

POPPA ART

PHOTO CONCEPTUAL ARTIST STEVEN VAUGHAN COMBINES HIS BACKGROUND IN MASS MEDIA, POP CULTURE AND FASHION INTO PAINTED STATEMENTS ON SOCIETY

By Jenifer Howard



Photo conceptual artist Steven Vaughan with his latest painting, *Paradise City*, a mix of *The Bible* and a *Guns N' Roses* song title. Vaughan thinks it is both holy and hip, like the painting.

able at StevenVaughan.net. His awards include: "Best of Year" TV campaign from Advertising Age, "Best Art Direction" at New York Art Directors Club, "Best TV Spot" Chicago Film Festival, and the Effie "for a 20% increase in sales" from his Publix supermarket TV campaign.

Vaughan also extended his passion for design to create his own brand of eyewear. His private label was sold in more than 100 stores and represented 40% of sunglass sales at Henri Bendel's in New York City. Halle Berry wore them on the Red Carpet at the 2003 Oscars, and Lisa Marie Presley, Harrison Ford, Denzel Washington, and Elton John, are among the large list of celebrities who wear them. In addition to also designing his own line of menswear and freelancing for Juicy Couture and Liz Claiborne, he has created and designed logos and graphics for many clients including movie studios, private schools, radio and TV stations and restaurants.

The common thread among all of these diverse projects from

dustry, where he directed more than 300 national and international television commercials for Fortune 500 companies including BMW, Ford, Chrysler, L'Oreal, Chanel, The Wall St. Journal, AT&T, DeBeers Diamonds, Taco Bell, US Air, Nissan Motors, Miller Beer, Red Dog Beer, Coca-Cola International/Fanta and Sports Illustrated. Known as a visual-stylist, he has directed under contract to George Lucas and Dream Quest Images. Celebrities he has worked with include: Cindy Crawford, Dwight Yoakam, Little Richard and Tyra Banks among others. Some of his commercial work is avail-

"I was thinking about how men and women covet very different things and how those things really are at opposite ends of the spectrum," said Vaughan. "Could I take two obvious things that men and women love that have little in common and create a harmonious image? A visual equivalent of marriage? I failed to do this in life, but perhaps I could do it in art." Vaughan's love of art and his passion for paintings that reflect pop culture of the past two decades comes from his previous life spent as a successful award-winning director in the advertising in-

I think of my work as both photorealism and conceptual art. Two very challenging movements combined for the first time, and these photo-conceptual paintings require a great deal of thought before the first brush stroke is ever made," stated Steven Vaughan, an emerging artist on the Fairfield County art scene whose photo conceptual paintings are on display and available for private showings at the Delamar Southport Hotel, and who has prints for sale at the Samuel Owen Gallery in Stamford.

Vaughan's surreal painting of a 1955 one-of-a-kind Mercedes Benz race car amid a field of pale yellow roses, with its muted grey, yellow and white colors entitled *Benz and Roses*, (48" x 72" acrylic on canvas), evokes different emotions in both men and women, with women loving the sensual beauty of the painting, and men reveling in the gorgeous car. Yet Vaughan's reasoning behind why he painted it describes a much deeper meaning.

"Summer Of Love"

36 x 48 inches Acrylic on Canvas
"I always loved that brief moment when MOD fashion and Hippies were taking over pop culture. This painting brings brings back my fondest childhood memories. The word 'yes' in the magnifying glass is from a gallery show John Lennon went to. He climbed a ladder to the ceiling of the plain white room and looked through the magnifying glass attached to see the small word 'yes.' It blew him away, the most positive message Lennon had seen. He asked to meet the artist, it was Yoko Ono."

Steven Vaughan © 2010



"Benz And Roses"

48 x 72 inches Acrylic on Canvas
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in any painting - it is all done by my hand." Vaughan also will hand embellish any purchased print, making it a one-of-a-kind piece of art for its owners.

One of Vaughan's personal favorites in his collection of paintings is one with an iconic Bentley, which was purchased by a prominent east coast collector of contemporary art (who wishes to remain anonymous). The amazing payment for the painting featuring the car was in the form of the artist being given an actual Bentley, in exchange for the painting. On sunny days, Vaughan, who paints in the Indiana countryside, brings the Bentley out for a drive, and revels in its beauty, being inspired for his next painting.

To learn more about Steven Vaughan and his work, visit StevenVaughanFineArt.com. His original paintings are available for viewing by appointment at the Delamar Southport Hotel and his prints are available at the Samuel Owen Gallery. For an appointment to see Vaughan's work, call 203-325-1924. □

Vaughan's commercial work to his paintings is art – it doesn't matter if it's a TV commercial, a product or a logo. Vaughan is inspired by the Renaissance artists who would use their visual style, engineering or art to design anything patrons needed. Those artists were not limited and neither, says Vaughan, is he.

However, Vaughan noted that photorealism is the most unforgiving style of painting to execute technically. In elaboration, Vaughn stated, "Conceptual art is the strongest form of art as far as ideas are concerned. I have always felt that a lot of photorealism was weak on ideas, and a

great deal of conceptual art was weak in execution. So, I wanted to conquer the void in those two areas. I intentionally wanted to make extreme art - work that was technically difficult and intellectually challenging."

Vaughan worked as Ben Shoenziet's assistant in the early 1980's, and at the same time studied with conceptual artist Joanne Seltzer in New York's SoHo district. A 'photo-conceptual' perspective was a natural evolution for Vaughan as an artist. Shoenziet was one of the original ten photorealist painters from the 1960's, and Vaughan learned many of the techniques

he still uses today directly from Ben. Vaughan's paintings are highly realistic and look like photographs, but on closer inspection, they have brush strokes and the lines are fluid and flowing, a trait Vaughan has admired in the paintings of John Singer Sargent.

For Vaughan's work today, he paints mostly with acrylics – because they dry faster and have cleaner, sharper edges. "I like to paint in the area of 4' x 6' give or take a foot or two," notes Vaughan. "My techniques are limitless. I use antiquated tools as well as the most modern. I never use any printing process