



35 YEARS IN THE STUDIO

Charlotte Artist Tony Hernandez makes a career out of a passion.

words ELEANOR MERRELL

photos CARTER WADE PHOTOGRAPHY *courtesy* TONY HERNANDEZ



TONY HERNANDEZ REMAINS LOCKED IN HIS STUDIO. EACH MORNING he puts on the same clothes, and each day he eats the same meals. The objective is to limit any distractions — even one as simple as which shirt to wear on a day when he will see no one, do nothing other than create. In doing so, Hernandez feels he is able to preserve the mental space necessary to immerse himself in his artistic work until he is able to bring his vision to life.

This creative process taps into the same level of obsessive dedication that was the catalyst for Hernandez’s transition to a full-time career as an artist in the spring of 1988. “I remember I was in Little Five Points in Atlanta, GA the day I made this decision,” says Hernandez. “I quit my job as a project manager at a construction company. Painting had become necessary for my existence. I needed time to ideate and conceptualize and I could not work and pursue my art part time.”

Within two years of that decision, Hernandez dialed in to the same medium that he uses today — a blend of graphite pencils, water pens, ink, colored pencils, gouache, beeswax, and damar resin. “I start the painting by drawing the image on a birch wood panel with graphite pencils,” explains Hernandez. “This is when I figure out how to paint the painting and it is the most painstaking part of the process.”

Next, Hernandez coats the panel with beeswax and damar resin, and then he begins to paint with oil crayons. As he does so, he uses a blowtorch to raise the heat of the paint to a temperature at which it will adhere to the birch wood panel. Between each application of paint and emulsion, Hernandez scrapes the surface of his work, removing any ridges of paint to produce an even surface. After allowing at least a week for the painting to dry, Hernandez adds a final layer of resin with extreme care; it’s

TLG DOORS & HARDWARE



RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL | REMODELING

Visit our showroom | Knowledge Park Rock Hill, SC 29730
803-329-2270 | tlgdoors.com

all too easy to smear the image with this application if a high level of patience and control is not applied.

The result is often a work that makes ample use of symbolism that gestures at a feeling or an emotion intended by the artist. Recent series have been composed of pieces that are uncluttered and seemingly simple, yet evocative nevertheless. Hernandez's pieces often feature children as the primary subjects, which the artist cites as a primary source of inspiration.

Hernandez's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across the globe and in a number of prominent cities in the U.S., most notably New York, San Francisco, Miami, Atlanta, and New Orleans. His pieces are part of a number of private and public collections, including in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and in The Bronx Museum of the Arts. Tony also had some major collaborations in 2023, including Ballard designs/QVC, Magnolia Network, and Kips Bay Showhouse in Palm Beach. Locally, his work can be found at Hidell Brooks Gallery in SouthEnd. Hernandez also works on commission and can be contacted through his website.

info

tonyhernandezstudios.com

[@tonyhernandezstudios](https://www.instagram.com/tonyhernandezstudios)

