

Origin of the Species

This industry is filled with diverse characters, each with a different story behind the art they produce. Here, we continue our Origin of the Species series, choosing three individuals – Bobbie T., a wartime internment camp survivor, Art Poulin, a gentlemen's farm owner, and Ketra Oberlander, a blind stand-up comic who has climbed Kilimanjaro – to demonstrate some of the individual stories behind art licensing...

The internment camp survivor

BOBBIE T.

Using just her imagination and meager playthings, Bobbie T. created a world that would inspire her later art.

Although she is a third generation American, Bobbie T. spent her early childhood in an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. Because their belongings were left behind in California, Bobbie was challenged to create her playthings out of whatever materials she could find. It turned out to be a blessing because the experience helped Bobbie to develop her vivid imagination.

"Being a natural "daydreamer" as a child, visualizing dolls and playthings was easy, and then finding the raw materials to create them out of sticks, leaves, paper and even mud was endless hours

of fun! Creating pictures in the sand, building a dollhouse from old paper and wood boxes, and dressing up critters with leaves, weeds and flower petals to live in the house was a joy. Little did I know that someday I would be designing sculptures and paintings with these same wonderful creatures in my adult years. As a child I made veggie people from the produce that my dear father grew by the acres for market, and today I design and paint them in my artwork for Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving and other occasions."

The love of art has been a part of Bobbie's life since childhood. Tagging along with her mother to art classes nurtured and

inspired her passion for design, painting and teaching. Bobbie first formal classes began in 1960 with a local fine artist. Since then she has studied with many artists and continually self-studies to learn more about her passion.

Most weekends, Bobbie travels to teach others about her unique style of artwork. She has taught seminars across the United States, Japan, Australia, Canada, England,

Scotland and Singapore.

Some of her journeys are depicted in her paintings. In 2007 Bobbie was selected as the official artist for the White House Easter Egg Roll. One of her paintings shows her in a hot air balloon shaped like a bunny with her brushes in one hand and suitcase in the other, on her way to the White House.



Friends and relatives will also find themselves in Bobbie's paintings but not in a 'usual' way. Her grandmother shows up in her paintings as a ladybug, her sons as frolicking elves and Bobbie might be a frog or a friendly witch.

"Painting and sculpting friends, family and, especially, our pet dog is my way of keeping records of special events and goings on in our daily lives and our world! I sometime think of myself as a contemporary American folk artist. Connecting with my artwork is the only way I can create my best work! Art comes from the artist's soul ... a piece of me is in everything I create! Granted, sometimes the artwork is way out there in "the zone," but what can I say ... I'm from California, the land of fruits and nuts!" The world is my inspiration, and life and the people around me, give me the creative juices that keep me going.



I cherish my humble beginnings, and my dear parents and grandparents for their example and inspiration."

Now Bobbie's paintings are available for licensing. Silvestri by Demdaco has just released a new gift line, Figments. "Figments are imagined moments caught in time that invite the child in you to come out and play." This collection of starlit worlds has been faithfully reproduced from Bobbie's intricately painted sculptures.

Bobbie is represented by Painted Planet Licensing Group. You can contact them by phone, 507.835.8009, or e-mail jan@paintedplanetlicensing.com.

The Army Chorister ART POULIN

Art Poulin was born in Waterville, Maine, to French-Canadian parents, and attended La Menais Prep with plans of joining the order of the Brothers of Christian Instruction as a teenager.

However, he found art and music to be a strong calling, and in 1975 he received an undergraduate degree in fine art and studio painting.

"If it's true that a person can get lost in the details, I might never find myself," Art Poulin says, joking about the details captured in all of his acclaimed paintings. With a broad smile, he continues, "As an artist, I'm often asked what it takes to paint this style and I always give the same answer: patience, a steady hand, patience and patience."

Looking out of the enormous glass windows of his studio at Lazy Goose, a gentleman's farm that he and his wife built over the last several years, Art's good nature and excitement for his work come across as clearly as the subjects on his canvases – both are deeply grounded in an appreciation for authentic living. "But seriously," he adds, "there needs to be passion for how you live and who you live with, for finding beauty in the world, and for what you do day in and day out. I feel that way every time I sit in front of an unfinished canvas – I can't wait to pick up the brush."

