



Artist Paul Rousso creates three dimensional pieces of art using items like dollar bills and candy wrappers.



STATE OF THE ARTIST

SOUTH CHARLOTTE MIXED-MEDIA ARTIST PAUL ROUSSO
REVELS IN CREATING THREE DIMENSIONAL WORKS
FROM TWO DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS.

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN DRISCOLL



Paul Rouso's career as an artist was born from an assignment he was given in the first grade at Cotswold Elementary School, some 50 years ago.

"I remember the teacher handing out paper and crayons and asking us to draw a picture of ourselves," says Rouso, his hands flecked with acrylic paint from readying a piece for an upcoming show. "All the other children just got right to it and I held back, studying my reflection in the window before beginning to draw. The teacher was quite taken back, brought me a mirror, declared me a budding artist, and from that moment on I knew what I was meant to do."

Today Rouso's SouthPark studio groans with dozens of free-form, hand-sculpted acrylic and mixed media works. His work is seen in high profile public spaces throughout Charlotte.

Rouso has two large murals depicting Charlotte history on display at Time Warner Cable Arena, another mural at the Charlotte Convention Center, and work featured at Mimosa Grill, Harpers, and Upstream restaurants. His outdoor Butterfly sculpture at Shalom Park is a specially-commissioned work in honor of children lost in the Holocaust.

Rouso's work is also found in the private collections of Rihanna, Jay-Z, Swizz Beatz, and Steve Carell.





POP REALISM

His style is pop realism that evokes the work of artists Rousso says influenced him, Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Johns, yet taken to an entirely different level.

Much of Rousso's work is abstract in nature. One large work features pearl-colored luscious ice cream-like vertical waves, breaking in sets upon each other. Other works involve transformed scraps of two dimensional paper such as candy wrappers, drink mix packets, and \$100 bills into huge three dimensional works of art, their crumpled texture and nuanced shadowing reaching out to viewers, capturing their imagination from across the room.

"I've always asked the question, 'What hasn't been done?'" says Rousso, 56, "And then I set out to go there. I want to actually sculpt paint, and use paint as an object."

After graduating from Myers Park High School, Rousso eventually made his way to the California College of the Arts in Oakland where he graduated with a degree in Fine Arts, honing his skills as an illustrator. Out of college, he held stints as a set painter at Burbank Studios and

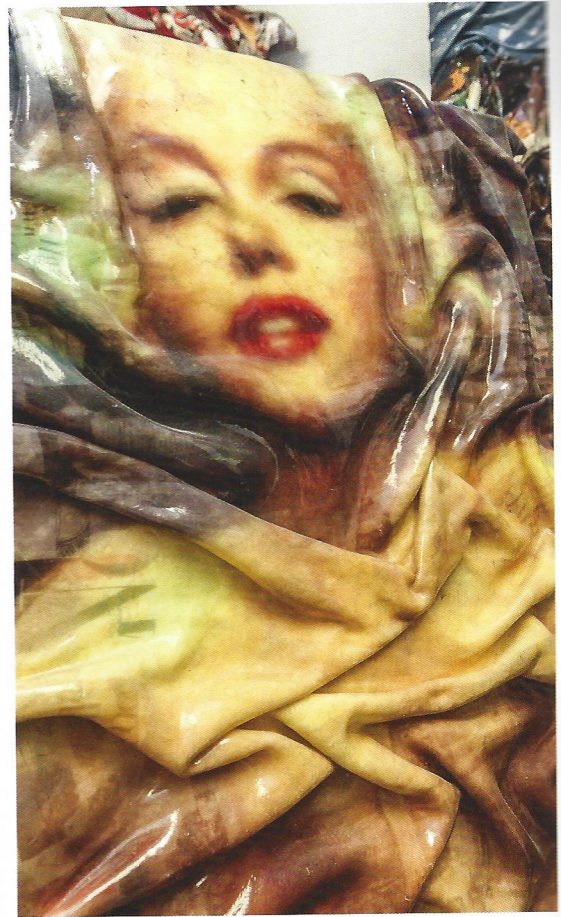
a "Mad Man-like" art director for a New York City advertising firm. A summer trip to Paris inspired him to return to his roots as a painter.

"I saw so many of the great master-works including 'The Fifer,' by Manet, and just thought, I need to get back to this, to creating art," says Rousso, who upon returning to New York, left his job to come back to Charlotte. "I have family and roots in Charlotte and was comfortable creating here. I eventually got my work out and seen outside the city and while it has been a struggle, I'm finding a following."

Rousso has an enviable list of representation including galleries in New York, Dallas, Boston, Venice, and Los Angeles. He showed most recently in April at a solo exhibition at Cheryl Hazan Contemporary Gallery in New York and in Dallas at the Laura Rathe Fine Art Gallery.

He is incredibly busy, enjoying the interest in his work, and continuing to push himself creatively.

"I don't paint an object," says Rousso, "My work is the object." www.paulroussostudio.com



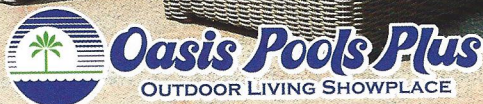
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