

## ***Inspirations and techniques***

By Steven Lamb

In most of my works I take inspiration from the beauty of Old Montreal, its streets, buildings and people. Walking down the streets is a rich experience providing a wealth of imagery for my work. Watching clowns, magicians, singers and artists perform is equally exciting as documenting them. Sometimes even places as such as the Montreal's Casino are important inspiration source. Using my camera I capture every possible scenes and then I use source and that is what makes a great deal of my unique technique. My method of work is a combination of old masters technique and some newly devised ways of achieving my objectives. My experience as a printmaker and illustrator also contributes to the richness of the technique. For instance the use of sand in my works comes from the aquatint as a part of intaglio technique. I combine all media in an effort to create my own world. What I consider typical about myself is the keen observation of popular culture. I use the grotesque as a tool of social commentary, not to criticise but to amuse and humourize my audience at the same time I am also trying to blend humour with serious things in an effort to give my work more life and meaning.

I usually begin my work with colour pencils, creating a rough sketch and refining it with a black pencil in order to achieve a precise line. This is inspired by an animation technique called 'clean up'.

After that, I apply charcoal lines on the back of the image to prepare it for the next procedure. Then I transfer the image on a specially prepared canvas. This technique was used in the past in the process of mural painting and is important for the precision of the details in my work. Once the outlines are defined, I proceed to apply different textures on previously determined places. To create a rich texture I use three kinds of sands.

The third step is to cover the textures with colour gesso. In the process I use up to seven colours and when satisfied with the result, I highlight the volumes using white tempera-another old masters technique.

The fourth step is to apply acrylic paint to the largest surfaces, proceeding from the general to the particular.

The fifth stage is to remove some parts of the acrylic paint with a special thinner. This way the colour base of the picture is revealed and that is how I create the vibration and harmony of the colours. After that I accentuate on the details.

In the final part I am using watercolour pencils, dry pastels and if necessary oil colour to complete the work. The order in which these steps are applied is extremely important for the professional execution, precision and quality of my

technique. Finally to secure a long lasting artwork I cover the picture with a special u.v. protection varnish.