

Stork's Exhibit Casts Old Art Masters in New Light

Artist Elyahou Lallouz Believes in Mixing Paint and Charity

By Phil LaPadula

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Elyahou Lallouz once painted a portrait of President George Bush Sr.-with his eyes closed. He also painted a shut-eyed President Bill Clinton. One could search for some profound political message in such renderings-the typical politician turning a blind eye to the needs of average people, or perhaps the conductor of the train of state asleep at the switch.

But while art is always open to the interpretation of the beholder, Lallouz insists he was not trying to create political commentary on canvas. Instead, the political portraits were merely a part of his "Dreamer Series." He has also painted tennis star Andy Roddick, former Dolphin quarterback Dan Marino and Isaac Hayes, all with their eyes closed. He painted all of the "dreamers" in rocking chairs because "rocking chairs symbolize comfort. It shows they accomplished something, and can now relax," he says.

"One hundred years from now, I may be considered a master," Lallouz jokes. "By then, everyone may paint portraits with the subject's eyes closed."

While his "Dreamer Series" has included "Masters of the Political World" and "masters of the Sports World," Lallouz captures the masters of the art world itself in his exhibit currently on display at Stork's in Wilton Manors.

The exhibit features some of the more eccentric masters-including Vincent Van Gogh, Salvadore Dali, Andy Warhol and Marc Chagall-with their eyes open. But the portraits are certainly not how the masters would have seen themselves in their time. Instead, Lallouz took self-portraits of the artists and doctored them in his own style of cubist abstraction to create images that mirror some of the quirks and eccentricities that history has recorded about these figures. They are still recognizable-Dali with his trademark mustache, Van Gogh amid swirls of yellow.

"I wanted to do something light and humorous, and I wanted to show who they were," Lallouz says. "I tried to use the colors that would symbolize the painters. I wanted them to be part of the background, part of the paint."

His next project will be "Masters of Entertainment." He plans to paint portraits of the Beatles, Frank Sinatra and other popular icons.

Lallouz, who operates Galleria Lallouz art company in Fort Lauderdale with his wife, Rhonda, has donated much of his artwork to charitable causes. He has donated his paintings at auctions to raise money for several local groups, including Tuesday's Angels, Kids in Distress, the Andy Roddick Foundation, Breast Cancer Awareness Foundation, ArtsUnited and the Dolphin Democrats.



Artist Elyahou Lallouz next to his portrait of Vincent Van Gogh at Stork's in Wilton Manors. Lallouz has donated Paintings to numerous charitable causes including Tuesday's Angels and ArtsUnited.

While he concedes that the "starving artist" is as much a reality today as he was in Van Gogh's time, Lallouz still thinks it's important for artists to give back to the community, and he was disappointed by some of the successful artists he knows who could afford to give back but don't.

"Before all the technology and mass media, artists and writers were the main messengers," Lallouz says. "Today, artists still have to be the bridges of society. The institutions are not working; they're not meeting needs."

Lallouz hopes his molding of art and charity will open some eyes about local needs.

The Lallouz exhibit runs through Nov. 30 at Stork's. For more information about Galleria Lallouz, visit www.GalleriaLallouz.com.