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Jorge Santos

artist profile



Raised in an environment of violent political turmoil, Jorge Santos spent his first years in Luanda, Angola on the coast of Africa. He moved to Portugal at the age of 16 to escape the conditions, but ironically found himself in further political turmoil; from Portugal's isolated corporatist dictatorship being overthrown in a military revolution to a near Communist takeover, to the founding of the first democratically elected government in 1976.

The national struggle paralleled Santos' own personal one and fueled his passion for drawing. At this early stage, his pencil drawings—the most simple and direct form of expression—of complicated and dramatic images was the perfect outlet for him. In the early 1980s Santos moved to the United States to pursue his art. It was here that his work evolved beyond drawing. His illusory, dreamlike images that hint at bizarre secrets leapt from the drawing board to the full realization of paint and canvas.

Santos combines illusion with an almost photo-realist style, and the result is unavoidably intriguing; sometimes referencing photographs from books and various places, he finds faces or uniforms to represent the characters in his paintings. With his febrile imagination taking him from one painting to the next, Santos creates scenes that are mysterious, playful and—surprise, surprise—improbable.

"I think of my paintings as snapshots of ordinary life in which I combine naive optimism with the impossible," says Santos (currently planning a move from Long Beach to the growing art mecca of New Mexico). "I like to place adults in difficult or impossible situations, but with a naïve, almost childish approach."

One could spend hours psychoanalyzing Santos' imagery; he is a master set designer who creates an emotional landscape and populates it with characters animated in the imagination of his viewers. Santos sets the stage and creates the cast, but it's the viewer who writes his or her own internal play. In fact, his paintings do have 'star appeal'—having appeared on several popular television shows, including *Will & Grace* and *Touched by an Angel*.

Santos will be showing new works at Andrea Schwartz Gallery in San Francisco thru April 28. He will also be in SoCal April 31 for a show at Glass Garage Gallery in West Hollywood.

Andrea Schwartz Gallery

San Francisco
(415) 495-2090



"PET PROJECT"
2006
OIL ON CANVAS,
48" x 60"

PHOTO: ANDREA SCHWARTZ GALLERY,
SAN FRANCISCO