

# Artist Biography

## Bio

Growing up in the 50's in middle America, the third of four children, Robert M. Robinson's life mimicked a Norman Rockwell painting in many ways. Church on Sundays followed by a big dinner at Grandma's house, "fighting" with his brothers, and a solid sense of family and self, instilled by the deep love his parents felt for their children, was the norm for his family.

Early on in life, Robert knew he wanted to be an artist. While his parents may have preferred that their young son consider careers that were guaranteed to be more lucrative, they did not attempt to dissuade him from his passion. By age seven, Robert had found a mentor who taught him oil painting plus techniques, and he started painting rural landscapes, which he was told were quite complex for his age.

Still hanging in his mother's home, is a painting of a seascape that Robert created after he and his brother were punished for fighting and subsequently sent to their bedrooms. Instead of ruminating, Robert picked up his paintbrush and began to paint. Young as he was, he realized that being alone was not a punishment for him; rather, he enjoyed being allowed to become completely absorbed by his art and in the solitude, almost become part of the paint. That feeling has never left him.

High school was filled with baseball, basketball, and girls, but art still attracted him most of all. He had a wonderful art teacher who introduced him to imaging outside of realism, and that opened a mental door for him. With his instructor facilitating him to learn other techniques such as semi representational, Robert spent as much time as possible in the art class honing his craft. During his senior year, Robert entered a regional, jurried show and won, whereby, he was entered in the New York Scholastic Art Show. He painted a landscape in oils in a monochromatic abstraction style and won again. He says that hearing the principal read his name and award over the loud speaker, in a school that was very large and very competitive, was extremely rewarding and further validation of his decision to follow art.

Because he was so impressed with his high school art teacher, Robert planned to become a teacher and after high school graduation, he enrolled in Edinboro State College in Edinboro, PA. He majored in painting, because it would enable him access to work in every medium including sculpture, fabric



**ROBERT ROBINSON**



design, print making and drawing. Everything seemed to be right on track when sadly, tragedy struck his family. One of his siblings was diagnosed with a long term, serious illness, and the support he had always enjoyed from his parents lessened considerably because they had to be almost totally focused on supporting his brother. Family life was never the same again, and Robert struggled to adjust to this new reality.

During his last semester of college, Robert embarked on student teaching where he spent the semester teaching art and soon felt, it meant little more than tutoring students in crafts. Hugely disappointed, Robert came to the realization that he didn't want to teach. Having worked very hard to reach the point where he was in art, he did not want to spend his life bringing art back to it's simplest form. Instead, he wanted to continue to reach new heights and grow in the field he loved so much. Difficult as his last semester was, it also held a high point which occurred when one of his professors recommended both Robert and another friend be allowed to have a two- person show at the Bates Gallery on campus. It was very reaffirming that he was going in the right direction.

Graduation was a confusing period in his life as his long time, planned teaching career was no longer what he wanted to do. Robert found a job with a designer painting city scenes in McDonald's Restaurants as they were up-grading all of them at the time. He painted local, visual architectural landmarks on the walls. Intermittent work and low pay caused him to seek additional employment, and he began working with his brother as a carpenter and builder of homes. Consequently, he learned to use all kinds of tools, which he later would use in his art work.

Soaring interest rates caused the home building business to decline considerably, and Robert made the decision to go back into art full time. Showing his portfolio, he made a large impression on a museum curator. The curator insisted on coming to see Robert's studio, only to discover that "the starving artist" was painting in the hallway of his apartment building. By the following year, Robert was receiving acclaim from the art community for his unusual and aggressive art work. He continued to receive accolades and more awards, but because the market place was relatively small, he was still not making the income he needed. Through a friend, Robert began his association with Rosenbaum, and Robert's work is now marketed all over the world. It is a very refreshing experience for him. He is very pleased that Rosenbaum Fine Art is open to experimenting, and Robert is very happy and content.

Robert's art is known for it's high energy and mixed media abstraction. The image is secondary to Robert; rather, he manipulates the medium and that is the part of art that intrigues him. Painting is a very physical thing as he typically paints quite large spaces, including installation art. "Red Haired Girl," "Incident," and "Souvenir" which was purchased by the Carnegie Museum, are some of his best known work. Currently painting on tar paper, the black scratch lines

created, are framed with difficult to design and labor intensive, carbon steel frames. The result is an elegant, symbiotic relationship between the two media and a powerful, while at the same time, delicate art form.

Consumed as he is with his art, Robert also enjoys spending time with his two sons from a former marriage. Both boys are very artistic, and Robert revels watching both of them grow in their artistic endeavors. Bonsai gardening is another favorite pastime. And, as Robert continues to search for new expression in his artistry, he probably has surprised himself by the fulfillment he has found teaching art to adults at the university level.