

rated

ART

Summer 2023

A McQueen Agency Publication

**Ready, Set,
Summer!**

**Get to Know
Masters
Gallery**

**10 Things We're
Looking Forward
to This Summer**

**Say Hello to
Our Newest
Signed Artists**

An illustration of a man with short hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark pants, riding a dark blue bicycle. He is leaning forward in a racing posture. The background shows a cityscape with buildings and a sunset sky with orange and pink clouds. A large, stylized 'ART' logo is overlaid on the top left of the image. The man is riding on a road with a red door visible on a building in the background.

**Meet
Michael
Abraham**

AN ARTIST Q&A

AGENCY DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ready, Set, Summer!

Summer is here—an intoxicating mix of heat, fun, and nights that seem to never end.

For us here in Canada, summer is something we don't take for granted. At the very first signs of warmth, we are in shorts and T-shirts, declaring victory over winter and marching gleefully towards patios and time outdoors.

While many of us escape to cabins and lakes or venture out on camping trips, the summer is also an opportunity to engage with more art! Exhibits, art fairs, and events are bountiful during our warmer months, and there is no shortage of ways to enjoy the heat while also embracing the arts. Where to begin? Right here, of course, with our summer issue of *ratedART*. Consider it a bit of a guide to point you towards brilliantly curated exhibits, culturally



Jared Tabler, photo by Aaron Pedersen.

intriguing works, and boundless exploration as you dive into summer. Just remember: The wall of heat can be draining by day, so stay hydrated, reapply your sunscreen—and don't forget that galleries offer a climate-controlled refuge for the weary!

Happy summer, everyone! We hope you'll find good art, great friends, and kindness around every corner.

- Jared

ARTIST Q&A

Meet Michael Abraham



Michael Abraham

To Michael Abraham, living well means creating and sharing work, no matter what the world thinks of it. To do so is to understand ourselves and each other—and to know we're not alone. That insatiable desire to create, share, and learn is part of Abraham's DNA. To him, art is a reflection of life, and to create it is to feel one's aliveness, insignificance, greatness, and feebleness all at once. His mantra? Enjoy the process. Because life is the continual process of making it. Meet Michael Abraham...

What's the first thing you ever made that inspired your artistic path? Did you know then that you'd unlocked something?

I think the key is not that I knew I'd unlocked something, but that something was unlocked in me! There were so many opportunities as a child to be creative or times I choose to be creative. And though I wasn't very skilled per se, I was curious and diligent to keep trying.

When I look back on all the solitary creative things I did as a child, I know now that they had a cumulative outcome. People often want their kids to take lessons, but I had this innate impulse to make things with my hands that stimulated my thoughts. I was always playing with crafts and clay or was colouring and sketching... so no "first thing" stands out, but some things I do remember doing are intriguing to me now. For example, when I was about seven years old, I recall using the darkest black fat-stick charcoal and rubbing an entire colouring book in black. The images were separated, folded, packaged in a baggy,

and placed at a craft table at a church bazaar. Every page—totally blackened—black-lined pictures that you couldn't see. The process was the pleasure, and it made sense to me, even though as I look back it is a bit absurd! My grandmother purchased them at the church bazaar, and I remember her holding the baggy and unfolding one of the blackened pages with a big smile on her face! Acceptance! Thank you, Nana! LOL.

I also recall all sorts of community summer-camp crafts, and drawing naked cartoons, and elephants, and comic strips with Greg Torchia. We were going to buy a bus and travel across America doing cartoons and be Walt Disney-like!

I also drew a lot on grid paper, as my dad was a draughtsman and architectural project manager. He had art and architecture books in abundance, which always kept me looking and trying to understand what I was seeing. A Mondrian book was of particular interest and intrigued me so much! Looking at this book often, I came to understand

that the balancing of visual elements is a pleasurable goal. I wanted to be able to make images like the ones I had seen, and curiosity made me focus on how artists made things “real.” Unlocking something is always the goal, even now. It happens regularly! Insights, understanding, and “surprising the self” are all part of creating.

