

art



"Primary Butterflies," above. "Lories," at left, by Hunter Slonem, highlights his love of birds.



"Rudi Circle," by Slonem

where the WILD THINGS are

World-famous artist lands in desert for one-man show

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Combining mysticism with realism to create a breathtaking form of exotica bursting with color, Hunt Slonem doesn't take a break — he takes a trip to an exotic land to find more beautiful living subjects to paint.

After painting tropical birds based on his own aviary, renowned

Art explosion

What: Opening reception for Hunt Slonem exhibit
When: 8 p.m. today, March 2. Exhibit runs through Sunday, April 9
Where: Exposure Gallery, 436 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs
Cost: Free
Information: 760-327-5995

artist Slonem will land in the desert for a one-man show at Exposure Gallery starting today, March 2. The show runs through Sunday, April 9.

"It took me 53 years to arrive in maturity," he says. "I've been painting in oils for years. I'm particular-

ly attracted to parrots because they are smart, toucans, cockatoos, woodpeckers — everything."

Slonem says his fascination with exotica came about during his childhood spent in Hawaii and later as a foreign exchange student in Nicaragua. In his early paintings, the birds evolved as inspiration throughout his travels.

"I travel a great deal. Things that are said to be extinct, I have often found them living," he says, while on location in Louisiana.

"I'm in rural Louisiana ... where there is a tremendous living population of butterflies. All the tropical things grow here — gardenias, you name it. There are alligators in the bayou and also, in the lakeside plantation, so many things to paint about."

With more than 250 exhibits at prestigious galleries, his work can be seen in such cities as Madras, India; Quito, Ecuador; Venice, Italy; Paris; Madrid, Spain; Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Until recently, Slonem lived and worked in New York City in his legendary loft with 70 pet birds. Today, he has about 30 birds because he spends most of his time traveling and looking for different subjects to paint.

Slonem says living in New York inspired him. It's one of the many homes for artists, and it's where his painting "Lories" took flight.

"New York has the strongest energy I have ever seen," he says. "Every person in every nature in every field is there. People seem to respect working artists there. Last

time I checked, there were more than 3 million registered artists living and working there."

Slonem maintains his vitality for pursuing the wild side of art. He says he admires legendary painters such as Frida Kahlo and Francesco Clemente.

His painting of monkeys was influenced by Kahlo's many self-portraits.

Slonem admits he's not a man that believes art is based on the phrase: "If you make it they will come." He says he believes if he finds it, it's worth painting.

"I am always visiting wildlife. I observe a lot of living things. There is something very vital about discovering the unknown and using art as the means to express it to the world," he says.