



# Masters of DECEPTION

# Rob Gonsalves

(1959-)

## MAGIC REALISM

*"I believe that there is real magic in life. Sometimes the experience of it can be dependent on one's point of view. I have come to see the making of art as the search for that point of view where the magic and wonder of life appears not so much as an illusion, but as an essential truth that often gets obscured."*

—ROB GONSALVES

ROB GONSALVES IS A highly original artist without peer in the artistic representation of illusionary worlds. Although one can definitely see the influences of René Magritte, M. C. Escher, Remedios Varo, and Chris Van Allsburg in his work, many of the illusionary perspective concepts as well as the "magical style" of presentation are unique to him. Many people have labeled his art as surrealistic, but Gonsalves believes that his work differs from pure surrealism because it is deliberately planned and makes the viewer think. His ideas are largely generated by the external world (which many surrealists try to ignore) and involve recognizable human activities combined with carefully planned illusionistic techniques. Gonsalves tries to inject a sense of magic into otherwise realistic scenes, thereby expressing the human desire to believe in the impossible. As a result, the term "Magic Realism" has been used to describe his work.

In trying to shed some light on the development of his current way of working, and his objectives in creating a painting, Gonsalves has stated,

Much of my free time in childhood was spent daydreaming and drawing. Usually the subject would be an imagined place. For me, the greatest joy in drawing came from giving form to something that had previously only existed in my head. Gradually, my drawings came to be influenced by another aspect of my personality: my strong aptitude for mathematics. Buildings became my main subject. By age 12 I learned the rudiments of perspective drawing, aided by the architectural texts I would pore over.

In my teenage years my interests shifted more towards the realms of surrealism, symbolism and fantasy in art, literature and even music. The emphasis on the subconscious and imagination intrigued me and pointed the way for the first handful of paintings that I was to produce. These images were dreamlike and enigmatic in the manner typical of surrealism. I did not at this point have the confidence to consider painting to be a career path that I could realistically pursue. My painting activities were essentially put on hold as I studied architecture and worked for some years in that business.

Eventually my desire to create images returned, as my work in architecture had not allowed many opportunities to fully exercise my imagination. I made more time for painting, continuing in a surrealist vein, but with new influences, probably largely due to my architecture experience. I had long been fascinated by the techniques that are employed to show the spatial relationship of objects in two-dimensional representations of the world. As I began painting again I felt the need to make the dreamlike, magical occurrences depicted seem more concrete, as if they could be experienced in the physical world. My first introduction to the work of Magritte helped to crystallize for me the direction that my work was to take. His work "The Human Condition" has a magical effect while being at the same time a straightforwardly realistic image. I had wanted to affirm that magical and wondrous experiences are not confined to the realm of dreams or the subconscious, but rather can be derived from our experience and conscious interpretation of the physical world. Magritte's "magic realism" helped me to see how I could achieve this.

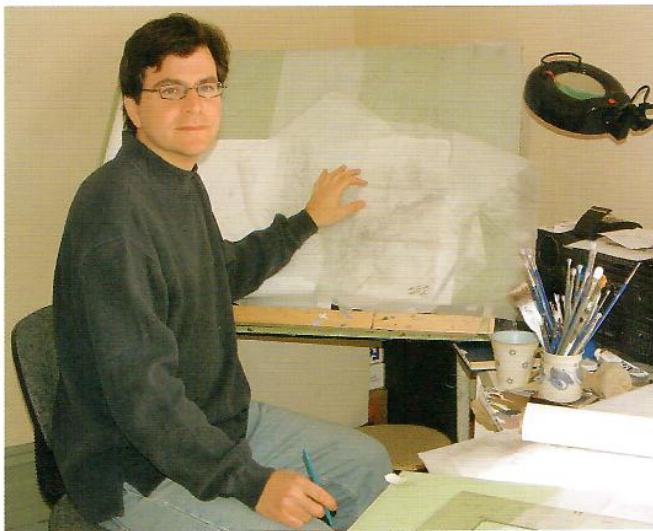
From a technical point of view, my work began to employ various optical illusion devices. At the same time however, I became more focused with regard to what I wanted to express about the subjects that I was depicting. In general, I would say that my work has become primarily a celebration of the wonder of imagination.

When one's imagination is brought to bear on a simple life experience, it can be magical—even transcendent.

Frequently, the desire to express the wonder of imagination is manifested as images depicting children at play. The magical transformation in such images illustrates what is happening in the minds of the characters depicted, who are so absorbed by their activity that what is imagined seems to become real. Often these images will involve the type of illusion device that suggests an impossible (yet convincing) change of scale.

