

Artist Statement

Thomas Motley

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My earliest vivid memory is of the concentric-circle logo on the cover of a Tide detergent box. I thought it was the Warner Brothers' Looney Tunes symbol, and kept waiting for it to become animated. I was three.

As a child, I drew barnyards, cows, chickens, mules, and rows of crops. My family were all farmers or rodeo people. The first comics I copied were Pogo (Walt Kelly), and Snuffy Smith (Fred Laswell). At ten, I discovered MAD magazine, and copied Jack Davis.

At 13 or 14, I bravely mailed some of my own cartoon creations to the famous editorial and sports cartoonist, Bob Taylor (Dallas Times Herald), seeking his advice and critique. A week later, Taylor posted a package too big to fit into our rural, road-side metal mailbox. In addition to a kind note of encouragement, his response included written instructions and his own re-drawn examples of my work, page for page. I learned the importance of "varied line weight" (when illustrating details), from a Master Cartoonist, critiquing my own teenage drawings.

Robert Nelson (Univ. of North Dakota) taught me how to build a proper canvas. Gene Turner (UT Arlington) taught me to trust my instincts and not overthink a painting. Judge (Wright) Williams taught me to draw the human figure through volume, instead of contour only.

I was a USAF printer at Grand Forks AFB, ND for four years. When I returned to Texas, I applied at LTV (Ling Temco Vought) for a printer's job. Instead, LTV's Forrest Harrisberger hired me as an illustrator for his Special Arts Department. LTV rolled over my TSC (Top Secret Clearance), so I got to do inkings on really cool manuscript projects like HUD (Heads Up Display). I worked a "swing shift" (4:45 PM to 1:30 AM), so was able to be a full-time art student in the daytime at UTA, and a part-time resident cartoonist for the infamous Dallas Notes, published by Stoney Burns.

At the University of Dallas, in Irving, Bob Cardwell taught composition better than anyone I'd ever heard. Lyle Novinski (UD Chair) and I agreed that every painting is full of stories, and we both loved telling them. Fellow UD grad students, Ann Stautberg and Linnea Glatt, shared the campus studio next to mine. They urged me to, at least, try out acrylic instead of oil paint for my big 8X10 ft. paintings, and to use a staple-gun instead of tack and hammer for securing canvas.

Henry Hopkins respected my work, viewed it often, and gave me confidence. James Clark's passion changed my young mind about collectors. Bill Campbell convinced me that my drawings were as worthy of display as my paintings. Paxton and Johnnie Moore, and Vicki Foster were true patrons.

My love for the phenomena, the sheer beauty, of overlapping veils of translucent, fluid COLOR, must be derived from nature. My boyhood memory is flooded with the vibrancy and luminosity of huge Hibiscus-like, red-centered, white flowers atop my Grandmother's tall okra plants; or the deep dark green flesh of a giant Black Diamond watermelon, split open, (with an unforgettable

‘crrraaack’ sound), to reveal lush red planes, with lines of black seeds as orderly as any of Larry Poons’ lozenge-dots.

My love for the crisp definition of an intentional, carefully drawn contour, must be derived from the comics, from what I knew as “the funny pages”, or the “funnies” in the newspapers of my childhood. Only the Sunday funnies were colored, so I guess my child’s eye associated the daily black and white linear emphasis used to depict overlapping shapes on those printed pages with my own crudely outlined animals in barnyards, and seemed the most efficient way to define the world.

Shortly after seeking me out for some ‘traditional’ painting instruction, Liz Trosper dragged me kicking and screaming into a digital art discussion. For a couple of years, we have critiqued each others’ work, and collaborated in a visual exchange, a reflective dialog about mutual interests in drawing, printmaking, and painting.

We appreciate Kit Hall’s enthusiastic response to the idea of *fluid dialog*, and to Texas Wesleyan University for sponsoring the exhibit and related events about our work, in the new Bernice Coulter Templeton Art Studio Gallery.