

Artist of the Moment: Steven Charles

By Katarina Hybenova



Famous and able to pay the rent...

“What is your biggest dream?” Maybe to the surprise of many, most of the Bushwick artists wouldn’t reply “international stardom” or “wealth,” but rather simply, “not having have to go to my day job, and living off my art.” Unlike the hundreds who strive for the myth of creative life without the need to have a day job, Bushwick-based artist Steven Charles managed to do it. He lived in the spotlights of fancy Chelsea galleries for 10 years. I wasn’t rich,” says Steven, “but I was painting everyday without having to worry about my rent.” Steven was scooped from a Williamsburg gallery Pierogi directly by Marlborough. A Chelsea-based gallery offered exclusive representation, which sounded almost too good to be truth. “I had a full show every two years,” says Steven with eyes wide open. Looking at Steven’s meticulously detailed work, I understand that he had to produce a painting after painting like a machine in order to be able to do it. The trick is that truly creative

work requires spaciousness of mind, and continuous work in a crazy pace can sometimes cause you to burn out and lose your inner fire. Steven sighs deeply and I gather that the art world isn't always only about art. It's a business in the first place.

"10 Years without a job? Were you in prison or what?"



However, Steven's fate wasn't to be at Marlborough forever. His fate has been twisted by the recession that hit the art world hard. In combination with reasons of a personal nature, Steven decided to quit the gallery and continue on his own without a gallery representation. "At first, it was tough,"

Steven says. His art was still selling, but he also had to get a part-time job to make sure he could pay his bills. "They were asking me what I was doing during that 10-year long gap," Steven recalls his unplanned job hunt. "It looked really suspicious to them that I only painted. They thought I was hiding something. I don't know...that I was in prison or something," Steven continues. Eventually, Steven found a job to put him in a stable place, and he currently works 2 to 3 days per week in catering and maintenance. The rest of his week is dedicated to what he loves the most - to painting.



8-bit world and furr

Steven Charles' soul probably looks something like his art. It's colorful, lively and giggling at a bunch of insider jokes. If you look closely and patiently you will see hundreds of amazing details and colors. A "lightness of being," his colorful schemes that stroke one's soul, little provocations by orange fur here and there, some tickling glitter - Steven Charles is an analogue child who discovered the 8-bit world of the first PC.



The Bushwick Rebirth

Another milestone in Steven's life is his "Bushwick Rebirth." He moved to a shared work/live loft on Melrose Street and couldn't be happier. "I love it here, and I'm so happy to be part of this!" Steven says passionately. He seems to be more creative than ever. Maybe it's because Steven really likes his housemates, or maybe because of the Laundromat right under his building ("I'm SO lucky!"), but my humble guess is that it is because Bushwick is real. Bushwick art scene is about art and Bushwick life is about life. Simple.

Steven's work has attracted many excited viewers in Bushwick. In June and July, Steven Charles showed at [Theodore:Art](#) at 56 Bogart and in [Storefront Bushwick](#) on Wilson Ave. Currently, he is preparing for a show at [Stux Gallery](#) in Chelsea, and who knows what else will happen. The Bushwick sun is glowing.