Other sources of inspiration for my images can be found in the various dualities that can be observed in life experience: natural vs. human made, urban vs. rural, light vs. dark, material vs. spiritual, etc. The images that are rooted in these concepts usually employ the device of a metamorphosis from one element to another. However, the techniques of optical illusion in my work are utilized somewhat intuitively. The devices that I use are generated perhaps less scientifically than in the work of artists whose primary concern is the creation of optical illusions for their own sake. For me, the particular subject depicted and its emotional impact is crucial; the illusions are a means to an end and must serve the objectives of the overall conception of the image.

In 1990, after an enthusiastic response at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Gonsalves decided to paint full time. In 2003 many of his wonderful paintings were incorporated into a children's book entitled *Imagine a Night*. This highly successful book was followed by a sequel volume entitled *Imagine a Day*. His work continues to be highly sought after.



ROB GONSALVES, 2001



“UNFINISHED PUZZLE,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1991, 30 x 30 INCHES (76 x 76 CM)



"AUTUMN CYCLING," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1994, 20 × 30 INCHES (51 × 76 CM)

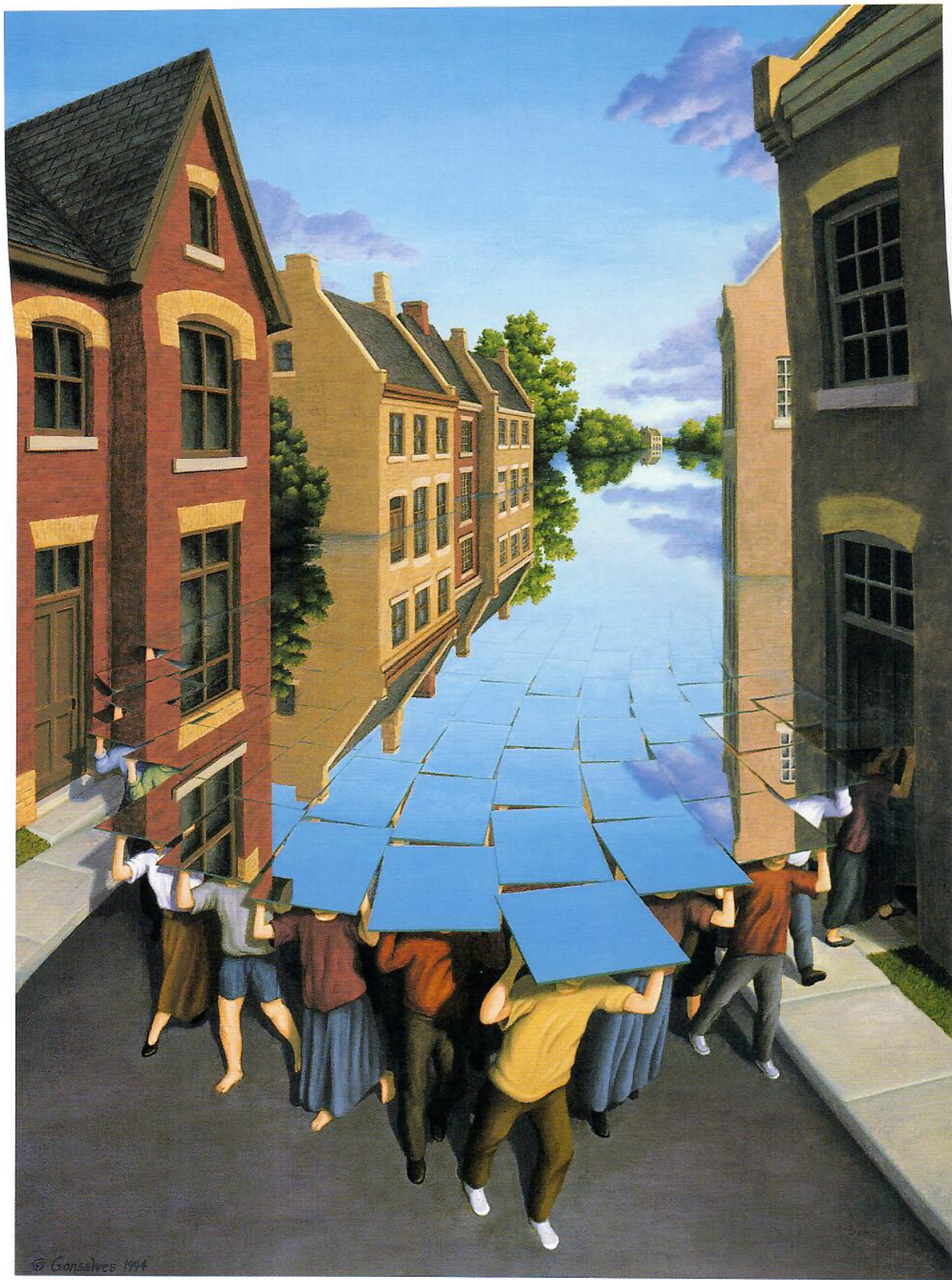


"PULLING STRINGS," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1998, 24 × 30 INCHES (61 × 76 CM)

