

Artist's Bio

Stepping into Phillip Timper's world, one glimpses pure, unfettered imagination. Color, texture, shape and image evoke excitement, humor, irony, and often a delighted exclamation of "Wow!". Currently a resident of the high mountain desert town of Prescott, Arizona, Phil enjoys working primarily in oils on canvas painting a variety of subject matter.

An avid hiker and camper, Phil draws much inspiration by examining the contrast between today's chaotic cultural tsunami with nature and her myriad colors, textures and her own beautiful chaos. In the late 1970s, he took a life-changing journey into the Grand Canyon for an extended backpacking trip. The nature of this extreme and beautifully harmonious landscape continues to inspire and inform his art today, and led to his taking up permanent residence in the midst of the American Southwest. "I guess the landscape still is a big part of me."

Born in 1954 in St. Louis, Missouri, Phil first discovered his love of art after completing a paint-by-numbers kit at age 9.

When his mother wasn't able to furnish another kit, Phil took things into his own hands, building a panel, drawing and painting his own still life of a violin, metronome and sheet music. After placing this piece in a local store on the main street of O'Fallon, Illinois, Phil was contacted by June Kelly, a landscape-painting teacher who was so impressed by his raw talent, she offered him classes free of charge. June's classical landscape approach to color theory and composition laid a foundation that Phil's work still reflects today.

Throughout Phil's childhood, art was his refuge from a sometimes challenging, chaotic home life. Growing up around mental illness became a constant reminder of the fragility of sanity and a concrete demonstration that for each person there is a unique and sometimes heartbreaking reality shaped by their perceptions, real or imagined.

At the end of junior high school, June declared to Phil that she had taught him all she could. Having laid a solid foundation in classical technique, Phil began to explore his own imagination, finding a sense of self-efficacy and confidence that shines through every inch of his work. Barriers to self-expression began to fall away, allowing his inner reality to be ex-

pressed and develop in all its flowing, chaotic grace.

In high school and college, Phil also displayed a flair for caricatures with an ability to nail his subjects' essence. He spent a fair amount of time doing what might be called a kind of performance art, which often took place in bars, conventions and parties. "It was a sit down stand-up routine," states Timper. While capturing his subjects on tone paper with charcoal, Phil maintained a constant patter of repartee, evoking laughter, and no doubt groans thanks to his punnier side. Depicting both young and old with the goal of capturing their most distinguishing attributes was not an activity for the faint of heart. Nor was it one for the vain among us. True to his very big heart, Phil learned a great deal about the importance of delicacy when showing people how he saw them. Though known in his youth as 'The Poison Pen', Phil matured into an artist sensitive to his subjects' own self image. He learned a valuable lesson about human nature, eventually saying, "Depending on who sat down, I had to know when to pull some punches." Phil's favorite subjects were the crusty old guys. "They were fun to draw and you could have a little more fun with their features. Many could laugh a little louder at themselves."

Phil's formal training took place at the University of Illinois, Edwardsville, where he spent his time drawing and painting. Today he reluctantly admits that academics were a secondary consideration for him at the beginning of his college years. Although academics did become an important part of his education, his immersion into art still found him at the fine art campus far more often than at the main campus. "College taught me I could develop my creativity. Creativity is a skill like dance or riding a bike, one can "learn" to be creative. Think of it as a muscle in your head, it just needs exercise..."

After college, an opportunity to work in the same studio as his father, also an artist at what was then AT&T, exposed Phil to traditional commercial graphics and design. Something not taught in school. Stepping into the very different world of corporate promotions was made easy with the help of his father and a dozen other artists happy to mentor a quick study. Phil's natural drawing styles became welcome skills in the group's mix. The commercial art principles and "board skills" he acquired there enhanced his already considerable abilities which provided a productive career. Ten years later, while still working in commercial illustration and graphics, Phil began using a Macintosh computer. This was at the same time the Mac was transforming the graphic industry, and this is, as they say, where the story really became interesting.

Having discovered surrealism in high school and naturally tempted with the potential imaging software represented, Phil knew there was magic to be made in the marriage of traditional and technical. Computer integration offered an opportunity to meld his traditional classical skills with ideas that demanded a medium that could reproduce images, textures, shapes and colors of this and of other worlds. Opportunity met capability and powered by his spirit, the art blossomed.

Basing his work in traditional theory gives Phil's work an aesthetic that invites a rapport with his audience, while allowing the technology he has mastered to set his imagination free. While exploring this "tra-digital" work in California in the 90s, Phil curated and directed the first Digital Art Expo symposium as a part of the Oceanside Cultural Art Foundation's annual Days of Art event. This was an early opportunity to review the state of digital art and to provide a forum to discuss the perceptions and applications of this new media. He got well-known technical speakers to demonstrate methods and software that helped inform a public of what was coming up next in the art world.

Today he is back to his foundational medium, oil on canvas, having more fun than ever. He has been working on larger formats, a 27' x 8' mural and a 7' x 9' commission, both in oil. Those experiences, and many more, help grow and inform his art today.

