

# Hashim Hannoon



left, Berth, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"  
above, Sunny Weekend, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"

## The Power of Hope

written by Brett Anningson

At first glance, the artwork of Hashim Hannoon seems simplistic and childlike. There are bright colours and exaggerated shapes, a blurred quality to the lines and a sense of shifting dynamism which draws you in. Then, the emotional content comes to life and the depth of meaning overtakes you.

So, leave the simplicity behind and what you will find is an abstract expressionist who paints realism. The art of Hashim captures a balance between form and colour, while bringing to life his unique perspective influenced by the hardship of war. In his work you will find the painful memories of wartime brought into the light and given the power to bring hope. Vitality, light and colour bubbling up to radiate optimism. At the same time, there is emotional realism showing that hope is only necessary because of hardship. "The several wars in my country made me escape from reality and go back to my childhood memories," explains Hashim, "as these would help me in portraying a bright future full with hope."

It was, in fact, his parents who first encouraged him to pursue the visual arts. They saw that he was able to express himself so well through creative



Sweet Memories, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"

pursuits. Teachers and professors also had a great impact in shaping his identity as an artist. Now, his family helps and supports him. Born at Basra, Iraq in 1957, Hashim showed much artistic promise right from the beginning. After regular schooling, he went on to graduate from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1979. He followed this with a Bachelor's Degree in Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1999. In his native country, Hashim was readily praised, and had already begun an illustrious career which seemed like it would continue to bring him more and more recognition. Until chaos intervened.

As you no doubt recall, 2003 was when Iraq came to the forefront of the global consciousness.

The United States led a coalition invasion that only managed to make matters worse. This was just another sad chapter in a region of the world that has known turmoil for many decades. "I moved with my family to Jordan during the war," Hashim explains, "and we lived there for ten years, during which I had lots of exhibitions. In 2009, I moved with my family to Winnipeg, Canada. My first exhibition was in Mayberry Fine Art Gallery in Toronto. Currently, I work and live in British Columbia."

Hashim finds much beauty in his current surroundings, but more importantly he has come to feel settled and stable in terms of the environment around him. It is from this place of relative peace



above, Granville Island, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"  
following spread, Victoria City Hall (detail), acrylic on canvas, 40" x 40"

and harmony that he is able to ponder the world of his past, and express it in new ways.

#### The Brightness of Life

"I studied a lot of art," says Hashim, "both modern and all of the historical movements. There is beauty in everything, but what spoke to me most was the abstract expressionist movement. I do not work by commission because I like to paint what inspires me at the moment. I suppose that is the same thing – I have blended together the things that I feel most strongly about and I present them on the canvas."

Hashim has been greatly influenced by artists who, like himself, have mixed the expressionist

with the realist. Among his favourites he would include Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Paul Klee, Joan Miro, Robert Rauschenberg, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Jasper Johns. In other words, he has been influenced by the modernism of the turn of the last century. This was a movement away from traditional representation; not only a type of painting, it was also a philosophy in which tradition is thrown aside in favour of experimentation. Abstraction, distortion, cubism – these were all new ways of seeing and creating that allowed the expression of emotions to come front and centre.

Combine this influence with all of Hashim's life experience; add a touch of voracious reading and



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previous spread, Downtown (detail), acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"  
left, Spring Breeze, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30"  
above, Icy Roads, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30"

a pinch of music and you have the creative process necessary to experiment with drawing and painting in a way that allows him to bring his surroundings to life. "My art is generated from my surroundings," muses Hashim, "although I tend to spend most of my creative time in the studio, escaping from the everyday routine. I listen to music, I think about my childhood, I think about the places I have been, I look at the handmade colourful carpets from Iraq which are on my floor, and I put all of that onto the canvas."

Many artists experiment with different media, trying to find one that suits them best, but Hashim has always loved working with acrylics because of the brightness and shine. Colours matter a lot in a Hannon painting, in fact, that might be what makes them distinctive. The colours – so bright and simple – drawing the eye in to the theme and texture that lingers below the surface. And, for Hashim, the best way to accomplish the bold colour palette he seeks is with acrylics.

"Because of the style I try to create, I try to simplify the way I am depicting the theme in my artworks. I want people to be able to search for, but also find the meaning in my work. I do that by choosing the right media, colours and symbols. I typically do not start with a sketch for my ideas; I like to fill in the canvas surface with colours and see where it takes me. Sometimes I use mixed media to add texture to the surface and then start to imagine what the theme will be for my work."



left top, Waterfall, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30"  
left bottom, Northern View, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30"

above, Wonderful Games, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30"

#### Finding Hope

"I tend to focus on the theme of childhood in my paintings, because I think that we can depict the future in in this theme," Hashim muses. "The presence of children means a new beginning and a better future. Therefore, I want to be optimistic about the future and I want the people who see my artworks to see hope not pain. The message I deliver through my artworks is about the importance of peace and having hope in a better future."

He explains that war has been prevalent since the 1980s in his home country; he has seen death many times, and not much has changed in Iraq so far. Coming to Canada was a new beginning and a new future, not only for him, but also for his

children. "I guess the big thing is that everything I have seen has made me really appreciate the meaning of a peaceful life. Therefore, I use my paintings as a medium to deliver my story and hopefully inspire my audience. When I came to Canada I felt more settled and I began to focus on the theme of the city and landscape, as I'm surrounded by a beautiful place. However, I did not forget about my roots or the old themes that I used to depict in my artworks. I combined different themes in my new artworks that cover the aspects of childhood and the Canadian scene centred around the city."

We all know that art can be emotional, but it can also be healing. This is a huge reality behind Hashim's practice of painting. He admits,





previous spread, Colourful Seaside (detail), acrylic on canvas, 40" x 40"  
above, portrait of artist Hashim Hannon  
right, Wonderful Victoria, acrylic on canvas, 40" x 40"

"Painting is healing to me because when I draw I feel I'm part of the world I'm creating via my own perspective. It gives me an opportunity to isolate myself from the surrounding."

And that means isolating himself from the pain and reality of the darkness he has encountered. It is good advice for any of us, to try to let go of the darkness and see the light. He notes, "This is why I encourage the people who explore my artworks for the first time to contemplate them closely in order to understand their deep meaning."

If you are searching for hope, if you want to be transported to a simpler time, or if you just enjoy the beauty and colour of the world around you, immerse yourself in the world of Hashim Hannon and his post modern exploration of how childhood brings joy to the heart of darkness. It's a journey well worth taking.

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Hashim Hannon is represented by the following galleries:

Madrona Gallery  
Victoria, BC  
[www.madronagallery.com](http://www.madronagallery.com)  
250.380.4660

Mayberry Fine Art  
Toronto, ON  
[www.mayberryfineart.com](http://www.mayberryfineart.com)  
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