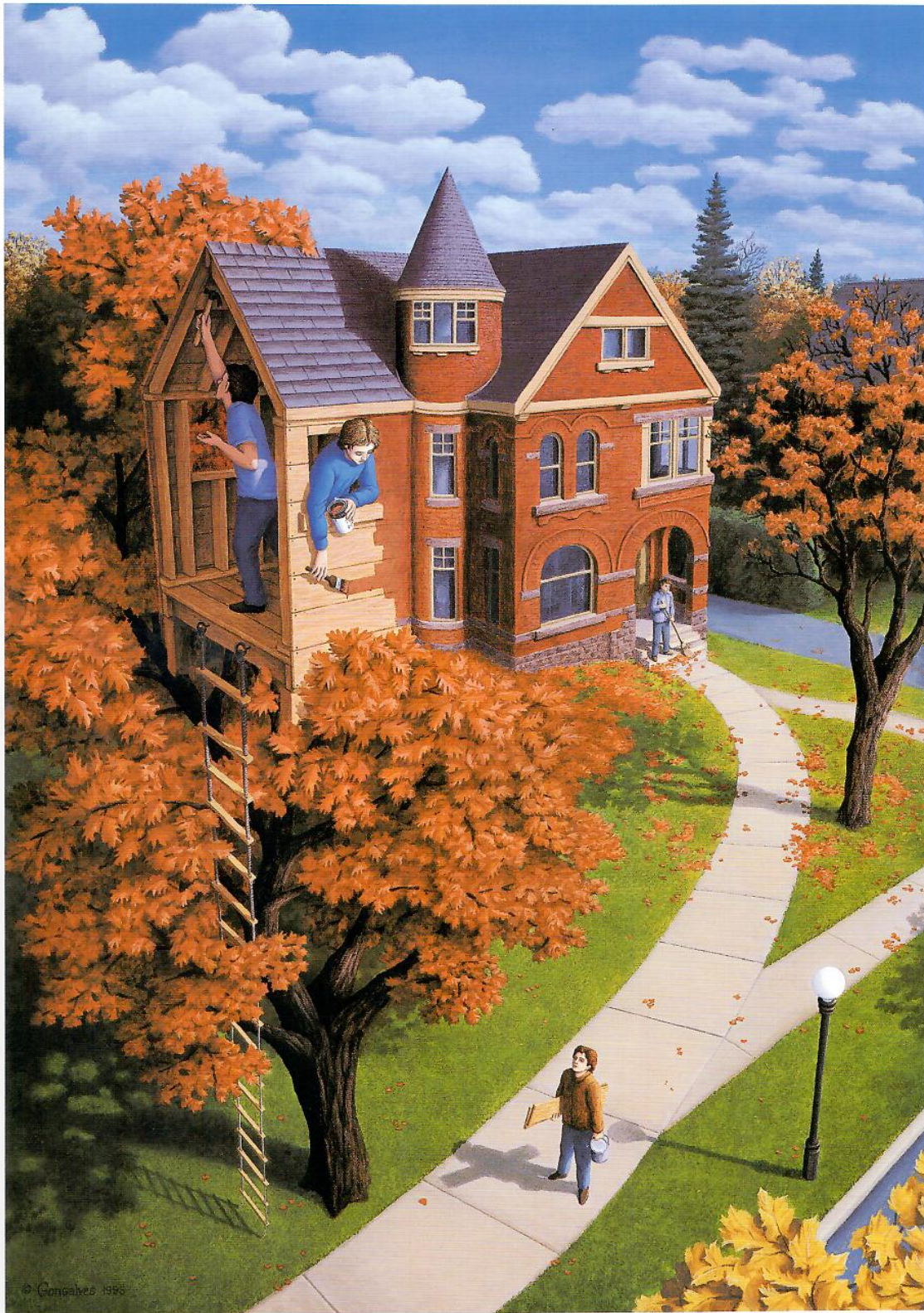


“STILL WATERS,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1994, 20 × 24 INCHES (51 × 61 CM)





“HERE COMES THE FLOOD,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1994, 18 × 24 INCHES (46 × 61 CM)