For anyone just discovering you, describe your artistic sensibilities and influences.

My work is figurative, narrative, and in stylized realism—a realistically detailed style, but not bound by reality. In that way, I can bend, contort, and colour to make the images have a unique psychological intent or directional rhythm that I want for each idea.

I love the skill and refinement of old masters—artists like Ingres, Fra Angelico, and the Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece. But I also like the playfulness, and colour, and stylistic freedom of more recent artists, like Picasso and Sir Stanley Spencer. I love so many artists for so many different reasons.

I try to convey a childlike fascination with the material world, making visually stimulating compositions that have visual elements of colour, line, tone, shape, balance, design, and rhythm, while on occasion addressing more serious content, such as power dynamics, absurdity, sexuality, spiritual desire, abandonment, differences, inequality, fear, the environment, substance abuse, pleasure... The list goes on. With narrative work, it is at my discretion as to what the content is, but I think my goal is to keep the focus on the age-old saying of, “Living well is the best revenge,” because deep down we all know life is a challenge. And I would hope that by the end of my years of image-making, that when all viewed together, a full range of understanding of what living this life has been about is embodied in my work.

What’s your creative process like? And how do you know when a piece is finished?

I am a non-linear thinker... so as I create, I process the world around me, as well as go through my own thoughts and feelings.

I often start images with notes—words that trigger ideas and thumbnail scribbles that evolve into much more refined images on the canvas. I paint while listening to media, songs, news, podcasts, etc., and often, I come up with an element that might symbolize what I am processing about the world. I can use an element, like a

bull or water or a garden, and play with it in a variety of ways to suggest all sorts of scenarios and psychological ideas. As I create one image, another image may suggest itself to me. Lots do, but then some feel more relevant (either societally or personally), so I spend the time to create that image.

I’ll draw an image on paper loosely, and then develop the drawing in vine charcoal on linen canvas, then refine the drawing and start layering in oil paint. The painting is usually done in two layers—an opaque underpainting layer and an overpainting layer, with a bit of edge and adjustment in a third layer if I feel the need. I know I am done when:

- Nothing jumps out at me as a spot requiring more work (all elements feel like they are working together).
- There is enough “air” in the darker parts.
- No shape or distortion detracts or distracts from the overall image.
- The edges of elements are softened/blurred or sharp at just the right spots to help with the focus and flow of the viewer’s eye.
- It feels right!

“I am a non-linear thinker... so as I create, I process the world around me, as well as go through my own thoughts and feelings.”

A few years ago, I remember there was one painting that was so close to being finished, but I knew something was off, and it took over a month of having it in the studio before I realized the whiteness of the two chickens were overpowering everything else. I darkened the whites and shadows of the chickens just a touch, and the rest of the painting came alive. Sometimes the smallest changes can affect the entire painting.



Untitled artwork in progress.

Tell us about a lesson you've had to learn more than once.

If one stays focused on the process and puts oneself in different opportunities, growth happens! The key is to enjoy the process and not to focus on the promise of one event or one project, hoping it will bring something bigger—or bigger immediately. Things come to fruition and reward, but often way later than expected and in unexpected ways. Creativity does reward, just not in how one initially expects! Looking back on many years of creating, it is neat to see how I've developed and how rewards have come through visibility over time. As William Shatner once said, "Life is the continual process of making it."

I've also had to learn, more than once, that no one will fully take care of you. As an artist, you must be your own guide, businessperson, and rep., and know that there is no magic person or event that defines success. It is good to work as a team, but we are singularly responsible for our own affairs. The saying, "Do what you do best, and let others do the rest" made me naively expect other people to help build my network. I realized after a few misses that it was up to me to connect, follow up, confirm, schedule, and promote... one can't just paint and expect things to happen.

Other lessons I've learned:

- It is important to pay for proper help for certain things (accountants are worth it!).
- Get professional photos of your work because once the work is gone, it is tough to get art back to photograph—and sometimes impossible.

