

fine art

INTERVIEW WITH Philip DeAngelo

Rapid River Magazine: Please give us some background information about yourself and your journey as an artist.

Philip DeAngelo: The right teacher can make all the difference. My fourth grade art teacher constantly encouraged me with my work, and my high school art teacher showed me that I could do what I loved for a living. There was about a 10 year period after college that I just stopped creating and worked in corporate sales.

In 1997, a friend and I decided to open a fine art gallery which led to opening an art publishing company about six years later. By the time my wife, Tina, and I discovered Asheville in 2007, the prints from our publishing company were being sold in more than 60 countries.

After visiting Asheville I realized that I had lost my joy as an artist and was creating art for the wrong reasons. I think God allowed me to realize the goals I thought were so important as an artist early in my career, so that I would be ready when the real thing came along. Tina and I felt so connected with Asheville that we closed the gallery and publishing company, sold our farm, and moved to Asheville within the year.

I think that the River Arts District is something artists can search their whole lives for and never find. We have never been happier or felt more connected to a community than we do now.

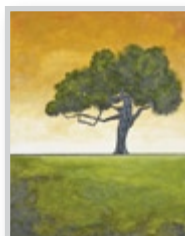
RRM: You and your wife are, as you say, a "team." How would your art, and your approach to art, be different had you two never met?

PDA: I guess you never know what an alternate future could have held, but I truly can't imagine life without her. Tina has her degree in art history, and she is everything I'm not. Her gift for organizing and detail allows me to pursue my creative dreams. I know I would not have had the courage to drop everything and move to Asheville without her.

RRM: What is your art about? What do you want people to feel/realize/experience when looking at your artwork?

PDA: My wife and I are in love with the beauty of the mountains, and most weekends you'll find us hiking. My paintings these days are explorations in texture and color, using the forms of trees as my focal point. They are a

INTERVIEWED BY DENNIS RAY



Forbidden Fruit

celebration of life, creation and everything that makes life worth living.

There are two symbolic elements in most of my work that I have become known for. The first are trees, which for me are iconic and can be used to illustrate our feelings, relationships, and the seasons of life. The second, is the distinct horizon line that is based on the principle of the "golden section" or the "divine proportion" that is found throughout nature. The horizon line, for me, always symbolizes the hope of things to come.

The final element that might set my work apart are the substrates I choose to paint on. I love painting on interesting physical textures such as cork, museum board, and old ceiling tins. Also, I love incorporating the visual textures of fabrics and the swirling patterns I find in certain grains of wood.

As an artist, I am always trying to convey a feeling or story to the viewer. However, I have become much more interested in what my work means to my collectors. I find that I crave the stories people tell me about my work and how it affects them.

RRM: How do you conceptualize your images? Do you draw from memories, or from photographs or locations?

PDA: I usually have about the next five or six paintings rolling around in my head before I have the opportunity to get to them. It's funny, the older I get the more visual I become, and the more I need to get things on paper quickly. There was a time I could have a painting rolling around in my mind for six months or more before starting to paint, but those days are gone.

I am a terrible photographer, but I can be inspired by a great photo-



Philip DeAngelo in his studio. Photo: Paul Howey



Autumn Rush



No Greater Love

graph. I generally translate the image into raw forms and general composition, leaving the details behind. Often, when I work directly from a photograph, my mind will wander, I get creatively lazy and the painting starts to look too much like the photo.

RRM: What inspires you to create?

PDA: I believe in a God and creator who is in love with beauty, and my relationship with Him influences everything that I do.

RRM: How do you know when a piece of art is finished?

PDA: I think one of the hardest things for an artist to learn is when to stop. After you ruin enough paintings by taking them too far, you learn when to stop.

RRM: What do you think of the artists' community in WNC?

PDA: I have never been anywhere like it. Most of the country sees art as simply a luxury. Art in WNC is viewed as a necessity for good living. It doesn't matter if it is music, dance, theatre, food, pottery, or painting, it is all done with a creative urgency in Asheville. I am surrounded by like-minded people who realize the importance of creativity, both in the creation of it and the consumption of it.

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