

Burton Morris

Building on the legacy of Pop Art masters of the 1960s-70s, Burton Morris presents his personal world of popular American icons that put a delightful spin on everyday objects and motifs. In his post-Pop style, Morris boldly projects an enticing mood of happiness, high energy and fun. But his roots are in fine art.

Morris' forbears were icons Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Tom Wesselmann and Red Grooms. He also employs some of the shorthand gestures of comic strips and magazines he has loved and emulated since childhood. These classic devices are seen in his simplified forms and action lines indicating movement joined with his rich acrylic colors. Morris imbues his art with his own impeccable style and optimistic frame of mind.

The artist's distinctive sword-like slashes suggesting shards of energy come from his study of woodcut prints. Two of his heroes are Albrecht Durer and Rockwell Kent. Durer used similar hatching in the sixteenth century. Twentieth century American artist Rockwell Kent illustrated books and designed bookplates with such lines. Artists for The New York Review of Books emulated his style in small India ink drawings, called "gloomies" in journalistic parlance.

Burton Morris was born in Pittsburgh in 1964. Like the late Pop artist Keith Haring, Morris felt an early attraction to Belgian artist Pierre Alechinsky's paintings that resemble fantastic comic strips. Both artists saw the Belgian's large exhibition in the International Series at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, in 1977.

Morris earned his bachelor of fine arts degree at Carnegie Mellon University in 1986 and, during three more years while working at art directing and doing television commercials, he began developing his post-Pop drawings.

The artist established the Burton Morris Studios in 1990. That year he began making his small post-Pop icons more impressive by enlarging them. He also tightened his brushwork into his present precise style. He would choose one subject per composition to create what he calls "an instant happening" for the viewer.

Finding eager acceptance in the corporate world, Morris soon received commissions from Absolut Vodka, AT&T, Perrier, Microsoft, Sony and H.J. Heinz Corporation. He also began reaching out to a mass audience. For ten seasons, fans of the television sitcom Friends saw his work on the set.

Morris began expanding his artistic range with new conceptions. He worked beyond his pictures' edges and coordinated his images with three-dimensional objects made of painted wood that added intensity to his central images. He also created multi-panel paintings, often using such American icons as the Statue of Liberty and others in his bright and clean identifiable style.

In recent years Morris has exhibited his work in many venues. Among them are forty-two paintings and drawings shown at the auction gallery Sotheby's branch in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The International Olympic Committee selected the artist to produce thirty-six triumphant paintings on the spirit of the Olympic Games which exhibited at the International Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, during the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Morris' work really burst onto the American stage and was given wide exposure in 2004 when he produced signature images for the 76th annual Academy Awards, perhaps best remembered for Morris' image of a young male photographer who faces forward with a light-exploding camera. Posters and banners with this icon enlivened the façade of the Kodak Theater and other sites in Hollywood and Los Angeles. The artist also produced art for the 38th Montreux Jazz Festival, the tenth annual Andre Agassi Charitable Foundation event and Major League Baseball's 2006 All-Star Game.

Morris has exhibited his eye-popping art in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Boston, Pittsburgh as well as in Paris, Geneva,

Tokyo, Hong Kong and Rome. His paintings are also part of many public and private collections.

But Burton Morris has only begun to show his considerable potential. He has proven he is alive to the world of large ideas. His talent, intensity, imagination and determination have always been present, and they continue to develop as he reaches his middle years. His talent reaches out boldly toward fresh artistic possibilities -- whenever they occur, whatever they may be and wherever they take him.

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