

Spirit, humor pop in Luck's creative images

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Standing on top of a hospital roof and looking out into the distance, artist Will Luck contemplated his life and purpose. That's when he says it hit him like a bolt of lightning: art. He'd always loved drawing as a child and taught himself as a hobby for many years growing up in Hollywood, Florida. At 18 he left home for the U.S. Airforce as a medic, and his time in the military influenced his outlook tremendously on the preciousness of life. It wasn't until he was 26 years old and was working in a hospital that he decided he would pursue art full-time.

Churning out piece after piece, he was encouraged by his brother to start selling his work. His first outdoor exhibition was in Miami Beach where he showed one six by nine foot painting and two five by six feet paintings. For 25 years he continued bringing his work to shows and was featured in exhibitions such as Boca Raton Museum's "Humor in Art," Tampa Museum's show about self-taught art and humor, and show at the former Four Arts gallery in Tallahassee called "Simple Genius." Moving to Tallahassee he did shows on Gaines Street in a shared space called Nomads, as well as in his own space, Will Luck Art Shop, in Railroad Square for five years.

"I was so blown away the first time I realized what art was about when I was in and saw a Van Gogh painting," says Luck. "Being untrained, I just pursued it with my own licks and I've always respected artists who did that. I was drawn to all the rebels who broke the rules, but more than that, I was drawn to a side of art that was about emotion and spirit as opposed to logic."

Now at age 72, Luck resides in a 100-year-old farmhouse in Thomasville, Georgia, with his wife, who is also an artist. He continues to practice his art every day and is excited to have his work displayed by COCA along with three other local artists in City Hall Art Gallery's It's a Mad Mad World exhibition. His work will be smaller than his larger, printed canvases, clocking in at 13 by 19 inches, which he feels will pull viewers for a closer, more intimate look at his work.

Among the pictures he'll show are his whimsical "Salvador Dali On The Beach," "Grin Dog," and "Flying Dream." His favorite is the last one, as Luck often experiences flying dreams and says he always wakes up feeling like a million bucks. He says those dreams also foretell positivity, which he sees as a constant theme throughout all his work.

Luck tried his hand at painting, ceramics, and sculpture. He pursued large landscape and figurative work for a time, but wasn't as interested in making his art look just like reality. In 2000, he became interested in computer art, and after a difficult financial year in 2008, he stopped painting on huge canvases and started working digitally every day.

He describes his work as spontaneous, optimistic, playful, provocative, humorous and edgy, and makes each piece with a software package, Corel Painter, and a Wacom tablet and stylus, similar to a pen. Donning a glove and long sleeves allows Luck to make large strokes on the tablet so his skin doesn't get caught on the surface. He works the same way on a digital surface as he would a canvas—making large strokes and many lines, sitting back, erasing some lines, and seeing what image comes through.

"What pops out is my spirit made real through my subconscious meanings and images,"



Will Luck's "Flying Dream."

If you go

What: It's a Mad Mad World Exhibition
When: 8 a.m.-5p.m., Monday-Friday through Feb. 7
Where: City Hall Galleries, 300 South Adams St.
Cost: Free
Contact: For more information, call 850-224-2500 or visit <http://coca.tallahasseearts.org/art-in-public-places/city-hall-gallery>.



Will Luck will show his whimsical work at the City Hall Art Gallery.

explains Luck. "There's a little story in each one and it's not abstract at all. If we had a lot of puppies, a puppy picture comes out; if I'm in love, I have all these love pictures; if I'm walking around the landscape a lot, it's pictures of trees. It's what's going on in my world."

The fewer tools Luck uses, the better he likes the piece. Utilizing a brush, pen, and paint bucket or filler tool, he makes a few strokes, fills in colors, and finishes what the image wants to

become. He heads the words of Picasso and follows a line instead of directing it, allowing images like cheery, golden chickens, his neighbor's wide-eyed cow, and his little blue dog chasing a fiery red bull come into the foreground.

It's not an endless process, however, as he always finds a stopping point and considers it the record of that particular performance. Many images are self-portraits as well, a telltale sign being the blue eyes that he and his digital personas share. A good amount of

the art and looking at it later or owning it isn't that important to me."

Though he once filled his studio to the rafters with these cartoon-like paintings, working digitally has allowed him to preserve his work in a different way. Luck feels it offers another dimension to his art, and wants others to see the power in the medium as well.

Always on the move and having lived abroad and in the U.S., he has stayed in contact with people from Japan, Europe, and South America via Facebook and online art groups. The digital world allows his art to transcend physical spaces and he alters lyrics from a Dire Straits song as his tagline for many websites.

"I say, downloads for nothing and the pics are free," smiles Luck. "People have the idea that digital art is kind of like cheating, but the digital process is the tool and the spirit is still the art. Through the computer, I can give these pictures away and I've started websites as a way of putting my work around the world."

"I've always been in a category of my own and if you're going to follow your own star you've got to make it a bright one and the strongest you can," affirms Luck. "My art is about optimism and I feel I have a message that will influence the next generations through a language without words that they intrinsically understand. I hope others see something of themselves and that what I feel comes across, and that it influences the way people feel about reality and themselves."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).



Will Luck's "Salvador Dali on the Beach."



his work also features a small moon, which Luck says is from a memory he has as a kid laying on the grass in an apple grove looking up at the blue moon. Vibrant and contrasting colors are

one of Luck's signature elements, and he appreciates local artists like his friend Ron Yraberda who can get at a mood using color.

"I'm in love with the creative process," says Luck. "It's the journey and the creative spark, and once it's there, it's an energy that just takes off. The gift is making

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