



John Heine

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1950, John Heine first became intrigued with the world of art when, as a youngster, his grandmother took him and his siblings to some of the many excellent art galleries in Washington DC. These early museum visits instilled a deep sense of awe and appreciation for the arts that would never leave him.

Throughout his early years he was constantly drawing. As much as he loved to draw, it never occurred to him that he would pursue it professionally. However, that changed in his junior year at Berry High School in Birmingham. That was the year he first decided to become an artist. Little did he know then how that would play out - first as a professional cartoonist, then as an oil painter.

In 1969, Heine enrolled at the University of Montevallo, majoring in Art and Philosophy. There he took art classes from the legendary painting professor John Spicer and nationally acclaimed sculptor John Rietta. Yet while Heine was learning about painting and sculpting, he was also seriously moonlighting with the art of his first love, cartooning. It was in 1972, while at the UM, that he created a nationally syndicated cartoon strip called MAYA. He went on to have his drawings in many national magazines and publications as well as two cartoon books, A Good Planet is Hard to Find and The Land of No Hassles.

But after thirty years of completely dedicating himself to cartooning he hit a creative brick wall. Ever the gambler, he felt compelled to try something more serious, more artistically demanding. So, in 1990, he decided to jump head first into oil painting. His early oil paintings of this period were explorations of the human figure and color, always focused on manipulating the human form in new ways.

Heine's most financially successful paintings were a long-running series called Chaotic Neighborhoods. Each canvas consisted of numerous overcrowded twisting, turning houses painted with a riot of color.

In 2000, after ten years of painting, he decided to take a sabbatical from making art. He did not paint or draw for nearly seven years.

Then in late 2006 the desire to make art came back in full force. This time, however, he decided to try his hand at abstract paintings. These early canvases have an organic, puzzle-like feel with a deep impasto surface that was carved and scratched into, revealing an undercoat of paint. As the paintings progressed, the shapes became less organic and more clearly defined, more muscular, with negative space behind the shapes taking on more importance. The colors became brighter and more contrasting. The scratching/carving into outer impasto surface evolved into unusual and spontaneous drawings within the larger shapes having an archetypal, mysterious yet familiar feel. All of these ingredients came together to make each canvas a very powerful statement.

While most of Heine's muscular new work consists of large, visually abstract or non-representational paintings, he is always looking for authentic ways to experiment with the human figure. And it is the human figure that is the theme of his newest work, PARALLEL WORLDS. In each painting, however, there is no set rule for which direction he will go. The direction he paints is completely determined by the idea or shapes as to whether the canvas is more representational or totally abstract.

Currently, Heine has paintings for sale at the Matt Jones Gallery in Birmingham, AL.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Whether my images are recognizable or completely abstract is of little importance to me. The idea for each new painting is like jumping off a cliff into the unknown. I know where it will start, but I have no idea where it will end up. Whenever I start a new canvas I go to war. I take no prisoners. I try to paint fearlessly, pushing visual boundaries and at the same time always paying homage to the profound mystery of life.