

RANDALL M. HASSON

Randall M. Hasson has a rather eye-catching way with words. While he holds no official degrees in art, he is formally trained in the calligraphic arts, and his beautifully crafted words have worked their way very prominently into his paintings. "Most of my complex paintings have a significant amount of text," says Hasson, who typically takes two or three months to finish each large canvas panel. The artist, who has a home in Santa Fe, did briefly study illustration in college. He builds as many as twelve or more layers of acrylic paint in sections, then does the lettering with whatever tool will best accomplish the intended style: broad-edged nibs, brushes, bamboo and reed pens, even pens fashioned from aluminum cans. "Sometimes I have a quote and the painting evolves around that," Hasson says, "Sometimes the image comes first and the concepts come from the image."

What inspired this painting?

I had used cut gemstones as images in a previous painting ... the act of painting them intrigued me, and I began to explore their form and meaning.

What prep work and painting techniques went into it?

Because I integrate lettering into my work, I use readily available acrylic inks and therefore paint in acrylic as well. I use various mediums and glazes to achieve either the finish or depth/transparency I desire for the subject I am painting. In this particular painting, the gems themselves are painted in multiple glazes and are finished with a glossy varnish layer while the rest of the surface remains matte. I researched the gemstones themselves-their meaning from a metaphysical, biblical and traditional view, which included such things as the healing properties and also which gems (such as lapis) were used as pigments, and what gemstones were significant biblically. While many times I do have compositions in mind, in this case the painting started with one gem and evolved from there.

How does it relate to your other paintings?

My works, because most of them contain text, are usually topical or themed. I call them "contemplative" because they are not meant to provide answers, but to stimulate thought and questions. I almost always use symbolism and allegory in the images I select. This particular painting deals with a great or significant subject: faith, mystery, spirituality, afterlife, and so on. The subject matter dictated not only a dynamic composition, but also dynamic movement and color.

What does this painting mean to you?

It is about the mystery of eternity. It is an asked question without a defined answer. There is a presupposition here on the part of the artist: the concept that there actually is a Higher Being, or God. For a traditional Western Christian or Jew, there is a concept of Heaven. But no matter who you are or what you believe, the only thing that is sure is that it won't be exactly how you think it will be. We simply don't know. In the two faiths mentioned above, there is a "Throne" or a "New Jerusalem" described in the Bible. The gems mentioned in those descriptions are in this painting ... but so are many others. Many artists have tried to paint or portray the actual "throne" or the New Jerusalem. I have not because I don't believe any representation by a human can be accurate. That is why the "street paved in gold" disappears over the hill. It begs the questions: Is there a God? What does He look like? Where does He dwell? What does that place look like? Is it active or peaceful? Stagnant or bustling with creativity? And so begins the conversation.