



A Conversation with Realist Painter: Paul Collins

To paint with words is the writer's task, but this canvas I write on is electronic and the artist I want to depict with words is vibrant, richly layered and has a texture that spans decades that has encompassed the world with his talent.

Paul Collins is world renowned, highly respected, and deeply admired for his artistic majesty.

You can learn more by visiting his website: www.collinsart.org



Paul's work has been exhibited in Major cities such as Moscow, Tokyo, Paris, and New York. His artwork mirrors his life.

He has traveled around the world and has depicted the cultures and people he has met in places such as Senegal, Israel, Kenya, Gambia, Japan, Mexico, the U.S. and Cuba.

Paul has lived in the countries and with the people and places that he depicts with his masterful use of light, textures, and detail.



Walk with Us

by Paul Collins



Paul Collins has a booklet titled **“Walk with Us”**. It highlights his life as an artist, and is available online. It's free and details many aspects of his life as a painter and also gives great insight into his perspective and influences.

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Paul Collins is not just an outsider that observes.

He experiences the people and cultures he vividly paints on canvas by living with them. When you see a Paul Collins work of art you are not just observing, you are also experiencing it.

Being an artist is only one part of Paul Collins that people might know, but he is also dedicated to being philanthropic and has helped many organizations especially as a chairperson of youth groups.

You can discover more about Paul's extraordinary life by visiting this link: [*Paul Collins - Artist*](#)

The canvas I write on feels limited to describe the accomplishments and overall magnificence of Paul Collins.

There is much to admire beyond the art itself.

This interview is an honor, and is truly special because, let's be honest, Paul Collins is one of America's best realist painters.

Paul Collins himself is as real as it gets.

Thank You Paul for taking time away from your canvas to help me paint mine.



TS: When you look back on your vast experience, is there a special time, or place that you would like to return and just visit, not to paint, but just visit?

PC: It would be Japan and Cuba.

I learned a lot in Japan. It taught us how to consistently take better care of our minds and bodies. There is a sense of harmony and respect for nature and culture that I have never felt anywhere else. No matter your status in life, if you could join the community on Saturdays, the elders would put you to work. Every day was a cultural experience.

Cuba, too, was fascinating. A rainbow of humanity. Their prized possession is virtually one another and their innovative, creative spirit. We saw them as angels caught in a vortex of politics and power. Through the years, we saw small but steady improvements for the people. It is very culturally different from other communist countries I have experienced.

They were both a significant contribution to my life ethics and spirituality.



TS: Who would you say was/is the greatest influence on you as a painter?

PC: Randy Brown, a highly educated artist, writer, and poet, was one of my role models in my community.

I met him at a young age. He was different from anyone else I knew, which fascinated me. He acknowledged a lot about me and my art that I didn't even realize. My history teacher, Mrs. Lally, saw me doing sketches of kids in class and asked me to draw the assignments on the chalkboard. She told me I would be a great artist. My art teacher told me the opposite!

Randy told me she was right, and he took an interest in me and my art. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship and professional collaboration. Soon he hired me to work with him doing yellow page illustrations for all types of businesses.

In 1956 we formed RAN-COL Associates. It quickly became a highly sought-after commercial art and sign-painting company because we could paint people and products along with lettering. We provided services to Michigan's largest businesses, including Amway, Meijer, Steelcase, Herman Miller, and Stow-Davis. Together we broke down a lot of walls of bigotry.

At night I would hone my fine art, and soon I was ready to sell at the art fairs. As my career went in another direction, we collaborated on projects incorporating his writings and poetry with my work.



TS: What do you use to create your paintings? (Do you use oils, acrylics, watercolor?)

PC: My eyes and mind. I use oils on canvas or masonite. I prefer masonite because it travels well.



TS: Do you ever look at one of your paintings and see "mistakes?"

PC: Yes, I do. I look at quite a few of my paintings and think maybe I could have done something different; most of all, I should have made them bigger! The award-winning painting of the Underground Railroad has graced covers and pages of books, magazines, digital media, and millions of homes and offices.

There is no doubt that the image captivates people and is relatable to traumatic events in many places worldwide. I would not consider it a mistake but a missed addition to the story. If I were to portray it again, I would add a quaker because the railroad's success was a passionate collaboration of blacks and whites.



TS: What has been your favorite subject to paint? (Is it people, nature, or food/objects?)

PC: People. I have always been fascinated by the human face, body, and spirit. At a young age, I was disturbed by the derogatory caricatures of blacks and Indians portrayed like clowns as if they were not as human as others

As my talent emerged, I realized I could paint people's truth. Creating a window into another life subliminally highlighting our commonality

I started painting black people, not looking at color but character. That tradition carried on into many other cultures. So many people I paint are positive role models. I want to show people of all cultures in a dignified light.

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PC: At the same time, I realize humanity cannot exist without the earth. Often, I pay homage in my art to the universe. I respect and understand that we are all in this together and that this earth gives us life that is our existence. Collectively, helping the process of bringing people together.

I believe our greatest gift is the earth and one another, and unless we learn to live together, we perish.

We are all affected by one another on some level. I passionately paint to prick the conscience within us, remind us of our commonality, and provoke thought and awareness of the world around us. I feel a deep sense of responsibility to do what I can to make our world a better place for generations to come.

Painting reality becomes immortal to future generations.

TS: When you began your journey as a painter, did you ever expect it to take you to the places and meet the people you have?

PC: Never in my wildest imagination.

My work is inquisitive and non-judgmental. This has allowed me to immerse myself inside cultures. It has been an honor to meet people from all walks of life from the far corners of the globe. Every place and the uniqueness of each individual allowed me to grow and continue to improve myself.

Some of my questions about life have been answered through all my journeys, but many more have surfaced.

A few things I have witnessed are if we work collectively together positively, life is enriched. If we choose to hate, it pollutes our minds and causes destruction in life.



Paul and his wife Carol

TS: Your life is represented in your art, and I am thankful to have been able to experience it, and I hope that anyone who reads this interview will discover the world and cultures that you have shared with us, and I will say that your words are as beautiful and inspiring as the paintings you have created.

Please visit Paul's website for much more information and to see his artwork.

www.collinsart.org

