



Adrian Waggoner

bluecanvas.com/adrian

“There is the problem of trying too hard to read the whims and trends of the art world, or being completely oblivious to what’s going on. I try not to dwell on these things.”

Adrian Waggoner was born in 1980 in California, and he spent the early part of his youth moving around the country with his military family until finally settling in 1991 in the city he calls home, Boise. His first year of college took him to Ecuador in 1999 as an exchange student, where he studied Visual Arts in La Universidad de Cuenca. After several years working as a muralist and portrait artist, Adrian moved to Connecticut to attend the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts. There, he earned a BFA in 2009 and has since earned the John Stobart Fellowship Grant as well as awards for his shows in Boston and New York City. Waggoner currently lives in Salt Lake City where he is pursuing his art career full time.



Apatheology, oil on canvas, 66 x 86 cm

Color is obviously something you think about in your work and in your bio you mention that pigments can “fulfill the measure of their own creation.” What do you mean by this, and what role do you think color plays versus the shapes in your pieces?

I am fascinated by color. When I was young and first started painting, I was mesmerized by mixing one color with another and watching them become yet another color. It was beautiful. By mixing, and layering colors, the pigments of each combined and formed relationships to ultimately create an image. I saw the pigments as living and created for the purpose of becoming art. At the end of the day, I could not just throw away the extra paints. I

felt like I would be robbing them of their potential. So I would paint anything and everything around me with the extra colors. I painted on walls, my desk, my pants, anything to help the pigments fulfill the measure of their own creation. It did not matter their ultimate fate to me, whether they became part of a masterpiece, or a pattern painted on a scrap that would end up in the trash. It had to be done. They would be beautiful wherever they ended up. I am not quite as dramatic today, but my love for color has stayed with me. If I compared my paintings with music, then color, shape, and line would be the notes and rhythm that make up the composition. How those colors and shapes are arranged will determine the mood or quality of the song. The shapes and colors, along with the figure, create patterns and a way for the viewer's eye to be lead through out the piece. I attempt to create unity and harmony through the piece using these formal conventions.



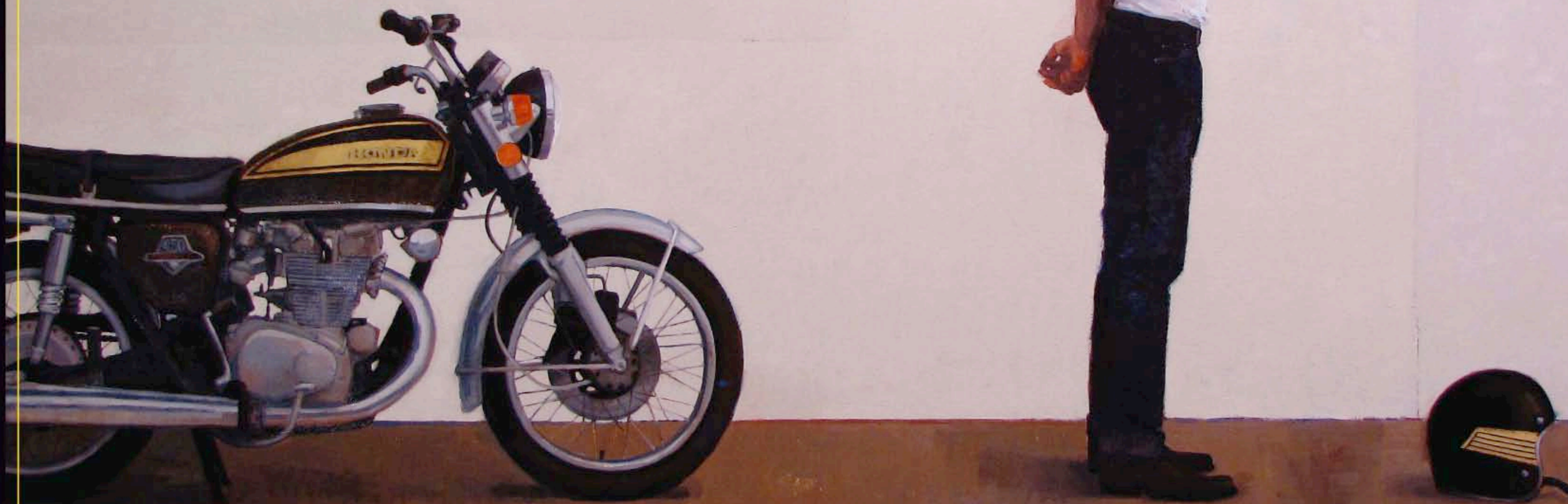
The Curse of Awareness, oil on canvas, 102 x 102 cm

Do you intend for your images of models to carry with them a certain take on life or are they simply exercises?

While I cannot say that each figure in each painting carries with it a narrative or certain take on life, I definitely do not see them as merely exercises. I would like to say the figure, or model, is as much an object or tool in the arrangement as the colors, pattern, shapes, and lines to achieve a desired composition. I would like to say that they are there only as a balance to the space around them; but at the same time, I understand the weight a figure brings to an image. I cannot deny the psychology, symbolism, or emotions they evoke. As viewers, we may want to understand or relate to the individual portrayed. Because of this, I try to avoid obvious, one word emotions,

that are easily seen, felt, and forgotten.

