



Blessed with Creativity

WRITTEN BY TONYA SCHAFER

Someday, art lovers might find Jamie Miller's work hanging in a New York City gallery. But critical acclaim isn't the reason Miller made art his career.

West Michigan residents are buying Miller's paintings of still lifes, landscapes and animals, and the local artist considers their approval as exciting as any East Village opening. "I love the fact that people have my art in their homes," he says. Sometimes Miller will go to a party and see one of his paintings on the host's wall. Knowing that his work resonates with a friend or acquaintance is a fulfilling experience. "It's the greatest gift," he says. "It's a wonderful way to make a living."

Miller's method is oil, whose smooth texture and vibrant hues make it what he says is an attractive medium. After arranging a still life or taking digital photographs of a landscape or pet, Miller settles into his studio, located in the basement of his Grand Rapids home.

Then he begins painting, using honed, industrial strokes to create intricate impressions. Detail is essential to Miller; though he can paint figures from memory, he prefers having actual images to serve as inspiration. His favorite paintings include a series in which he captures the interplay of light and shadow on martini glasses, shakers and other bar implements.

Miller also enjoys perspective and has a series in which he paints plants from aerial views. Whether depicting a flower's delicate petals or the sun-streaked pastels of a Caribbean villa, Miller wants to portray his subjects' essence and will put away a painting for weeks at a time if inspiration doesn't strike him. Eyes are especially important—a painting doesn't cause a reaction unless viewers become part of it—and Miller works hard to give personal gazes to his living subjects. "The eyes are the windows to the soul," he explains. Capturing the spark of life in a dog's stare "can take hours to accomplish."

