

Source of  
inspiration, life  
partner, housemate.  
A special kind  
of symbiosis be-  
tween Hunt Slonem  
and his parakeet.

# Poison yellow and Pink

The exotically wild, the lavishly vivid, Hawaiian flora and fauna, interspersed with his earlier paintings of saints. New York's star artist Hunt Slonem paints on a grand scale – in terms of size and colour. He took *Drive* for a walk through his 89 worlds on New York's south side.

## The Exotic Worlds of **Hunt Slonem**



# Poison yellow and Pink

The address 303 West 10th Street, in a neighbourhood of profane industrial buildings and dark brick walls, is not exactly inviting. Exiting the elevator on the first floor of the old office building, visitors are immediately confronted with an oversized picture frame leaning from floor to ceiling against the opposite wall. A pallid golden memento of a past epoch that bridges into the colourful world of Hunt Slonem



today. Here in his 50,000-square-metre atelier overlooking the Hudson River begins the fabulous realm of one of the most successful marketing minds among America's painters.

Our host greets us in light shorts sprinkled with paint in colours that tip us off to exactly which painting he is currently working on. Hunt Slonem begs our pardon but has come directly from his easel; a green cockatoo on his shoulder playfully rubs its feathered head against him. We follow him into the first of his 89 rooms, many of which flamboyantly colourful. We enter the pink salon, where, as the name implies, everything from the walls to the antique furniture is uniformly decked in pink. Paintings hang frame on frame, beside, over and under one another, testifying to their creator's passion to produce. Slonem does not present his works, he stages them. And he does so in a new way each and every time. Here the light-blue room with the butterfly paintings; there another pink one packed with mussels; the collection of paintings of rabbits set against Parisian green; then his unmistakable fresco-technique paintings of monkeys, especially well-staged against the backdrop of yellow and orange walls. Thirty years of work pass before our very eyes.







We quickly lose our orientation in this labyrinth of rooms, halls and walls. All around us and at every turn a steady rhythm of paintings, paintings, paintings, until it all abruptly transitions into a place that is completely off-beat. The small, blue room is the meditative heart of the atelier, transporting the observer into another world, a blend of Asian culture and oriental religions. Hunt is not religious, he assures us. But his spiritual nature is unmistakeable. Later on, he will tell us reverently of the Krishna disciple Mother Meera, for whom he twice a year makes the long journey to Germany to tank up on new life energy in her presence.

The blue room is the kind of place that makes you want to pause, reflect, breathe deeply. But Hunt Slonem leaves no time for this. Hustling along right at our host's heels, we are relieved, if not to say pleased, when





once again his cell phone halts our hastened walkabout, if only for a short breather. Business never ceases. "I don't worry about where my pictures are hanging. The important thing is that they are selling," is his reply to the inquisitive expressions on our faces. Hunt collectors will shell out anywhere between 3,500 and 100,000 dollars for one of his works. "Depends on the size." But for these prices, the art lovers can custom-order a piece tailored to their every desire or colour preference. One recent example: a portrait of Donald Trump. A genuine Hunt Slonem as a commissioned work.

The 54-year-old native of Maine with Russian roots stages his works of art most effectively within his own four walls, such as his palace-like country house in Kingston on the banks of the Hudson River or yet another grandiose estate in Louisiana which he only visits a few times a year. Visitors can marvel at Hunt Slonem's masterpieces in the New York Guggenheim and the equally renowned Whitney Museum of American Art, as well as some 150 other museums throughout the world which play either brief stopover or permanent home to his paintings. And what are his plans for 2006? Hunt Slonem broods over the question, gently petting the fine-feathered friend on his shoulder: "Six to seven exhibits, I think, and a new book. Oh yeah, and also the TV work ..." □

*Doris Pospischil*

*Hunt Slonem in Europe: [www.galerie-von-stechow.com](http://www.galerie-von-stechow.com)*



and **Pink**

**Poison  
yellow**

