

## **more thoughts on Hunt Slonem**

**by Timothy Tew January 2019**

My introduction to Hunt Slonem came while walking through a gallery in La Jolla, California about five years ago. As is most regularly the case, I didn't see anything I liked. That was until I turned the corner and encountered a huge, luminous painting of butterflies. I was caught totally off guard, first because of its size, but also because it wasn't the style of art I thought I should respond to. But I was responding to it because the artist was obviously a gifted colorist, the application of paint was skilled, the surface was eloquent and the design was compelling, this despite the fact the piece was filled with nothing but butterflies on a gridded background. The painting also seemed to vibrate, something I would later realize was the product of repetition, much like the repetition of mantras Hunt Slonem uses to help inspire good fortune, something he believes in strongly.

The painting and its style were, however, so new to my spirit that I left the gallery with one foot in the Hunt Slonem universe and another foot still out; and it would take a few more years until I connected the dots. Soon after that, TEW Galleries had the good fortune to represent him in Atlanta.

Hunt Slonem's paintings almost always make an impression on people. This can range from those who feel his art is too sweet and the color too exuberant, to those who can't get past the fact he paints a lot of bunnies, birds and butterflies, but there are also enthusiastic, vital followers who find his art both life giving and authentic. These enthusiasts also enjoy Hunt's aura, an aura that isn't simply manufactured, something I discovered in a whole new way when I first visited his vast Brooklyn studio compound. Able to observe so much of his art in one place, I was overwhelmed by his artistic output, the consistency of the quality, and, to the dismay of critics,

that his art was getting stronger and more beautiful because of an evolving sense of color, interesting surfaces and the way he used repetition to his creative advantage.

I just returned from another visit to Hunt Slonem's studio, this time to select paintings for our upcoming show opening on February 22. I'm pleased to say I found some very exciting works that I didn't know about and they are going to make for a spectacular show. After the studio visit was complete, I headed for my favorite stop in Manhattan, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I'm very familiar with Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings—they were my first love—so I wasn't intending to visit their galleries; but when I saw a Matisse painting in the distance I was compelled to take a closer look. This led to a stroll and, before I knew it, I was looking at works by Vincent Van Gogh which, because I'm reading his wonderful biography by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, captured my attention in a new way. I was also struck by the revelation that Hunt Slonem's art has a similar exuberance of color, sensitivity to nature and repetitive mark making that I was seeing in masterworks by Van Gogh. With this, I could only wonder how I had failed to notice this before. The answer came in a quote from Albert Einstein. "The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources."

-Timothy Tew