

# “Why I paint...,” Artist David Meadow

By **Alina Oswald** - August 17, 2021



David Meadow painting "Texting"

## Out Artist

Photographers paint with light. Painters paint light. That’s exactly what artist [David Meadow](#) does, capturing life as we live it and as we often dream about it. A self-taught artist based in Princeton, Meadow has won many awards, and his artwork has been exhibited in various shows, including Points of View Gallery show and Art Against Racism in 2019, and Philadelphia 3rd Street Gallery Figurative Works in 2020. His art is currently on display at Ellarslie Open at the Trenton City Museum.

[David Meadow](#) became interested in art at a very young age. “I was always drawing,” he recalls. “While other kids were out playing sports, I was sitting with a pencil and crayons and and I kept drawing all (the way) through high school.”



David Meadow painting "Best friends"

He received a full scholarship to Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University in Philadelphia. However, while he wasn’t interested in any other art form but fine arts, he turned down the scholarship, and went on to follow a different career. Yet, his interest in art has never faded away. And so, several years ago, when he retired, he decided to devote himself fully to his art. Hence, he joined a “wonderful” art group called Artists of Yardley in Yardley, PA. It is now known as AOY Art Center) located “right over the New Jersey border. I’ve been doing studio painting with them for the last (few) years.” The experience has helped him evolve as an artist. His artwork has been displayed at the Artist of Yardley Art Show over the years and will be displayed again this year on September 18.

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David Meadow’s work is fascinating and insightful. His paintings are moody, yet not quite dark, intriguing, and also enlightening while always engaging and interacting with the viewer in a subtle, yet powerful way. A common thread traversing his body of work is the human form or rather the artist’s interpretation and expression of the human form. It comes alive in Meadow’s work through light and shadows, gesture and emotion, appearing lonely and mysterious, a mesmerizing puzzle for viewers to solve.

Many of Meadow’s art pieces explore themes like loneliness, solitude or emptiness as related to natural or urban spaces, as well as the human interaction with those spaces. Thus, these artworks remind of recent and real-life events, hence they resonate and interact with viewers in insightful and powerful ways.

“I’ve always been fascinated with how people interact with their environment, whether it’s the city or nature,” Meadow said. “Many people shy away from depicting the isolation and potential sadness of loneliness but it’s just something that I was always drawn to. I think it is part of the human experience. Also, I think LGBTQ+ people, more than the general population, are prone to feeling isolated and lonely, and I think a lot of that has gotten into my paintings.”



David Meadow painting “Feeling Free”



Oftentimes Meadow’s paintings have descriptive titles, such as *Hot Day in Philly* or *The Violin Maker*, titles that clearly point at a subject, setting, and story. Other titles like *Contemplation* or the very intriguing *Should I* urge or even dare viewers to take a closer look to figure out more about the subject, story, and related symbolism and meaning.

Part of Meadow’s body of work explores our relationship with, and our role and place, in nature. In *The Waterfall*, an individual dressed in red bright colors stands at the foot of a waterfall, in the middle of nature. Looking at this painting, viewers can almost “hear” the sound of water on its sheer descent down the cliff, its size almost overshadowing everything around it. Similarly, *Feeling Insignificant* hints at what might go through the mind of the individual shown standing at the edge of a cliff, looking down at a turbulent river. And yet another painting captures a woman standing by a tree, looking into the abyss, *Feeling Free*, while connecting with nature and perhaps with her inner self.





Other images show people in urban environments, on empty city streets, perhaps as a nod to the most recent pandemic. Many images stand out. *Lost in the City* gives a sense of real-life drama, capturing a man with his bike in a deserted alleyway. *Morning Coffee* perfectly expresses the calm before the beginning of yet another day, portraying a woman sitting in a coffee shop, sipping her coffee, while dreaming of the new day ahead or maybe of something else. *Texting* speaks to the times we’re living in and is the perfect title for the visual story it tells, that of a young man in the city, unaware of the emptiness engulfing him, with his attention fully focused on the screen of his phone. And then there’s the painting of a woman in a crowded New York City Subway car, commuting back and forth between home and work, trying to find an escape in her thoughts or maybe just trying to get through her day. This particular painting resonates with a pre-COVID life, one that many people might end up returning to.

Each and every painting captures slices of life that we’re too familiar with or landscapes or natural sceneries that we often find ourselves dreaming of.

Many other images remind us of a lighter side of life. Such is the *Best Friends* painting, which shows an individual walking with his dog on an empty city street. “I was raised with dogs,” Meadow comments on this particular body of work. “I’ve always had dogs. And for me, there’s always a special connection between people and their dogs, and so I’ve always had a soft spot for painting (them).”

While it’s fascinating to look at and learn from Meadow’s paintings, it’s equally fascinating to learn about the making of all these paintings. David Meadow works mostly in acrylic and watercolor, which, as the artist explains, “are very different in how they are handled.

Watercolor is the most unforgiving media, believe it or not,” he says. “That’s because once you cover the white paper (with it) you can never get (your light) back. There is really no white in watercolor. You are using the transparency of the paint for the light. So, with watercolor, unless you’re doing a very abstract piece, which I don’t do, you have to think about what the whole painting is going to look like at the end. So, for me, it’s a difficult process because I have to work from very light to dark (when using watercolor). Acrylic is the opposite. In acrylic I work from very dark to light. With acrylic you can paint over, and you can get your light back, because like an oil paint, it’s an opaque medium to some degree, so you can always kind of fix what you’re doing, to some degree.

“As a fast painter, I am not one to wait. I like to keep moving, which is why early on (I started painting with acrylic),” Meadow says. He further explains that most painters paint in oil, because oil adds a certain shine or depth to the image, something that acrylic does not. “The problem with oil is that you can’t keep painting,” he adds. “It takes a very long time (for it) to dry, and so you have to stop at a certain point, otherwise your colors get all muddy. With acrylic, it’s very fast drying because it’s water based so I can keep painting and painting for as long as I want; with oil you don’t have that luxury.”

It’s impossible to look at Meadow’s work and not emotionally engage with it. Captivating and riveting, his paintings speak to the reality of life, and to the dreams that might come true while in this life. To resonate with viewers in such powerful ways, art has to come from the heart, from the artist’s heart. “What’s most important is to paint what you love,” Meadow said about the process of making art. “You need to do it because you



David Meadow painting “Lost in the City”



David Meadow painting “Feeling Insignificant”

David Meadow painting “The Waterfall”

love it. People will understand and appreciate that."

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Alina Oswald is a writer and award-winning photographer published nationally and internationally, with twenty years of publishing industry experience and ten years of teaching experience, I offer photography and photo editing services to small businesses and business professionals, to artists, authors and other fellow creatives.

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