



Sports, MICHAEL BLATT remembers, was on the tip of every tongue. Walking through the animated streets of his native Brooklyn as a child, Blatt loved to listen to the arguments shouted at newspaper stands and coffee shops about who was the better of New York's three baseball teams. It was a time of heroes, he recalls; a time of towering players who redefined the ideal of what it meant to be a man. In this environment, surrounded by living legends and their adoring fans, Michael Blatt began to draw and paint as a young boy, and sports figures would remain a powerful presence in his artwork throughout his career.

"I've never been anything other than a painter," Blatt says, wryly adding that even while he served in the army, his artistic skills were used in psychological operations, or PSYOPS. Back home in Brooklyn, he was educated at the Pratt Institute, where he studied under the abstract expressionist painter Adolph Gottlieb, and later at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, studying painting under the direction of Isaac Sawyer.

The bold, masculine art that Blatt created caught the attention of many, particularly in the sports world, and he distinguished himself by creating unique textured works of art that contrasted with the simpler portraits created by other sports artists. In one painting, for instance, Blatt created *The Streak*, a remarkable portrait of Joe DiMaggio overlaid with the figures from the games that constituted his 56-game hitting streak. In another portrait that hung in Mickey Mantle's restaurant for years, Blatt depicted Mantle in a quiet pose painted on baseball cards. And in one image that Blatt is particularly proud of, he painted Graig Nettles and placed the image on a spindle. "No matter how you turned it," Blatt says, smiling, "Nettles caught the ball."

These innovations did not go unnoticed. Soon Blatt was producing art for the San Jose Sharks professional hockey team, as well as for the Oakland Athletics and the San Francisco Giants, and his remarkable artwork ensured that he was one of the first artists to have work exhibited at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York.

Blatt's art, however, goes far beyond baseball. Recently, he produced a series entitled *The Bronco Brawler Suite* at the Rowland Studios division of S2 Art Group. These remarkable minimalist images capture the ruggedness and wildness of the American rodeo bareback rider, focusing on the movements of the horse without a distracting background. At the same time, Blatt created four vibrantly colorful paintings of American bull riders, capturing the controlled roughness of modern athletes participating in a frontier sport. In addition, Blatt has created humorous and playful images of the doe-eyed bombshell Betty Boop with S2 under the license of King Features, along with dense, layered portraits of the world's greatest poker players.

Blatt is also widely recognized in the advertising industry, winning awards for his work for STP Motor Oil, Westinghouse, and Phillip Morris. While working for internationally renowned J. Walter Thompson, he also did work for Chevron, Teledyne Water-Pik, and the Ford Motor Company. Blatt has also undertaken many commissions, including several for Art Marshall, chairman of BankWest of Nevada and a member of the gaming commission. Furthermore, Blatt had the honor of creating the poster for the 75th anniversary of Radio City Music Hall in 2007, in addition to being the only artist selected to create a poster commemorating the 40th anniversary of the famous Radio City Rockettes.

Today, Blatt lives with his family in Las Vegas, where he is able to concentrate on contemporary art and painting, and he continues to strive for perfection and find new subjects for his exciting art. As for the future, he sees much on the horizon. "I've worked my whole life in sports and entertainment," Blatt says, "and I'm finally in a city where it's all in one place."