



Georgia Born and Bred

INSPIRATION OF A TRUE SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONIST

By: Caroline Wingat



A spell is cast over the inhabitants of the south by the profuse purple blooms of the wild, fragrant wisteria in the spring, each stereotypical well-used truck in the front yard of a home covered in kudzu, and in every tattered flag proudly waving from the antenna of a monster truck. Each visual finds a way to charm those to whom they are witness. How can one not be fired by the emotion inspired on the colorful and oppressively humid days where people fan themselves in the shade with a refreshing glass of sweet tea in hand? The traditional faces of the South are persons of distinctive taste, class and, more often than not, a unique southern drawl. These characteristics are simply a way of life for many, and they weave a sultry magic that keeps people gravitating here, to the fastest growing area in the country. Quiet inspiration, although unassuming, is still vivid and powerful. There is a sentimental power behind capturing a beautiful memory in a beautiful painting. When an artist captures the nature of a place or the culture of a people, he is successful at conveying the "who" and the "what" of what is going on around him. The "how" is the reason people linger, unable to remove their gaze from the captured image that takes them back to another time, another place. Art transports our consciousness to the location where our dreams, ambitions, hopes and memories are engraved upon our hearts.



Capturing the essence of a place or people draws in observers the same way an emotional scene playing out on a movie screen mesmerizes the audience. To have a signature is typical for artists, but to have a signature feeling that onlookers experience without knowing a single detail from the story behind the paintings, or that can identify work of the artist through a distinct touch of layering, is most remarkable. Such is the case with artist Chris Cook of Madison, Georgia.

Art finds a place in many young lives, but Cook found inspiration and built upon those humble, creative beginnings. Cook also dabbles in architecture, but views commercial art to be where he feels most at home. Fascinated by all mediums, this eclectic artist finds that illustration and advertising design also catch his attention, allowing his web design business to occupy his weekdays. By painting on the weekends however, he feeds his soul. As the owner of the successful Madison Studios web design business, Cook feels blessed to be able to have such flexibility with his creativity and passion for trying new styles. He continually stretches his boundaries and finds ways to express himself to reflect the things he sees around town and the places he visits in his art. This Georgia boy, born and bred, allows his vivid imagination and his abundance of experiences to influence his bold paintings. Southern lifestyle is woven in and out of every painting, often integrated into subjects with a religious flavor or inspired by rural farm life.

Self-taught, Cook finds that he relishes the freedoms he takes in style and format of his paintings. Not one to follow a pattern or to adhere to traditional rules, Cook's work is considered "cool and loose." Rebelling against what is "popular" or "normal," he prefers painting in styles that ebb and flow, following his mood rather than a particular style or genre. While working, he enjoys listening to music, but instead of the stereotypical soothing strains of classic music, Cook often chooses the indie, low-fi and "off-the-chart" artists.

This wide-ranging artist assumes an interesting combination of roles, from his black-and-white profession to his fabulously free passion for painting. This collection of interests resonates well with those

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of us who consider life a little more complex or fascinating, and Cook allows each discipline to rebound off of and inspire the other. A multi-talented man, his proficiency for computer code exists in contrast to his passion for ignoring the rules in his painting.

The attraction of Cook's diversity in his works with a constant theme of layers symbolizing the complexity of life allows for consumers of all tastes to have a piece of the distinctly southern expressionist style of Chris Cook artwork. Throughout his extensive collection of impressionist, expressionist, realism and abstract art, this multi-faceted artist has acquired a distinctly different style. His ability to connect with an audience as different and varied as his work is proof of his strong talent. Incorporating the southern way of life into the expressions of this individual allows for a diverse portfolio that pulls at the heartstrings of the audience; it appeals to the senses of those in touch, and in love, with the culture around them.

Upcoming events and contests bring excitement and wonder to those of us anxiously awaiting Chris Cook's next project. Keep up with him at www.chriscookartist.com. You will never know what he will be inspired by next.