As someone who creates narrative work, what do you think it is about story that brings us together?

Sharing insight. It is always neat to see someone share their story and then see so many people nod in recognition of their own stories. There is the sharing of insight into the phases of life, and the sharing of the experiences, hopes, and fears of others. Some will see what they've experienced, while others will see what is yet to come.

If art is an iceberg, then narrative art shows us the hidden 90% that's underwater—the part that contains the fuller scope of our collective humanity and of our shared history and history as viewed from varied perspectives. Story makes us realize we are all, in most ways, alike—regardless of perceived differences.

The process of making art holds the discovery of the story, and it allows the creator/author/shaman time to tap into their story and process or figure out the meaning of it for themselves. If done well, the artifact/art/book left behind is the object that helps to share or tell the story to others.

For me, personally, a friend quoting someone else once said to me, "The gift and the curse are one." All the processing of story helps one to find lightness in sorrow, joy beyond pain, power in vulnerability, and weakness in strength. I think stories help many of us come to terms with the concept that in life, creativity, fame, family, desire, and so many other things, "the gift and the curse are one."

***“If art is an iceberg,
then narrative art
shows us the hidden
90% that’s underwater”***

**You've said that "meaning and making are inseparable."
How so?**

I could maybe have added the word *purpose* in there: meaning and making, meaning and purpose, purpose and making—all are inseparable.

When I make something, it must have a point and feel relevant. If it isn't meaningful to me, I question why I would want to spend my time on it. That initial importance in an idea makes me commit to the time to make the piece. Sometimes it is to counteract the negativity of the zeitgeist, or to confirm something, or to explore something. And yet, sometimes, I am compelled to make something and am not sure why, but am compelled none the less. If I'm uncertain as to its relevance at the outset/start of the process, it somehow reveals meaning along the way. Sometimes that meaning is in the skill development, or in tackling a new design challenge, or sometimes it is in the insight it gives me into myself or society—or answers a philosophical inquiry, or opens a new question, capturing mystery or getting something just right! It always means something in the end!

What was your first art purchase? And what was your last art purchase?

The first piece of art I ever purchased was a small etching from a gallery in Yorkville in 1987. It was a print called *On Standing in Line, Don't*. It depicted a hand holding a few tiny heads on sticks. I bought it with my dad in mind. He never liked to wait in lines, and with five children in tow, he always managed to get attended to quickly. I liked the image right away.

The most recent piece of art was this spring at the local artist guild. A small imaginary landscape by Cathy Swift. It is of a slight aerial view of a lime-green prairie field with a cadmium-red light streak through it—like a lightning bolt across the sky, but in the grass! Fresh colour accent. Like a yummy candy!

Tell us a little about what you're currently working on or hoping to explore next.

I am on to a series that started in January 2023. The concept is "bucket lists." I recently had a sister pass away, and my son recently spent four months travelling in Asia, and one of my brothers just did a cross-Canada trip in his Sprinter van... so I feel time moving along. All those things made me think about what I may like to do (or what might already be too late to do), or an extreme of what one can experience while in this earthly realm. I love the idea of base jumping in a squirrel suit. A fear of injury or worse makes me too resistant



Michael Abraham, minotaur marionette costume, 2023.

to actually be doing it. The first three images have jumper characters in readying-to-soar demeanor, but as happens with me often, one idea leads to another. The fourth image has someone filming themselves on the verge of flicking the propellor that sits atop a hat of a contented character who is passing by. They might be characterizations of an older and a younger version of myself.

This spring, a friend who owns a theatre company also asked if I'd make a minotaur costume for her production of *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*. She knew I wouldn't say no, as I love large sculpting projects, so I have had fun for two weeks making a huge wearable bull marionette. Now I am thinking the bucket-list images might somehow include bullfighting or running with the bulls—but me in a bull costume so that the bulls won't attack me, LOL! I've adopted the bull iconography in the past. I am a Taurus after all!



