

Press Release

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CRAIG CARLISLE - ARTIST

The idea of meditation and contemplation play a major role in the paintings of California based artist Craig Carlisle. Infused with serene happiness and optimism, his paintings articulate indelible images which evoke emotions reminiscent of childhood innocence. "I like watching how people react to the colors, or to the painting's content," says Carlisle. Some paintings of figures are cropped from the waist up and larger than life, while other paintings are small scale and intimate, yet all elicit an immediacy of reaction which is both mesmerizing and unexplainable. "Some people become alive and overjoyed while others prefer to be left alone to experience the imagery,". Carlisle's series of "Big Head" paintings he created in the early to mid 90's helped him become a deeply respected artist who is an original visionary. While the Heads were his survival paintings during those years, collectors were quickly seeking the studio of this upcoming artist. Those original Big Head paintings now are highly collectable.

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Carlisle creates a "still-moment" in his narrative art by juxtaposing recognizable elements while at the same time using minimal, sometimes flat color, for the background. A complexity is built around the emotional and psychological context of the work. The figures he paints are inanimate, sometimes single heads or double heads sprouting from the same set of shoulders. His figures are anonymous, and at times nude, genderless, almost child-like. Carlisle produces paintings in a lush, saturated range of colors with a variety of characters. In fact, the continuity in his recent paintings have a developing cast of charmed creatures each with their own names. Some of his works feature the perspective of a solitary creature within a landscape, while other paintings may include multiple characters. When there is a pairing, we're able to see personalities unfold and relationships bloom. The artist has relied on the traditions of Folk Art, Neo-surrealism and the naiveté of his "soulful" innocent characters. Carlisle's art is best labeled within the group called Fantastic. Briefly, Fantastic art explores fantasy, imagination, the dream state, the grotesque, visions and the uncanny. "Each work has a different relationship with the viewer." The artist explains, "my work is about communicating something optimistic, almost healing, at least that is what I start out to create."

Craig Carlisle (1964) was born in Oklahoma and moved to Ohio where he studied at the Columbus College of Art and Design, and where he received his BFA in 1988. He has lived and worked in New York City -- currently Carlisle resides in Los Angeles and is represented exclusively by George Billis Gallery NYC/LA. The artist has exhibited throughout the United States, and is included in numerous private and public collections around the World.

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