



Burton Morris, American (1964 -)

Burton Morris was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University (1986). He is an artist whose work is filled with bold shapes and bright colors. Paintbrush in hand, the leader of the "New Pop" art movement creates images that vibrate with enormous energy and style. Walk into any room with a Burton Morris painting on the wall, and you are instantly enamored by the playful spirit it exudes. His "energy shards" leap off every canvas and help define the signature style for which Morris is so well known.

We recognize Burton Morris' artwork everywhere. Millions of people weekly see his paintings on the hit NBC television shows, Friends and Just Shoot Me. It explodes across the labels of Perrier bottles and Pepsi-Cola cans and careens around the walls of Boston's South Shore Plaza. Hanging around the necks of celebrities like Mathew Perry, Lyle Lovett and Jay Leno, Morris' collection of high fashion neckwear showcases his art throughout major department stores nationwide. His artwork celebrates the world of Mr Roger's Neighborhood and has graced the ads for Absolut Vodka, AT & T, Heinz, and Dubon net. Burton's art has raised thousands of dollars for charities such as the United Way, Race for the Cure, Muscular Dystrophy, Art for AIDS and Children's Hospital.

Burton's client list reads like the stock exchange: American Express, Anheuser Busch, AT & T, Coors, Heinz, McDonalds, Microsoft, Mitsubishi, Sony, Warner Brothers and Walt Disney. He was selected as one of America's official artists for World Cup '98 and the 2002 Winter Olympics. Owners of his artwork range from Ernest and Julio Gallo, of Gallo Winery, Michael Roux, CEO of Stolichnaya, Steve Levitan, creator of the NBC hit television show Just Shoot Me, Peter Schlesel, Senior VP, Columbia Tri-Star Pictures, Fred Rogers of Mr Roger's Neighborhood, to former President Jimmy Carter.

From the age of three Burton has been drawing and painting, and has always enjoyed entertaining people with his artwork. In 1986, Burton received a BFA degree in design and fine art from Carnegie Mellon University. His philosophy "I want to make an impact on today's art world by adding a contemporary twist to traditional "Pop Art".

Burton Morris' Approach To Fine Art

Building on the legacy of Pop Art masters of the 1960s-70s, Burton Morris presents his personal world of popular American icons that put a delightful spin on everyday objects and motifs. In his post-Pop style, Morris boldly projects an enticing mood of happiness, high energy and fun. But his roots are in fine art.

Morris' forbears were icons Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Tom Wesselmann and Red Grooms. He also employs some of the shorthand gestures of comic strips and magazines he has loved and emulated since childhood. These classic devices are seen in his simplified forms and action lines indicating movement joined with his rich acrylic colors. Morris imbues his art with his own impeccable style and optimistic frame of mind.

The artist's distinctive sword-like slashes suggesting shards of energy come from his study of woodcut prints. Two of his heroes are Albrecht Durer and Rockwell Kent. Durer used similar hatching in the sixteenth century. Twentieth century American artist Rockwell Kent illustrated books and designed bookplates with such lines. Artists for The New York Review of Books emulated his style in small India ink drawings, called "gloomies" in journalistic parlance.

Burton Morris was born in Pittsburgh in 1964. Like the late Pop artist Keith Haring, Morris felt an early attraction to Belgian's large exhibition in the International Series at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, in 1977.

Morris earned his bachelor of fine arts degree at Carnegie Mellon University in 1986 and, during three more years while working at art directing and doing television commercials, he began developing his post-Pop drawings.

The artist established the Burton Morris Studios in 1990. That year he began making his small post-Pop icons more impressive by enlarging them. He also tightened his brushwork into his present precise style. He would choose one subject per composition to create what he calls "an instant happening" for the viewer.

Finding eager acceptance in the corporate world, Morris soon received commissions from Absolut Vodka, AT&T, Perrier, Microsoft, Sony and H.J. Heinz Corporation. He also began reaching out to a mass audience. For ten seasons, fans of the television sitcom Friends saw his work on the set.

Morris began expanding his artistic range with new conceptions. He worked beyond his pictures' edges and coordinated his images with three-dimensional objects made of painted wood that added intensity to his central images. He also created multi-panel paintings, often using such American icons as the Statue of Liberty and others in his bright and clean identifiable style.

In recent years Morris has exhibited his work in many venues. Among them are forty-two paintings and drawings shown at the auction gallery Sotheby's branch in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The International Olympic Committee selected the artist to produce thirty-six triumphant paintings on the spirit of the Olympic Games which exhibited at the International Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, during the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Morris' work really burst onto the American stage and was given wide exposure in 2004 when he produced signature images for the 76th annual Academy Awards, perhaps best remembered for Morris' image of a young male photographer who faces forward with a light-exploding camera. Posters and banners with this icon enlivened the façade of the Kodak Theater and other sites in Hollywood and Los Angeles. The artist also produced art for the 38th Montreux Jazz Festival, the tenth annual Andre Agassi Charitable Foundation event and Major League Baseball's 2006 All-Star Game.

Morris has exhibited his eye-popping art in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Boston, Pittsburgh as well as in Paris, Geneva, Tokyo and Rome. His paintings are also part of many public and private collections.

But Burton Morris has only begun to show his considerable potential. He has proven he is alive to the world of large ideas. His talent, intensity, imagination and determination have always been present, and they continue to develop as he reaches

his middle years. His talent reaches out boldly toward fresh artistic possibilities -- whenever they occur, whatever they may be and wherever they take him.

Donald Miller

The author is a retired senior editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, where he was art and architecture critic for thirty-three years. He is the author of six books on artists and architects.