

Ari Hirschman

By Jan Engoren

BACKGROUND ART: AS TIME GOES BY

Searching for beauty and inspiration, Kansas-born and Argentinean-bred, sculptor and painter Ari Hirschman, 47, moved his family to Boca Raton in 2004.

A former electrical engineer, four years ago Hirschman left his secure but unfulfilling day job as a network manager for AOL to reinvent himself as a full-time artist, interpreter of human nature and a commentator on the human condition. He relocated to Florida from Maryland with his wife, Laura, and three children, ages 5-12, so he could focus full-time on his art.



HERE THEY COME

Although Hirschman considers himself a big-city person, he has adapted to life in Boca Raton and loves the fact that his children can play outdoors year-round. He appreciates the natural beauty of Florida, including the gekkos and lizards that pay periodic visits to his home, and is inspired by the night skies. A competitive cyclist, Hirschman clocks many miles along A1A.

Says Hirschman, "Art, for me, is a passion. I am fortunate to have this opportunity to do what I love. In my former career, I was unfulfilled and felt something missing from my life. I wanted more and art offers me more."

Partially self-taught, Hirschman studied at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia, where he learned anatomy and figure sculpting.



FEATHER

Although his childhood was without want, his world views hint at a life both hard and challenging but with a belief that the beauty of art can mitigate this adversity.

Having worked as an EMT in one of the busiest rescue squads in the country, and coming from a family of physicians, Hirschman is aware of the delicate balance that life maintains with the rest of the world. His works reflect that view, but they are not without humor.

He sculpts in bonded bronze and his Giacometti-esque sculptures, with flat, mask-like, elongated heads on steel rods representing human bodies pay homage to the Swiss sculptor. The heads appear skeletal and barely human. Most are elongated, distorted, and gaunt with hollow, emaciated cheeks. Where their bodies should be, Hirschman prefers the viewer substitute his or her interpretation.

Says Hirschman, "My works are abstract, not minimal, and I say a lot with very little. My interest is in using my imagination and having viewers engage theirs."

Says Josh W.E. Russo, Director of the Exor Galleries, "Ari's works combine his technical, engineering expertise with his artistic view. I've seen many sculpted heads and masks, but I haven't often seen a series of heads."

In those rare moments of free time, Hirschman reads lots of science, art and philosophy books. "*The Art Spirit*" by Robert Henri is one of his favorite books and his world views are influenced by the John Gribbin novel, *Unveiling the Edge of Time: Black Holes, White Holes, Worm Holes*, which explores the possibility of other universes and time travel.

While painting, Hirschman sets a timer on 5 minute increments. Every five minutes he steps back from the canvas to ensure he is not overworking the piece.



FORCE OF LIFE

His oil painting entitled, *“The Calm Start on the Road to Hell,”* depicts Hirschman’s interpretation of man’s fate and his attempt to rail against the calmness and apathy of human nature in the face of tragedy.

Hirschman recently completed his latest series of sculptures titled, *“It’s Complicated.”* The series of elongated, nail-like bronze heads and hammers, some resting on large bronze books, was exhibited at the Miami Art Group (MAG) Gallery and was on display in the Design District of Miami during Art Basel. He depicts the nails as symbolic of the obligations in our lives. The hammers represent the forces causing those obligations.

Conversely, the book represents our dreams, desires, imagination, and knowledge which may be thwarted in life by our obligations.

Says Hirschman, “All the obligations act as a force to limit us in our ability to learn, achieve our dreams and our potential. Life is about balancing these opposing forces.”

“I believe that we, as a species, are emerging from the dark ages and I try to convey this with my work. I feel tied to the ‘real’ world more than most people, and know that the ‘real world’ is one of the weirdest and strangest things around.”

Ari Hirschman’s sculptures are on display at the Exor Galleries 291 Via Naranjas, No. 45-A, Boca Raton, 33432, (561) 361-7474, in Royal Palm Plaza, Boca Raton.

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