To the Sun, Oil on Canvas, 36 x 36, by Michael Abraham, 1995.

When you're struggling to stay on task, what's your favourite way to procrastinate?

I clean. The studio, the house, the car—and when that trick to fool myself into avoiding work by working is done, I then do artwork! I love what I do, but sometimes I take a few days here and there to ruminate on ideas. I may do a home project or clean, but I usually get things done.

I remember being in art school at the Ontario College of Art, and my professor Tom LaPierre asking what my plans were for after graduation, and me replying: "It's not so much about 'what do I want to do?' but rather 'what do I want to paint?' that I am concerned with." Occasionally when unsure of what I want to focus on, I sit down with either charcoal and newsprint or with my Cintiq drawing tablet and randomly sketch. It is often in these periods of random sketching and line-making that ideas start to flow. Procrastinating is not an efficient way to break the lack of certainty—sketching is! But only after everything is clean!

“I love the idea of base jumping in a squirrel suit”

It's a perfect day. How do you spend it?

I have the good fortune of having three “perfect day” scenarios:

Perfect Day #1 (the standard perfect day)

A late noonish wake-up, slow bath, hopefully sunny kitchen for coffee and honey toast, reading news stories and emails, then a bike ride to the thrift store for a motivator or to get a useful spring or tool or frame, while bumping into a few friendly townfolk. Then back at my home studio rigged out for sound, light, connection to the outside world, and creativity. Next, an afternoon FaceTime chat with a friend and a paint for three hours, followed by dinner with my wife and an adult son or two, chatting with them and seeing what's up in their worlds! Then, paint for few more hours, workout at 9 p.m. for 45 minutes, then snack and paint until the wee hours with a podcast or tv or music on in the background. With brushes and palette cleaned at 4 a.m., I'm back in the house and in bed within 10 minutes. Out like a light!

Perfect Day #2 A stimulating event! Connection, communication, communion... new people, new places, new foods, high energy, chill energy, art galleries, a museum, travel to see family, a new project with other artists... a wedding... a concert...

Perfect Day #3 The most perfect of perfect days—rested, shirtless, a bike trail to water, sunshine, naked in nature swimming!

Discover more of Michael Abraham's current work [here](#), and give him a follow on [Instagram!](#)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Get to Know Masters Gallery

Art need not be intimidating—
and it needn't break the bank.

Those two beliefs have guided Calgary's much-loved **Masters Gallery** since it opened its door in 1976. Though its incredible reputation precedes it, to experience the gallery is to truly understand its legacy—a passion for sharing knowledge, strengthening community, and enthusiastically celebrating art. Not surprisingly, those are the same values and qualities that the gallery's president and owner, Ryan Green, also embodies.

Green's more than 20 years of experience as a dealer of Canadian historical, post-war, and contemporary art makes him an expert on sourcing the gallery's paintings, drawings, and sculpture. But it's his passion for education that sets him and the gallery apart from the rest. Case in point? Green's **Young Masters** program—a collaborative initiative with the Calgary Public School Board to introduce elementary school students to Canadian art, artists, and art appreciation.

Each Young Masters event is centred around an informative talk with Green, who shares his knowledge and excitement about important Canadian artwork. To ensure that the program is equally accessible to students city-wide, the Masters Gallery even covers the transportation costs for each class that attends.

Learn more about Ryan Green and Masters Gallery here!



Masters Gallery Ltd.



Ryan Green, president and owner of Masters Gallery Ltd.



