

ALLEN EGAN

ARTIST STATEMENT / BIO

Allen was born and raised in Zimbabwe and started painting in oils at the age of 16. After high school, he completed a 3-year graphic design diploma at college and worked in the print and graphic design industry. Allen began painting and exhibiting full-time in 1999. His work has evolved over the years from a strictly realist approach to a more graphic style combining digital and mixed media and traditional painting. Allen immigrated to Canada, eventually settling in Gatineau where he lives and works as a fulltime artist.

“My mandate for this series of works was to use my children as serious painterly subject matter, whilst attempting to avoid the possibility that they may appear kitsch. I use an illustrative approach as well as using simple props and painting them in wild and remote places to give a sense of mystery and emotion. The challenge then was to capture them purely as figures in a landscape or environment without the image appearing saccharine.

Although I am not an illustrator I recognize with appreciation the virtuoso skill, freedom and overwhelming variety of imagery that illustrators create. Researching illustrative works over many years has inspired me in ways that bring virtuosity into my work. I am a figurative painter and cannot imagine a painting without a figure in it. However the figure to my mind must occupy or be part of a space or an environment. I rarely paint the figure as portrait.

The completed painting needs to be a short story or part of a story in which something imminent is about to happen or has happened. It is this sense of unpredictability that I try to capture with all of my works. I use props and unusual environments to set the stage and set the figure at odds within this space. The final summary of the contents of the painting is up to the viewer.

It is my habit to avoid paintings that are layered with political meaning but rather to make paintings that are impulsive and spontaneous. I gather together several images to combine them as a painting. Ultimately they are like a single frame in a movie. One does not know what came before and likewise one does not know what the outcome may be. They are short stories. There is no intent to manufacture a recognizable story, rather an opportunity for the viewer to decide for themselves what it all means. They impose their own stories and opinions are many and varied.”