



Third Prize Winner US\$1000 and an Official Award Certificate

STEVE SCHEURING, Pennsylvania, USA, *Jam*, oil, 24 x 36" (60 x 91 cm)

MY INSPIRATION

I love playing toy cars with my son. One of our favorite games is to set up the cars' tracks across our basement's length and take turns shooting cars back and forth to each other. When I shoot the cars to him, he collects them in neat, orderly rows, just like cars stuck in highway traffic.

One weekend, prior to a play session, I visited New York's Museum of Modern Art. My son's car traffic jam reminded me of some grids-of-color paintings seen in the museum and I was inspired to apply a similar abstract composition to a realistic scene.

Jam can be seen as a nostalgic, simple celebration of childhood toys. Or, it can be viewed as a more adult-themed traffic jam. In much of my recent work, I've been drawn to subject matter that can be interpreted in different ways, depending on if I'm feeling sentimental or engrossed in the realities of adult life. I have also painted a series incorporating toys in adult settings.

MY DESIGN STRATEGY

I used my son's inspiration to compose his cars in a similar pattern to the museum paintings. I used cars with complementary colors like blue and orange and also ones with a high contrast of lights and darks in the foreground. I also used cars with analogous colors like blue and green and low contrast in the background so they would recede. These tactics help move the viewer's eye throughout the work. I composed the cars on my dining room table – this room has a perfect late-afternoon glow – and took a number of reference photos, playing with various car placements and angles until the composition suited me.

MY WORKING PROCESS

I use a mix of photography, the live composition, and individual toy cars in my studio as reference. I paint at night, so toy cars provide an easy opportunity to paint from life. I created a grid on a print of the primary reference photo and sketched the composition using a scaled-up grid on canvas. Grids on larger paintings helped ensure perspective and proper placement. Then I blocked in inky washes of the car base colors. At this stage, I'm not too concerned about nailing the right temperature or value – I just want it close, knowing glazing adjustments can be made later. I purposefully keep my palette limited, but for this painting, additions of some old student paints were perfect. An old tube simply called "green" was nearly spot on for the Pinto. Once this first pass properly dried, I adjusted value and temperature with glazes and refined detail starting at the bottom right, working to the top left – I'm left handed and didn't want to drag my hand/brush through finished work. I've recently switched to extra-long filbert brushes for finer work to help create crisp, straight edges and maximize paint loading.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: steve@stevescheuringfineart.com
www.stevescheuring.com