

## Thomas Stiltz

Born in 1948 in the town of Newark, Delaware, Tom Stiltz's affinity for art became apparent at an early age. By the age of 5, he was drawing his favorite cartoon characters.

At age 12, he was picked to attend special art classes at the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. There he was taught painting and drawing and exposed to the Museum's collection. By high school, he had sold his first painting - an Andrew Wyeth-like oil painting of an old farm wagon. The Wyeth family dominated the art scene in Delaware at that time and Delaware has a fine tradition of illustrators.

In 1965, he attended the University of Delaware as an Art major and soon discovered photography, ceramics and steel sculpture. In photography, he started to work big - producing large murals in black and white. Mural paper at that time was dull and hard to work with, so he started to experiment with applying photographic emulsion to different surfaces such as frosted glass, mirror and formica. This led to a grant to attend graduate school at the University of Delaware in 1971.

For most of his professional life, Thomas Stiltz has worked as an art director, photographer and painter. His experience with Photography brings sensitivity to light and form. His strong sense of composition and picture space, combined with a flair for the dramatic, naturally lead him to create striking paintings.

Thomas Stiltz now lives outside Baltimore, Maryland with his wife Sheri and daughters Jenny and Julie. Thomas Stiltz's vision and style sweep through his still-life paintings like fresh air and light through an open window. Here within well-crafted compositions, we find a beautiful, peaceful and harmonious refuge from a hectic world that is too often filled with noise, crowding and chaos.

In a Stiltz painting, everything is just as we want it to be. Everything has a perfect place. Somehow, Stiltz has managed to combine an elegant spareness with a sensual lushness - two qualities that would seem, at first analysis, to be mutually exclusive. Benefiting from Stiltz's keen sensitivity to light and shadow, forms take on new meaning and life. Flowers contrasted against the solidity of a ceramic vase convey a sense of fragility. Folds in cloth contrasted against the rigidity of placed objects produce organic movement. These effects are no accident, but a deliberate manifestation of Stiltz's intent to subtly subvert, and ultimately replace, our view and understanding of inanimate objects. To achieve his result, Stiltz combines old world paintings techniques with a distinctly modern view of the world. He navigates deftly between the Scylla and Charybdis of still-life painting; steer too much toward the traditional, and the painting becomes musty - as if you could, or should, blow the dust away; steer too much toward the modern and you have lifeless, sterile photographs of little interest to

the viewer. Stiltz manages to borrow the best elements of both, and in doing so creates a style that is uniquely his own.

Drawing from his background as a professional photographer, Stiltz employs unique framing concepts that use space to create drama and mystery in the painting. Rather than try to fill up the picture space with objects, he leaves out all but the most important elements to produce interesting and dynamic compositions. A Stiltz painting is at once visually dramatic and yet, quiet in mood.

Finally, Stiltz's paintings invite us not only to enjoy the sublime pleasures of his canvasses, but also to start seeing everything in a different light. Gaining an appreciation for his work inevitably leads us to a greater appreciation for the objects and light that create the everyday visual world around us. It is a priceless experience indeed.