

off the wall gallery

paintings • sculpture • original prints



PETER MAX *Painting*

A love of beauty, color, music, spirituality, and art mark their presence in the consciousness of Peter Max. As one of America's most recognized living artists and pop art icons, his uplifting imagery and use of exhilarating colors implement themselves into American culture. Max inspired generations of artists and greatly influenced pop and digital art movements throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. From Tibetan monks to billboards in Times Square, Peter found inspiration in the cultures and artifacts that surrounded him, taking from them themes, colors, and psychological mindsets that could be experienced through his oeuvre.

He created paintings of presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan and Bush, in addition to his 100 Clintons—a multiple portrait installation. Additionally, he was commissioned for a number of projects from the "Preserve the Environment" postage stamp, in honor of the World's Fair in Spokane, WA to border murals at the entry points in Canada and Mexico by the US General Services, fashions and interior design, and exhibitions in over forty museums and fifty galleries worldwide. His work often featured colorful images depicting celebrities, politicians, athletes, and sporting events and other pop culture subjects in his artwork ranging from pastels, acrylics, oils, ink, and collages.

Born in Berlin in 1937, a young Peter Max would move to Shanghai only a year later with his family where he would live until he was 10 years old — then moving to Israel, South Africa, Italy, Paris, and eventually settling down in New York City; a place where he would marvel at the large automobiles, Broadway billboards, the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. As a young boy, Peter was introduced to his artistic vision through the people who were closest to him. His nanny in Shanghai would often bring watercolor sets, calligraphy brushes, and charcoal to teach the boy how to draw. His loving mother also cultivated his passion by giving him various art supplies and allowing for him to make a big painterly mess around the house. While still a young boy in Shanghai, he developed a fascination for three peculiarly American things: movies, comic books, and jazz. Music held a strong presence in Peter's painting atmosphere, with almost every work being created with the melodic sound of jazz or rock & roll blasting in the background. Although the American theme would become increasingly present in his work at a later stage of his life, the young Peter felt its presence through his childhood.

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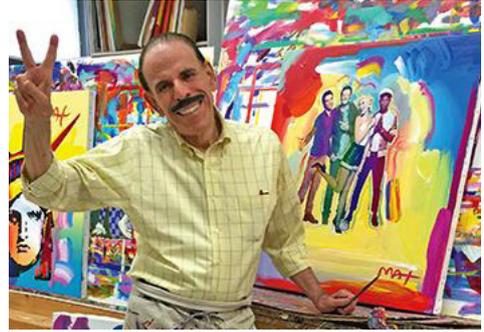
PETER MAX *continued ...*

In 1956, Max was enrolled into the distinguished Art Students League and studies realism under Frank Reilly and Norman Rockwell. Peter was previously introduced to the use of vibrant hues of color by a Viennese Expressionist teacher who would one day alter his student's canvas with the use of pinks, yellows, and bright tones - this became an eye-opener for the young student who would then realize that there are colors everywhere, even where they appear not to be. Returning to his fascination with the colorful comic books that accompanied him in China, Peter became enchanted by the power that color can hold on canvas, incorporating themes of Pop art, cartoonish images, dynamic hues of color and use of line into his work. He went on to open an art studio in Manhattan, where he would produce several posters that would eventually win him numerous awards for book covers and graphic design. The next stage in his work came from the fascination that astronomy held on Peter during his childhood. Having originally dreamed of becoming an astro physicist and studying science, he retained his passion for the Universe and later explored the theme in countless works. The magnitude of distance, the abstraction of form, and natural mysticism captivated the artist during the peak of his 'cosmic period.' Fantasized astrological images of stars, nebulas, and planets were engaging the masses of the world through Peter's canvas. Once Peter encountered America in his late teens, a new era of Pop culture references and images would implant themselves in his mind, soaring from his consciousness into a blank canvas. Psychedelic images of buildings and celebrities were elaborated in a celebration of the potential color held, inspired by an Indian swami who guided Peter with yoga and spirituality. Following a break from painting, Peter Max explored new directions in art during the 70s, leaving behind the printing press and the silk-screen that defined his work earlier. It was during this new era that he created some of his most famous works, such as the umbrella man.

Max became a bona-fide superstar through his work, being a guest on the Ed Sullivan Show, The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, appearing on the cover of Life Magazine; having his one-man exhibition at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco and the Hermitage museum in Russia, and even being invited to Ronald Raegan's Fourth of July celebration at the White House. He was also commissioned by People Magazine to design a cover, by Woodstock festival to create the largest rock and roll stage, and by the Grammy awards to create five Grammy posters, as well

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PETER MAX *continued ...*

as designing planes and cruises for Continental Airlines and Norwegian Cruise Line. It is through his universal spontaneous creativity that Peter Max reaches an inner chord in our mind, implanting images of subjects that are familiar to all of us in impressive uses of color and fundamentals of painting that have touched the lives of so many across the globe. His art creates a straight line to dreams and fantasy that create an alternative reality of that which we feel so familiar to.

"At first, I couldn't comprehend space, but I thought about it all the time, dreaming, imagining, letting my mind soar." - Peter Max

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS, COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS

MOMA - Museum of Modern Art, New York City, NY.

De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, CA.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO.

General Motors INstitute, Flint, Michigan.

Künstlerhaus, Vienna, Austria.

Palazzo de Esposizioni, Rome, Italy.

Musee de l'Affiche et la Publicite, Paris, France.

Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY.

Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, TN.

El Paso Museum of Art (EPMA), El Paso, TX.

Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY.

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Moscow Museum of Fine Art, Moscow, Russia.

The Freunde der Stattlichen Kuntshallen, Berlin, Germany.

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Parco Exhibition, Tokio, Hokkaido, and Osaka, Japan.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX.

National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

And more...