Seattle Art Fair. Photo courtesy AMP

10 Things We're Looking Forward to **This Summer**

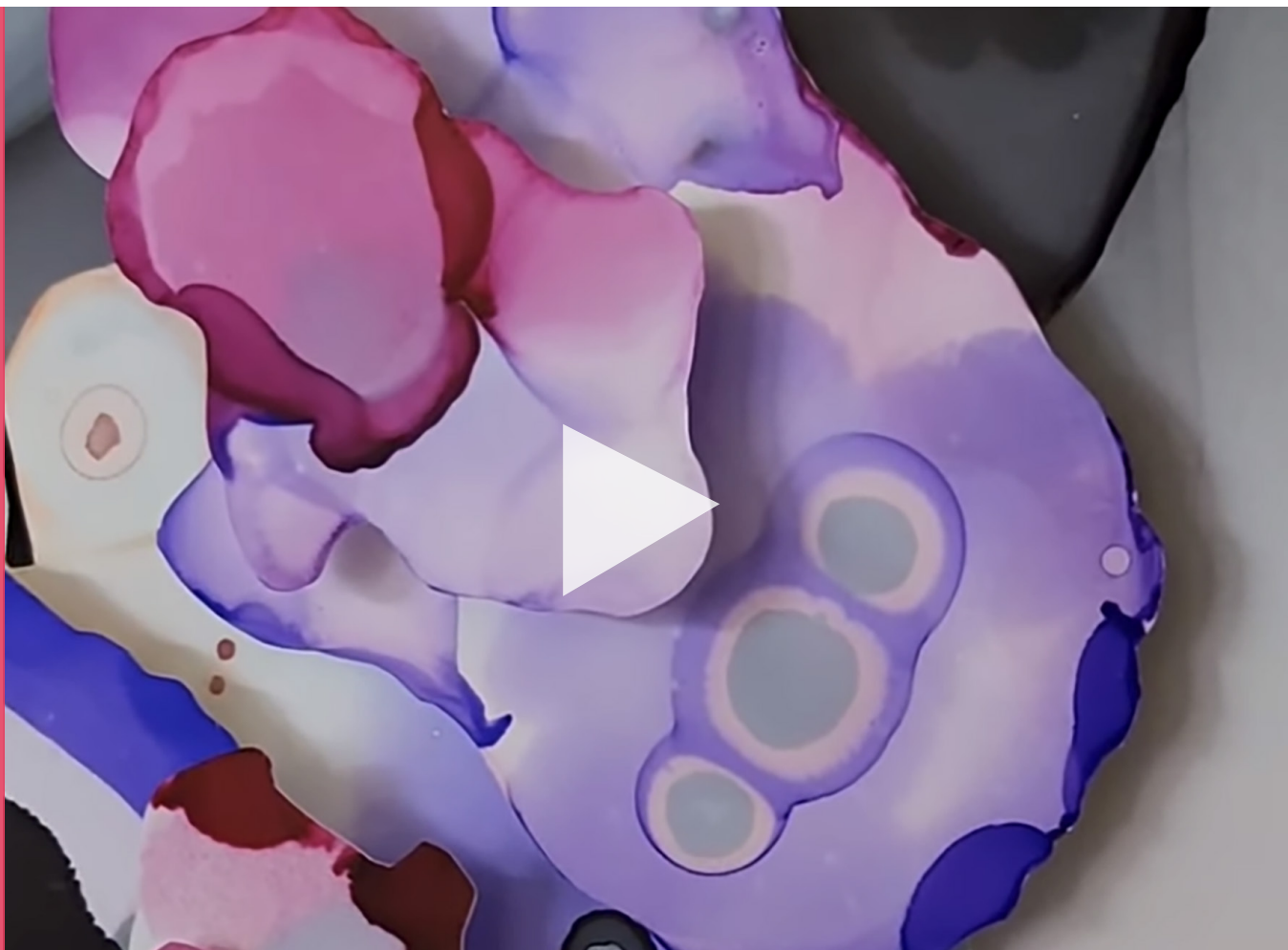
- 1. Vancouver Art Gallery presents: *Fashion Fictions*,** May 27 – October 9, 2023. Learn more [here](#).
- 2. Art Gallery of Ontario presents: *Cassatt-McNicoll: Impressionists Between Worlds*,** through September 4, 2023. Toronto. Learn more [here](#).
- 3. Art Gallery of Alberta presents: *From Warhol to Banksy*,** June 10 – October 15, 2023. Edmonton. Learn more [here](#).
- 4. VOLTA,** June 12 – 18, 2023. Learn more [here](#).
- 5. Art Basel Switzerland,** June 15 – 18, 2023. Basel. Learn more [here](#).
- 6. Twitter Art Exhibit (TAE) 2023,** to benefit Urban Native Youth Association. Exhibition and sale: June 24 – 25, 2023, at the Pipe Shop Venue at the Shipyards in North Vancouver. Online sale: June 26 – July 24, 2023. Learn more [here](#).
- 7. Montréal Jazz Festival,** June 29 – July 8, 2023. Learn more [here](#).
- 8. Whyte Avenue Art Walk,** July 7 – 9, 2023. Edmonton. Learn more [here](#).
- 9. Seattle Art Fair,** July 27 – 30, 2023. Learn more [here](#).
- 10. MoMA presents: *Georgia O'Keeffe: To See Takes Time*,** through August 12, 2023. New York. Learn more [here](#).

