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Intimate Insights into America's Favorite Art Destination

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## HYATT MOORE: PORTRAYING HUMANITY

Painter Hyatt Moore captures the people of the world in his skillful works on canvas.

BY BENJAMIN ROSE

*I'm working at showing a true humanity, an individuality, with mind and emotions that, regardless of race and background, we recognize as part of the human experience.*

—Hyatt Moore

Artist Hyatt Moore portrays this human experience with open eyes, providing a glimpse of the world's people and their relationship to nature and community. An antidote to the agitation of modern life, Moore's art invites the viewer to confront the candid humor and passionate strength of individuals, and share in the simple and harmonious acts of everyday life.

From his broad travels, Moore documents the world's cultures through his rendering of humankind. "My main interest is people," states the artist, "particularly those living at the distant edges, often exotic, full of dignity, and likely colorful." The work captures these individuals in all their complexity—not only portraying their outward features, but providing a glimpse of their soul. In confident strokes and bold colors, Moore places viewers in distant settings, inviting them to follow in their imaginations the noble glances and gestures of our shared humanity.

The artist illustrates fierce independence and human vulnerability through the eyes of his subjects. The manner in which they disclose the complexity and ambivalence of what the French photographer Cartier-Bresson has called "the decisive moment"—a moment revealing the essence of a subject—makes viewers conscious of their role as participant. These eyes immediately transfer us to the corners of the earth, conveying the intensity and depth of human life.

Hyatt Moore alights at this present level of skill and fluidity through what he describes as a "broad and circuitous" route. Broad in his occupational experience and formal education; circuitous in his prophetic return to the subject of ethnic people which he began in his first paintings as a teenager. In the meantime, Moore worked with designers of the *Cobra* sports car, served for nine years as the art director of *Surfer* magazine, and

studied linguistics for alphabet development and literacy in minority cultures throughout the world.

Eventually, his disparate experience in the realms of design, organizational leadership, linguistics and publishing brought him back to the fine art of painting. “I was at a stoplight, waiting for the green on the way home from work,” recalls the artist. “My eyes mused over to the lighted windows of a gallery across the street showing off some nice landscapes. As I looked, a very deep sensation came over me and with a surge of energy I heard myself saying, ‘I could do that!’ It was like a bolt from heaven.”

From that defining moment, Moore never looked back. Developing a style steeped in tradition yet thoroughly contemporary, he now prevails as a master of his medium. Boldly striding the line between representation and abstraction, the artist handles paint with an ease and clarity that translate seamlessly to the canvas. “In the end it’s a pursuit of raw beauty, uncooked, and a sort of wild order that fills our everyday landscape and footfalls,” explains the artist.

Moore fulfills this pursuit by delicately balancing the rendering of figures and the conceptual construct of their backgrounds. In *Masai Mary*, from a recent trip to Kenya, Moore allows the life size figure to fill the tall and narrow proportions of the canvas, the head crowning a classical pyramid of composition. The face—and particularly the eyes—become the modeled center of our attention. Radiating outward and downward from this focal point, the paint becomes more and more abstract, the brushstrokes looser and broader, emerging to a background of drips, sprays and strokes of generalized paint. Yet the artist ties it all together with color: the hints of emerald in the elaborate dress fading to the suggested greenery of nature behind the figure.

This painterly technique and its concern with color and its application remains a fundamental aspect of Moore’s work. Evocative of the Post-Impressionists, he frankly acknowledges his brushwork, each mark containing an immediacy of impression recorded by the artist:

“My approach is for reality, but not *realism*,” explains Moore. “There’s a certain ‘unsmoothness’ that is intended—like in nature. Van Gogh’s work was rough by design. He is an inspiration, as is Gauguin with his travels...and the Fauves that followed, with their incredible boldness in color, as if the supreme reason for even making a painting. I think about these things—the art of the art—as well as the subjects that intrigue me.”

For all this concern with history and technique, Moore remains true to the honesty and integrity of his subject matter. “I’m still after the specificness [*sic*] of each race, and each human within that race. Each is worthy. Each speaks for him/herself—and each represents a wider whole.”

As viewers, we stand as privileged witnesses to Hyatt Moore’s attentive and compassionate vision of humanity: “The peoples of the earth should be painted. They’re important. They’re beautiful. They’re interesting. They’re us.”