

Vaughn Gillson Bio

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I am a full-time artist living and working in a rural community in southern Ontario, Canada. My paintings reflect a personal response to figurative subjects as interpreted through my sensations and experiences of the world and my life. I followed classical art studies with artists in Toronto and at the Art Students' League in New York and before that, studied theatre design at the National Theatre School in Montreal. My work has been represented in galleries in the Greater Toronto Area, Maryland and Alabama, and resides in collections in Canada, United States and England.

After having spent seven years in Montreal where I studied theatre design at National Theatre School and later was employed as head of the wardrobe department at Centaur Theatre, I switched focus from the collaborative milieu of performance art to personal creative expression through sculpture and painting. My relocation from Montreal to Toronto at this time helped the transition. I wanted a fresh environment in which to find a new direction in art and participated in an assortment of non-structured courses and programs that allowed me to experiment with styles and art principles. It was a beginning that encouraged intuition more than skill and introduced me to teachers and ideas that informed my development. I gradually moved backwards from modern art to more traditional studies where the academic, classical viewpoint seemed to offer the creative tools that I was looking for.

Along with learning the craft of drawing and painting, I began to pay close attention to what I was painting on and painting with. Studying old master techniques was part of my classical training, an exploration that included work with materials made in similar fashion to those used centuries ago. These experiences ranged from preparing traditional gesso panels for egg tempera to making grounds for canvases and paint and varnishes for oil. Understanding the nature of the medium in such a hands-on way provided historical context and insight on the many dimensions of oil paint and I continue to prepare all materials by hand.

Much of my work starts from ideas based on representational subjects with sensory properties that rebound back and forth in my head between ideas and imagery. Some of this process happens through a traditional disciplines such as drawing and value and colour studies. I also like to explore topics using pastel, water colour or collage, media that I am not comfortable with and so stumble a lot and learn to exploit the accidental.

For several years I taught drawing and painting throughout southern Ontario. Art is very important to me and consequently, I feel strongly about its value in education. In addition to classroom teaching, I developed a set of teachers' guides on art, "Visual Language", a network of lessons offering sequential, structured building blocks to help learn about art concepts. An underlying theme of the series suggests that, when making art there is a visual language behind our creative decisions and its grammar is composed of visual elements and principles. In 2006 I founded Dizegno, Instruction for Visual Art, a gallery that promoted thinking through visual language. During that time, I produced a 20-minute video "Art & Learning" that may be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/51LERGW6w8o>.

