



Bendel Hydes



*Image: Bendel Hydes (2009), Baltic Blossom 0-30 Degrees East,
from the collection of Alan Turner*

“My work is always more about the image rather than the idea, but no matter how or where ideas come about, if one is involved in their production, the way in which one pursues that production will determine the outcome of the work.”

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The Artist

Bendel Hydes is known as one of Cayman's top artists. He was born in West Bay, Grand Cayman in 1952. Hydes studied art at two different universities in the UK, and finished his studies at Clark University in the US where he could focus more on the ideas of art and creativity rather than the practice of art.

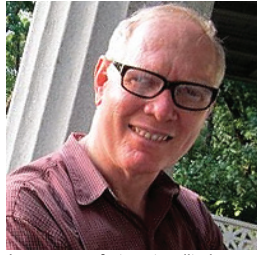


Image: www.fortrestosolitude.com

He is very well known for paintings that he makes as what are called 'translucent abstractions', where thin washes of colour are layered one on top of the other.

Hydes focuses on the materials and processes he uses to create a painting, rather than trying to depict any one particular image. He enjoys discovering what new ideas he can communicate through creating art.

Hydes is very interested in philosophy (the study of reality, or the way things are), and exploring why individuals, groups and cultures act in the ways that they do, and what the results of those actions are. He has also said that the German Expressionist art movement had an effect on him. This movement focused on communicating the artist's feelings and mood by using unnatural shapes and colours (e.g.—Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Vasily Kandinsky, Otto Dix, and Franz Marc).

Expressionism is a term used to describe a common way of thinking about art and architecture. Abstract Expressionism is one of several types of Expressionism. Abstract Expressionism was biggest in the 1940s and 1950s especially in America, and uses the technique of abstraction (focusing on only a part of a natural object or event) to convey strong emotions. Other artists using this style include Barnett Newman, and Jackson Pollock.

Hydes has lived and worked in New York City since 1982 and participated in several important exhibitions there and in France, Brazil, London, and Washington, D.C. His art is collected by people such as HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, and several other public and private institutions including the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and the Cayman Islands National Archive.

The Artwork

Baltic Blossom comes from a series of paintings called Circumnavigating the Globe, which consists of 12 pieces, each sized 78" x 78"; approximately the height of a professional basketball player! Each painting in the series references a particular location on the globe.

This series focuses on how humans interact with the earth, and especially the sea, which Hydes says features predominately in his work because of his Caymanian heritage and experience as a sailor. The colours and shapes give a sense of the blending together of swirling water, land, cultures, and current events.

Hydes produces pieces such as *Baltic Blossom* by first trying to understand how nature and culture interact. *Baltic Blossom* was created as a tribute to a friend from Estonia in Eastern Europe. He wanted to show the free-spirited nature of that culture, using

pinks and blues shaded by white to illustrate the positive feelings of hope and being saved.

Discussion

- What does *Baltic Blossom* make you think of? How does it make you feel?

- What makes a painting valuable? Do you value work more if you know it is in the collection of a prince or a National Gallery? Does this affect how you view the art at all?

- Do you prefer work that has an idea behind it? Is your own art more about the image you produce or the idea behind it?

- The sea features in Hydes work because of growing up in Cayman and being a sailor. What things in your life influence what you like to paint?

Making Comparisons

- Look at the work of other Expressionist painters such as Kirchner and Newman. How is their work similar to, and different from, the work of Bendel Hydes?

www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/Barnett-newman-1699

www.wikipaintings.org/en/ernst-ludwig-kirchner

- Visit the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and view the Bendel Hydes pieces that are on display. What is it about them that makes them recognisable as Bendel Hydes paintings?

Follow Up Activities

- Bendel Hydes used pinks and blues shaded by white to represent positive attitudes of hope and redemption. Try painting in colours that express hope for you.

- Try the same painting in opposite (complementary) colours — does it change the feeling of the art?

- Try Hydes' technique of adding thin layers of colour over one another. Can you create the 'translucent abstraction' that he creates? Try watering down acrylic paints to achieve this.



Image: Bendel Hydes (2012), *Summer Heat*, from the collection of Alan Turner