



The Shooting Gallery
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Van Arno Biography

Van Arno was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee and grew up in St. Louis, Missouri where he attended a Christian Science school from kindergarten through high school. He was accepted at Otis Parsons School of Design in Los Angeles where he studied under Carol Caroompas and Lita Albuquerque, supporting himself working late nights as a bouncer in nightclubs and adult video arcades.

As a young illustrator his work appeared on album covers, video game box art, and nightclub posters around the city. By the late eighties, he began producing large 'cut-out' paintings blending cartoon imagery with portraits of cultural and historical icons. These early 'cut-out' paintings used black lines and luridly cartoon color to depict characters ranging from John F. Kennedy to Herman Goering to Othello. His guerrilla installation of a 12 foot tall Angel 'cut-out' could be seen hovering over Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood Christmas 1992. In the early 90s he became fascinated with the calendar of the ancient Maya, and traveled to Yucatan to see the ruins at Chichen Itza, Coba and Tulum. At the same time, he began to create heroic figurative works featuring religious and folk heroes from Christian, Mayan and American history (St. Francis, John Barrymore, Joan of Arc, Nat Turner, Nellie Bly) in cell vinyl on masonite.

This work was shown extensively in Los Angeles, Seattle, Santa Fe, Nashville and New York. He also captured attention with his series of Olive Oyl paintings, documenting her life as a waterfront floozy. He has frequently been featured in Juxtapoz Magazine since 1999. In the spring of 2000, several of his pieces were included in a national survey of Lowbrow painters at the Hollywood Art and Culture Center in Florida along with Mark Ryden, Chaz Bojorquez, Kenny Scharf, Anthony Ausgang and others.

Van was pleased to speak at the opening to detail the history of 'lowbrow' painting and its place in art history. In the fall of 2000, he painted a 36-foot billboard for the East Side Artcrawl entitled 'Abolitionist Goat War' which received local news coverage for its indictment of pimp culture. In 2004, Van was honored to have a solo show in Hamburg, Germany, which was well covered in the local press because of growing interest in the JUXTAPOZheit movement, and the Presidential election, 3 days earlier.

More recently, he has been exclusively painting in oil on canvas and wood panels. He continues to push the human figure into more and more extreme postures, causing him to name his painting style Uber-Mannerism. His ongoing fascination with the imagery of Religion and its use of the heroic figure found new relevance recently, as American 'values' were re-examined at home and abroad. Although he has been exploring non-narrative themes recently, his focus remains on the figure and its power to engage the viewer.