After gaining his degree, Art enlisted in the military as a tenor with the US Army Chorus – a position he held for over two decades. With the chorus, Art had the honor to meet six presidents and numerous world dignitaries. Performing at the White House, Radio City Music Hall and the Kennedy Center, among other world famous venues, he had the opportunity to work along side countless entertainment personalities. During that time, he founded and operated a design-build firm of residential homes in Northern Virginia. His homes and architectural designs have been featured in both local and national magazines.

It wasn't until 2002 when Art began his life-long dream of painting full



time. Drawing upon years of architectural work, he quickly developed a unique style that captures the heart of our country with exquisite details and vignettes set in timeless countryside and small-town scenes.

His paintings exemplify an American nostalgia and have broad appeal, so much so that the Penguin Group selected his artwork for the covers of the "Lumby" series of books. Likewise, Graphique de France and Buffalo Games followed suit by making unsolicited licensing offers for calendars, cards and puzzles, all of which are now distributed nationally. "I've been very fortunate

so far," Art says. "And with Painted Planet now managing that side of the business, I can put all of my attention into my work."

"Art's paintings are absolutely amazing!" says Howard Cooperman, owner of Bucks County Gallery of Fine Art in New Hope, PA, who exclusively represents Art's originals in that area.





"Each time I revisit a canvas, I see something different and totally new – something more that I didn't see before. His images bring me back to a time of wonder, to when life was better."

Art and his wife, author Gail Fraser, and their beloved property, Lazy Goose Farm in rural upstate New York, have been featured in several national magazines and on PBS. "We're both captivated by country living and the charm of small town America," Art says. "So, in my artwork, I try to reflect that admiration and have my canvases become a reprieve from hectic lifestyles by offering an escape to a time and place where life is more peaceful."

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The visually impaired sex columnist

KETRA OBERLANDER

Ketra Oberlander launched the art brand Art of Possibility Studios, which exclusively represents physically disabled artists in a for-profit business model.



Despite having lost her sight some years ago, Ketra has lived an extraordinary life, before and after experiencing vision problems.

In 1992 the Flaming Lips' label, Warner Bros., commissioned a music video,

but with not enough time or budget friends were enlisted to help and Ketra danced in high heels in a leopard bikini.

As urban bon vivant Kiki Dakota, Ketra penned a popular sex/humor column (sort of Erma Bombeck meets bar babe) for the alternative

press that syndicated across the web in the 1990s.

For six years while building her writing career Ketra had a day job as a legal secretary and paralegal in the field of criminal defense. She saw a number of death penalty cases at trial and appellate levels and regularly talked to the defendants and their families. For years after she left the practice Ketra received holiday cards from the staff at the federal prison in Leavenworth, KS, having talked to them so regularly while in the lawyers' employ.

As a freelance writer in San Francisco in the late 1990s Ketra wrote for a dozen dot coms. When the dot-conomy collapsed she was again "on trend" with the optimistic unemployment zeitgeist.

She appears in the feature film *That Darned Punk*, where she is on screen blue and naked. The same music video producer friend who put her in the Flaming Lips video threw together a portrait from an old photo – with the color palette being entirely his vision.

Ketra once lived in Brazil as an English-as-a-second-language teacher in Sao Paulo, and notes especially enjoying the coffee, shoes, handbags and men.

A challenge she set herself was to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro – and succeeded. She does however describe this experience as a vacation on a 12-



hour StairMaster then sleeping in a tent with insufficient oxygen. "My mountain climbing days are behind me!" comments Ketra.

She has also performed as a stand-up comic after she lost her vision but before beginning to paint. She did open mic at the Bay Area comedy clubs and would begin her sets with: "Wow! What a great looking audience!"

She launched Art of Possibility Studios last year and comments: "I stay enthused by my desire to help as many disabled artists as possible enjoy the dignity of earning a living through their work."

Ketra can be contacted on 408 423 8220 and you can see her work at www.aopstudios.com.

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