to Montevallo, Alabama, and took his first full-time job making maps.

Now 26 years old, he happened to read a book about Van Gogh and suddenly became seriously interested in painting. Finding a job as a graphic artist, he moved out on his own. He began studying art books and making a focused effort to improve his drawing skills. Crisswell started attending a life-drawing group in 1981, not realizing he would be doing this on a weekly basis for the next 22 years. At this time in the early 1980's most of his paintings were acrylic.

In October 1982 he met clay artist, Becky Bolton. While accompanying her to her outdoor art shows, he saw that some painters were actually making a living selling their work and became inspired to work toward this possibility. He began drawing and painting at night after work and on the weekends. The Crisswells moved to the Buxahatchee Woods in 1984, and in 1986 they built a studio to have a convenient workspace. Crisswell now had inspiration, desire, and a studio. He began experimenting with watercolor and producing paintings. This body of work got him accepted into his first art show in the fall of 1987 where he sold eleven paintings. Continuing to build on his knowledge and skills, Crisswell was ready to quit his day job as a graphic artist and become a full time artist in July 1991. His painting continued to develop steadily and around 1997 he started to explore oils and began selling oil paintings along with his watercolors in 1998.

It is interesting to see how Crisswell's work has evolved. A loose but direct approach is used to create his watercolor paintings, while the oils are done in glazed layering. For watercolors he mostly uses Bristol Papers but changes that according to the effect he desires, while oils are created on gessoed canvas or Masonite board. A comprehensive overview is compiled in his 2009 self-published book *Thoughts on Painting*. Since the beginning, Crisswell has combined realism with surrealistic elements in many of his works. As Steve Masterson of The Acoustic Café put it so well, "He sees things in a strange way and has the ability to take wet paint and arrange it so you can see what he sees."

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