

MEL SMOTHERS IS A LOCAL ARTIST WHOSE WORK DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM LAKE TAHOE. EARLIER THIS YEAR, HIS "MOUNTAIN LAKE" PAINTINGS WERE DISPLAYED IN NEW YORK CITY. WE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM TO LEARN ABOUT THE PIECES HE CREATES, AND WHAT INSPIRES HIM.

MEL



SMOTHERS

What did you do before becoming an artist? In college, I was a ranger in Desolation Wilderness as part of the Echo Unit. The experience had a profound effect on my life. I wanted to figure out how to stay in the mountains and make a living, so I went into business in Strawberry, California building mountain cabins.

How did you get started painting? When the market fell apart and construction work dried up, I had to start over. I thought about what really brought me joy and realized what mattered to me was how I felt when I finished homes for people, and when I worked as a wilderness ranger. My mom resurfaced the finger paintings I made as a child and I immediately remembered the joy associated with creating them. I went back to school for a Master's in Fine Art.

What would surprise people about the way you create? I paint on a blank wall. I don't have an easel. I don't buy canvas on stretcher bars. I buy canvas in big rolls, pin it to the wall and paint. When I'm finished, I stretch it if there's a reason to.

Is there a tool other than your paintbrush that you're currently obsessed with? There is, and this is an insider's secret... I use epoxy. It gives my paintings a certain look and brilliance.

What do you enjoy doing most when you're not creating? I consider myself a student of painting, the violin, and of fly fishing. I love playing jazz and rock and roll violin—the louder the better. Everything else fills in around those three things.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT MEL'S SOUTH LAKE TAHOE STUDIO, AND HIS NEW YORK GALLERY IS DOCUMENTED ON INSTAGRAM AT:

@ANDYDIALOGS

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