What's On

McQueen Artists Take Centre Stage

All of our fabulous McQueen artists are busy creating new artwork this summer, but a few also have some shows we're excited to tell you about. Here's where you'll find them.

- ▶ **Michael Abraham** will be participating in the [Seattle Art Fair](#), July 27 – 30, 2023, along with another Vancouver-based artist, David Haughton, through [Gallery 110](#).
- ▶ **Tiffany Blaise** will be participating in a show at [Tofino Gallery of Contemporary Art](#), July 21 – August 4, the opening reception of which takes place July 21, from 4 – 6p.m.
- ▶ **Alice Rich** will be showcasing a solo exhibition titled *New Works*, August 10 – 14, 2023, at [Studio 13 Fine Art](#) on Granville Island.
- ▶ **Allan Switzer** will be taking part in a group exhibition at [Mónica Reyes Gallery](#) in Vancouver, July 15 – August 12, 2023.
- ▶ **David Tycho** will be taking part in two group shows this summer :
What Moves You, a group exhibition and charity auction at Vancouver's [Pendulum Gallery](#), May 15 – June 15, 2023.
37th Anniversary Exhibition, at Vancouver's [Art Works Gallery](#), featuring new works by gallery artists, June 1 – 23, 2023.



SNEAK PEEK

First Door On the Right, *by Jordan Baraniecki*

Check out this behind-the-scenes look at the making of Jordan Baraniecki's latest series, *First Door On the Right*, inspired by Dorothea Tanning's paintings.

Love his work as much as we do? Discover more of Jordan's 3D ink collages [here](#), and give him a follow on Instagram. [Check it out!](#)

NOW REPRESENTING

Say Hello to Our Newest Signed Artists!

We couldn't be more excited to welcome 4 more amazing artists to the agency. Please say hello and give a follow to:

- + *Tiffany Blaise*
- + *Antonio Garullo*
- + *Charles Gibbons*
- + *Juan Murcia*

Ask the Agency

Q What factors go into determining the price for art?

A We get this question a lot, and for good reason—nothing about pricing art is straightforward. There are many determining factors in play. Some are objective, like the quality/condition of the work, as well as the preceding ownership/history of it. And some are subjective, like how well-known and popular the artist is—and even how “famous” the people they’ve worked with are.

The price for a work of art may also reflect the cost of materials and production, the size of the finished piece, the medium, the subject matter, the artist’s experience and education, accounting and taxes, the cost of the studio—even occupational health and wellness expenses.

Adding another layer to the equation is the issue of primary pricing and sales versus auction pricing/secondary market pricing. The difference? The artist and their gallery or agent set primary pricing based on materials, experience of the artist, etc., whereas ownership and condition are more of an auction or secondary market factor.

Have a question for us? Send it to info@mcqueenagency.com and you could see it answered in our next issue.

rated **ART**

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