

David's Room by Harvey Gordon 1997

In grade three, Harvey Gordon looked around at the artwork of the other students in his class and realized that he was pretty good in comparison to most of them. That was when it hit him that he could one day become a professional artist.

Gordon paints with acrylics, but he initially trained in oil painting because acrylics were not widely distributed until the early 1960's when they finally became available to him. He fell in love with the medium once he found it; its brilliant colors, fast drying ability, durability, and water solubility made it the perfect paint for Gordon, who didn't like the hazardous chemicals that need to be used when painting with oils.

It has taken Gordon 40 years to develop and perfect the carefully planned glazing technique he uses when painting. He paints on a heavyweight, high-quality paper called museum board, which he seals with gesso to keep the paint from soaking in.

After sanding the gesso down, Gordon draws a picture on the board using a photograph he has taken as a reference. Then his technique begins.

He uses acrylic paint, very little paint, with acrylic gloss medium he paints the drawing first in black and white, then he puts the color on in transparent, single layers of yellow, red, and blue. He never physically mixes the color together; all the mixing that occurs in the painting is visual mixing.

This process is important because it provides a remarkably beautiful, luminous finish to the acrylic, a paint that is often visually flat and boring. Gordon's paintings are like stained glass because of the glowing intensity of his colors. They also look like watercolor.

While working in his studio, Gordon uses fluorescent lighting. He does this because it is the best light to paint by, but it is a horrible light to view a painting in. When Harvey Gordon moves his work to a kinder light he is often genuinely surprised at the colors that have developed in his process.

Gordon grew up in Flint. He attended the University of Michigan and Cranbrook Academy of Art. He then received a fellowship at the University of North Carolina, where he earned his MFA. He now lives in Glen Arbor Michigan where he is now painting Lake Michigan sunsets, which are very difficult.

As I first looked at David's Room my first impression was how calming, warm, and relaxing it made me feel with the way the light was shining in the room and the beautiful colors.

What stood out to me in the picture were the colors, lighting and how just painting with the tip of a paint brush could produce such a lovely picture. The brush strokes prove to do so much more as well. Repetition, rhythm, texture, movement, balance, and unity. The fact that Gordon didn't mix the colors together he was still able to obtain contrast. He has used all the design principles.

I think David's Room would be a great piece to use on tours because of the way it was painted, and how it came together.