

PHOTOS BY
MEGAN LEIGH BARNARD

A STROLL THROUGH LA LA LAND

The vivid works of Craig Carlisle

BY MARK J. LUCAS

In the same contrasting way a damn fine sad song can lift your spirits, Craig Carlisle can express his darker emotions in bright hues and blue skies.

Between April 6th and April 30th, Carlisle's work will be on display at Sharon Weiss Gallery in the Short North, offering a glimpse into what he affectionately calls 'La La Land.'

"I go for the optimism," he explained. "It's important to me and my work. Maybe some of that has to do with being a preacher's kid, but I can do a dark painting and not feel like it's not optimistic. Then it becomes more classical, with a certain style to it. That creates some good imaging. If I'm in an angry mood, I can still express it with colorful work. I'm not here as an artist to vent something dark and make the viewer feel my pain. I know that's important for some artists, but not for me. Some of the more optimistic paintings I've done have been during challenging times and it's a way for me to heal myself."

Carlisle studied at Columbus College of Art & Design before heading to California to work as an artist. Many of his pieces are anchored by giant heads: single figures, acrogenous in nature, against a relatively blank background, intended to showcase the expression of the central subject.

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He dabbled in merry scenes, but a back injury had him riding the pine for a while. Now that he's back in Columbus, repaired, the artist has attacked them again with full force, re-immersing himself in the pop surrealism he's known for.

"I have a belief that everything I create is a self-portrait," Carlisle said. "It's all significant to where I am in my life. Call it therapy or whatever. Once I'm finished with it, I'm comfortable with letting it go. I think of it as having found a soulmate with someone else that connects to it. That's all-important to me in the process of painting: knowing that there'll be a reaction and that person will have an experience with the painting. Sometimes it goes away real quick, sometimes it takes a long time for it to find its home. I do it for myself first. I look at it and ask, 'What am I doing?' and, 'Why am I doing this?' and I analyze it. Why have I spent 25 years of my life going through the ups and downs of that? It's pure bliss to be able to paint and live the life of an artist, despite what you have to go through to support yourself." ■

Craig Carlisle's work will be on display at Sharon Weiss Gallery (20 E Lincoln St.) from April 6th through 30th. For more information about the show and to view more of Carlisle's work, visit www.craigcarlisle.com.