© Gonsalves 1995

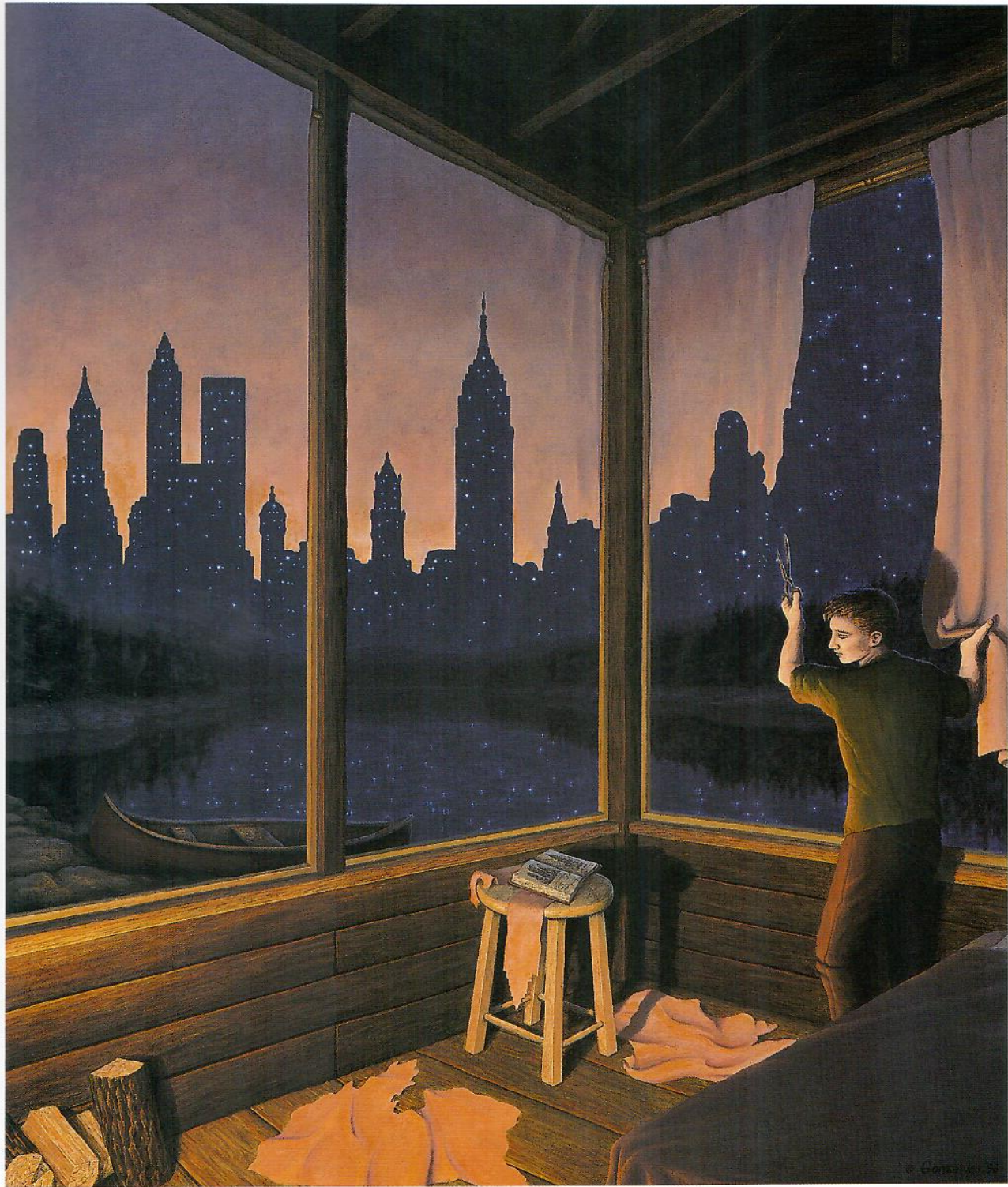
“TREE HOUSE IN AUTUMN,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1995, 20 × 28 INCHES (51 × 71 CM)



"IN SEARCH OF SEA," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1995, 34 × 22 INCHES (76 × 56 CM)



"COLD COMFORT," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1996, 34 × 22 INCHES (76 × 56 CM)



**“A CHANGE OF SCENERY,”** ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1996, 24 × 28 INCHES (61 × 71 CM)

Outside the windows of the young man’s country home, one can see a tranquil setting of a lake, boat, forest, and star-filled night. The young man creates a “change of scenery” by cutting the drapes so that the outline is of an urban city scene. The star-studded night becomes the city lights at night.



**"ROOTS AND WINGS,"** ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1997, 26 × 26 INCHES (66 × 66 CM)



“THE MOSAIC MOAT,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1998, 22 × 30 INCHES (56 × 76 CM)



"THE NIGHT OF THE LATE NIGHT," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 1999, 28 x 24 INCHES (71 x 61 CM)



"THE SUN SETS SAIL," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 2001, 40 x 20 INCHES (101.5 x 51 CM)



"BEDTIME AVIATION," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 2001, 30 × 24 INCHES (76 × 61 CM)





“ON THE UPSWING,” ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 2001, 22 × 32 INCHES (56 × 81 CM)