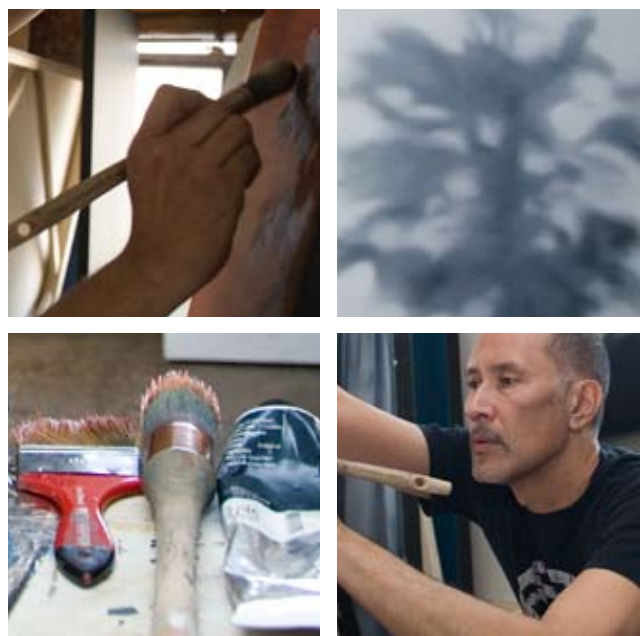


Photos by Margaret Molloy



# MIGUEL OSUNA

**Miguel Osuna is a drive-by painter. No, he doesn't get in his car and hold a brush out the window, he gets in his car and looks at, and feels, the road, then paints the experience, the sensation, the knowledge of space that coursing through the Los Angeles landscape provides him. Not the first Californian to manifest the freeway experience on canvas — he inherits from Wayne Thiebaud, Carlos Almaraz, James Doolin, and many others — Osuna is singularly dedicated to this theme, and conjures atmosphere and speed with a dancer's gracefulness.**

## ► ARCHITECTURE AS A COMPLEMENT TO PAINTING

I studied architecture in Mexico and worked in the field for a number of years before devoting myself full-time to painting. During architecture school, I discovered I had great affinity for the design classes, descriptive geometry, and, in general, subjects that had anything to do with perceiving and understanding space and perspective. I had a harder time with the science and mathematics part of the curriculum, but for descriptive geometry, for example, I didn't even have to study. Developing the solution for geometric problems and exercises was almost second nature for me, and I went through the courses with top grades all the time. This understanding of space, volume, and perspective permeates my current work and provides me with a useful language tool to communicate visually and create a vehicle to convey concepts in my paintings. I find it useful when it comes time to describe, for instance, open space and, with a few lines and angle suggestions, present an image that has a degree of "reality" and suggests scale and position to the viewer.

## FIRST COMMISSION

I was still working in an architectural company, and the principal in the firm asked me if I wanted to do a big piece on paper for one of the projects. It was for placement in the lobby of this medical building in Westwood. I did the piece, and it was one of those lucky situations where the client did not have any specific ideas or palette for the piece. I was able to develop this huge abstract with no parameters except size. The hardest part about commissions, in my opinion, is that the client already has an idea for what the piece may look like, and no matter what the artist does, it is very difficult to sort of "divine" that idea and execute it to the expectations of the collector . . .

## THE PROCESS OF CREATING

A very important part of the work process, for me, is the sketching, planning of a piece. Sometimes I spent more time planning, doing studies, or sketches than in the actual execution of a finished piece. I enjoy the planning as much as the execution. In the case of my studio, the process of creating itself is more like the activity I remember seeing in my mom's kitchen when I was a child. There was not really a beginning, mid process, or end of a particular meal. The activity was ever-happening, with things being prepared for the next day, ingredients procured for something next week, preparations for immediate "deployment" and such. It was fun to watch, to be part of it, and in a way I like to work like that in my own studio.

## RECURRING THEMES

I find myself working a lot around the concept of transportation. It may be overtly expressed in the form of depictions of highways or bridges, for instance, or the idea

of transportation perceived from within, the viewer being the subject of the movement. I keep suggesting horizon lines even in pieces that I conceive as abstract. I would say that landscapes are recurring themes in my work.

## AT HOME IN THE STUDIO

My new studio is in the Toy District, in Downtown L.A., in a building they used to call "The Creamery." I used to have a space on street level before, and visitors often knocked at the door to see what I would be working on, or just visit. My new workspace is on a fourth floor with this huge window overlooking Little Tokyo. I love the light I get there. I am mostly a daylight painter, so I especially appreciate this part. I also love the frenetic activity on the street with the merchants, people shopping, and the traffic noise. In general, when I am working, I listen to the radio, news, or music. When I paint, music becomes a sort of fuel. The actual application of pigment on the canvas can be a rather intense and frenetic affair for me, so I like to maintain a certain level of volume (loud!) and pace. I have these old-style speakers and also a pair of very ridiculous padded speaker boxes they sell for cars. The effect can be quite earthshaking at about three hundred watts!