The initial intention of my work is to demand attention of a room. The juxtaposition of the figure with large, flat shapes, or empty environment, creates tension and balance. The figure interacts with its environment, creating a critical relationship. Neither is one without the other. The figure is only what it is because of the space around it. The paintings have an immediacy because of their simplicity. This allows the viewer to interact and become part of the work. I am interested in this relationship. Whether it is through the subtle tension of two figures on the canvas, or the dialogue of a single figure with its environment, the paintings create a relationship with the viewer. The painting becomes a proxy for their present condition. This way, the viewer can create specifics to my generalities and a continual relationship is formed.





Hope Is a Thief, oil on canvas, 122 x 102 cm

What drives you to create, and to paint in particular?

Honestly, I am not entirely sure what drives me to create. Images come to my head and I sketch them, and think about them, and paint them in my head until they become so clear in my mind that they are already done before I have even stretched the canvas. I have to paint them. It's the only way I can stop thinking about the image and get it out of my brain. Sometimes I have so many paintings envisioned that are waiting to be started that I get anxiety I might forget them, or never find the person to pose for it that looks like the one in my head. I keep lists with generic descriptive titles of my imagined paintings until I can start them. I get anxious if I go too long without painting and I become less of a pleasant person to be around. So in a sense, I am painting for my sanity and the well being of the people around me. On the positive side, I love painting. I am obsessed with it. I love everything about it; the smell, the texture, the way the paint comes off the brushes, the challenge of creating what was once just a thought. One would think that after seeing the painting complete, I would find satisfaction, but I have already moved on, my mind is still painting the next several paintings.

I am also driven by failure. The more I fail, the bigger the disappointments, the harder the rejections, the more I am driven or determined to succeed and to prove something to everyone and myself.

Do you paint people you know or hire models—which is easier?

Most of the time, when an idea for a painting comes to mind, the image is so clear in my head, that I spend a lot of time looking for subjects that will match what is in my head. Sometimes it's people I

already know, friends, previous models, or random people I meet on the streets. I met one of my best models at a Kohl's who posed for several paintings. If I have to hire a model, I try to find ones who are interested in art and will trade their time for a copy of the painting. If I have to pay in cash, I get stressed about the time and it shows in the work.

What's the best advice you've ever received from anyone?

In high school we were required to attend the career fair and sign up for the fields that interested us. I signed up to meet with an artist. The floor of the convention center was littered with booths and displays of potential career opportunities and employers. I found the artist up off the arena floor and high up in the bleachers. He had no props, no examples, and nothing positive to say. He just sat there, still wearing his coat and slumped down in his seat. I took a seat along with a handful of other students, eager for some encouragement and advice. I will never forget what he said. "Don't become an artist, you will be poor, you will be hungry, you won't make it, you will be disappointed, it is too hard, get a job, make art a hobby." This only encouraged me more. I had to prove this sad man wrong. So maybe I am an artist out of spite?

One of my professors in college would often read to us from *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri. One quote from the book that always stuck with me was, "the object of painting is not simply to get them in exhibitions. It is all very fine to get your pictures hung, but you are painting for yourself, not the jury."

My friend Mike comes to my studio often and always has a few gems to share too. I keep a list of his best words of wisdom in a note book. The other day he told me I should paint animals doing people things or that I should re-paint famous paintings, but turn it into a *Where's Waldo*.

What is the most challenging aspect of painting for you?

I think that the most challenging thing for any one who paints is trying to be relevant with such a tired medium. There is the problem of trying too hard to read the whims and trends of the art world, or being completely oblivious to what's going on. I try not to dwell on these things, as I will inevitably end up hating my own work, or feel like I am chasing ghosts. I try to be true to myself first, but at the same time I am actively looking at current artist, questioning myself, who I am, and reading about new ideas and philosophies. As I continue to evolve, my work can evolve as well.

Another challenge for me personally is placing too much self worth in how my paintings are received. It seems difficult to overcome this, as art is a vulnerable thing. As artist we spend hours of time in our studios creating something, and then putting it out in the world to be seen, enjoyed, criticized, ridiculed or ignored.



Everything Is Everything, oil on canvas, 123 x 96 cm





Words, oil on canvas, 122 x 92 cm

Are you involved in the art scene at all in Salt Lake City, Utah? Can you tell us a bit about it?

I wish I could answer this question better. I have only recently moved to Salt Lake City, from New London, CT, where I was more actively involved in the art scene. I have heard great things about Salt Lake City's art scene, and can only suggest readers check out the documentary, *After Image: The Art of 337*. Google it!

If you weren't a painter what do you think you would be doing?

This is a difficult question to answer because I am answering as a painter, and artist. And as an artist, all I can think of is other things that involve creating, like sculptor, musician, actor, or film maker. I have honestly never thought of a plan B, or something I could fall back on if I had to give up painting. As all artists know, we are not choosing a profession when we

choose to be an artist, it is a personality we are reacting to. It is something we have to do or be. But for the sake of this interview, if I wasn't an artist, I would just roam the earth, maybe travel around with a carnival, or live on a boat.

The world would be better if...

people chose not to be offended.

If I had special powers they would be...

to never die, or the ability to control people's minds.

I'm addicted to...

vinyl records, drawing, and the smell of oil paint.

When I have a creative block I...

go to galleries, museums, watch movies, watch people, draw, read, or ride my vintage motor bike.

Growing up I...

never played Nintendo!



In Spite of Nothing, oil on canvas, 122 x 112 cm