

WITHOUT *constrictions*

*Written by Remy Haynes
Photographs by Remy Haynes*

EVERYTHING IS IN THE MOMENTS FOR ARTIST DOMINIC J. LOPEZ

Have a cappuccino with abstract painter Dominic J. Lopez and you will cover not just the subject of art but the metaverse - wait...what is that again? - and quantum mechanics. You might also discuss living amongst artists in Monterey, being a lieutenant in the Navy and getting a master's in finance all while sitting next to a painting with a cheesy grin and a drippy looking tooth. Have you fallen down a rabbit hole to another world or have you just been introduced to Dominic? The hour would tell.

Dominic is more than what he first appears, and much is revealed about how seriously he takes his art practice and how invested he is in who collects his art and what his art gives back to the world. At first glance you might find some shirtless selfies on his IG and some poetry, an interesting dichotomy. Several public photos also show he's quite serious, yet his work is playful, full of vibrancy and fun. This is what makes my job so interesting, getting to the bottom of why artists make the art they do and why it may be very different from their public persona.



We sit in a 'creative space' he has in Hollywood to discuss his art further. The walls are covered with medium to large scale paintings, all perfectly curated to include a thoughtful mix of subjects and colors that although appear at first haphazard are quite pleasing to the eye. He mentions a good friend of his helped him curate it. On the adjoining wall are other artist's works. 'I don't paint here,' he tells me, but I use it for gatherings and let other artists use it as well to do their art.' I ask where he typically paints, and he mentions a beautiful place with a garden he loves and a home studio but is private about that space. He's a bit vague, which only makes me want to know more. It seems from what he reveals that he enjoys being outside when he paints and barely clothed. "Clothes are constricting," he tells me. To which I quip back, so you paint in your undies, and he nods.

I want to paint a picture of Dominic but at every turn he crushes my preconceived notion of his public persona. Outwardly he's a handsome young guy, obviously talented but has a soul full past and is much more than

the art hanging beside us. He mentions attending the Naval Academy in Maryland after he was inspired to serve in the military after the tragedy of 9/11. He served seven years as a lieutenant and was able to go to film school on the government's dime. A careful plan, as he is now very much involved in the direction and production of movies, another great passion of his. He talks about his yoga practice, praying daily and meditating. "I also paint every day. I have to for my mind." I get the feeling these practices have kept him healthy, sane, and as he puts it, connected to the divine. "You're always taken care of in the pursuit of the evolution of self," he tells me. "You go to battle with yourself every day. Maybe your shadow self but God is smiling at you. There is no one like you. You have such a gift to give to the world. Every moment is so cherished. This is what my work is about."

Dominic's art is considered abstract and could be categorized as Neo-expressionism. My challenge as a writer is to try to understand his expression. My analytical brain wants



Dominic J. Lopez 3's



*Dominic J. Lopez /chiban

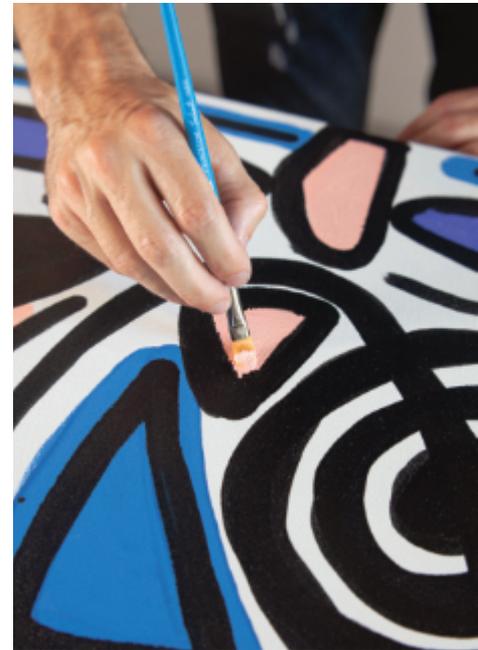
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to analyze the symbols he uses, the paint colors he chooses and discover the spaces that bring him inspiration so that I might uncover the reasoning behind the art. He dutifully answers my questions but it's obvious I've missed the point. It's called abstract art for a reason. It's not supposed to be accurate it's just supposed to achieve an effect. Andy Warhol's use of repetition and neon colors or Salvador Dali's trend for objects that melt may not resonate with everyone, but



Dominic J. Lopez Energy



Dominic J. Lopez Printing Paper

their work sure makes us think. Abstract work can trigger our analytic brains to ponder the 'why?'

This can be very closely related to the human experience, can it not? Aren't we all trying to figure out the why instead of living deeply in the richness on each moment given to us? "This moment is so special to me," Dominic tells me, "I may never have this moment again." I ask him about his piece titled, 'Printing Paper' and he explains his motivation behind it. "If you really step into your gift, you'll be taken care of. You can print your own paper, your own money." Or, he says, someone might just see the colors and vibe with that. I love his explanation because it's so true about any art. Viewers might just vibe with the visual he's chosen to entice us; his use of primary colors and thick lines, his stick figures and toothy, grinning faces. Maybe we just love looking at his art and seeing something different in it each time.



Dominic J. Lopez *El Capitan*

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Before we close our meeting, I ask him about some of the symbols in his work, like the repeating infinity symbols, his mention of portals and the metaverse. Again, my analytic brain wants to make sense of why he’s chosen to include these symbols. He explains that all his work is about the existential questioning we all experience as humans. It’s about self-awareness, and evolving, letting go and surrendering. I wonder, as he explains, if he’s talking about his actual state of mind he is in when he paints. Maybe when we see Dominic’s art it stirs that childlike energy in all of us that makes us want to paint in the garden in our undies. This artist may be reserved in person but the world he paints for us is anything but. Dominic’s world is vibrant and playful and begs our attention. It grounds us in the moment because that is where he wants us to live.

— *dc*



Dominic J. Lopez *Approach*

