



ART

ALAIN DESPERT

Absolut Genius

Alain Despert has had an interesting career. Only five years ago, he was the manager of the luxurious Hotel Bora Bora in exotic Tahiti. When the staff of *Town and Country Magazine* stayed at the hotel while on assignment, they "discovered" Alain's art. The rest is history. Alain moved to New York, where the spread in the April 1990 issue of *Town and Country* soon turned into a contract with Absolut Vodka, and the French artist started pursuing his "hobby" full time.

Alain likes to work in "themes." Past themes have included classic cars from the 1950's and cozy coffee shop interiors. The future is wide open—maybe the terrors of Seville, markets of Cairo, canals of Venice. And definitely scheduled for 1994, the opulence of Moscow.

"WHEN PEOPLE SEE MY PAINTINGS THEY SEE HAPPINESS."

His current theme is the buildings of Ocean Drive. "I love the art deco, especially on Ocean Drive. The lines and colors, in these tropical surroundings... they remind me a little of the tropical places I've lived in. I would like to stay here at least another year."

Inspirations have been Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso, and his own interest in photography, which gives his paintings a photographic edge. They all appear to be seen through a lens—close-up, wide angle...

"I like to do everything," Alain says. "I don't want to be limited. I can see anything and transform it into a picture. I have no problem with inspiration. I can always find something in a setting that I would like to paint. I see beauty in every scene—I can ignore the distractions and focus on the heart of the subject."

Life in the tropics has certainly given his paintings an exotic flair. "There is a joy of living in Tahiti," he says, somewhat nostalgically. "It is sunny, the people are very warm, and that is certainly reflected in my work. It is very colorful, not depressing. Like life in the South Pacific."

When asked if the decidedly cheerful attitude of his paintings is intentional, he responds: "No, but that is what I end up doing. I couldn't do something that is not happy or cheerful, because it's not me. When people see my paintings, they see happiness. They never leave feeling sad. Paintings are to be put on walls, to give people pleasure. To enjoy."

You'll have the opportunity to enjoy Alain Despert's Ocean Drive paintings at the LeMar Gallery, opening at the end of the month in the LeMar building on Washington Avenue.

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