



May 12, 2025

PURIST[®]
CULTURE, HAMPTONS

Hunt Slonem's Natural World

The artist's embrace of the divine, on view at Sag Harbor's Grenning Gallery.



Hunt Slonem, "Untitled," 2019. Courtesy of Hunt Slonem

Wandering through artist Hunt Slonem's labyrinth-like multifloor studio space in Hell's Kitchen feels a bit like being Alice lost in Wonderland: Slonem's iconic bunny paintings pop up everywhere—there's a full wall of the colorful, 8×10 bunnies in ornate antique frames—in addition to his famed works of birds, butterflies, ocelots and flowers. Turn a corner and witness a centerpiece vase full of colorful parrot feathers in multiple shades of blue—all from the flock Slonem's shepherded over the years. He's down to about a dozen now, who reside in a glass-encased aviary in the center of one floor, from the 80 or so he once had.

His solo show at Sag Harbor's Grenning Gallery (on view from June 19 to July 13) offers a survey of recent works, an enchanted kingdom of delights, celebrating the natural world and the spiritual reverie



his paintings engender. This sense of biophilia, he says, has “been with me my whole life—the exotic and colorful patterns of birds and butterflies just send me to the moon!”

The son of a Navy officer, Slonem was born in Maine, and moved every few years, bouncing from New Hampshire to Hawaii, and Washington state. “I grew up spiritual. I used to meditate as a child, with long walks through the woods,” he says. (Today, he attends services at St. Patrick’s Cathedral daily, and maintains a meditation practice.)

A year away in Nicaragua as a high school exchange student was especially pivotal—he was gifted an ocelot jacket for his 16th birthday, which served as a jumping-off point for his copious, spotted wild cat paintings. And yes, he had rabbits as a child. The first bunny painting he ever did, he recalls, was in a rendering of St. Martin de Porres, a patron saint of animals: “This was in the ’70s, I put a row of bunnies in the bottom of the painting.” Little did he know then the “Bunnies” would come to be one of his hallmarks.

More recently, his glittery paintings made in “diamond dust” have become a pop culture phenomenon, thanks in part to the Kardashian clan, who have purchased several. Shown at some 80 galleries worldwide, with works in over 250 museums, the prolific painter shows no sign of slowing as he approaches age 74. The morning *Purist* visited his studio, he was hard at work on a large-scale painting of Moluccan cockatoos, his navy blue shirt dappled with fresh dollops of periwinkle, green and orange. “Art has the ability to heal people,” says Slonem, who lives four blocks from his studio with his partner of 16 years and their Siberian husky. “I derive 100 percent purpose in living from my painting—if I don’t paint, I just feel useless.” And he still maintains an almost childlike wonder and appreciation of the world around him. “I’m just surrounded by this great beauty all of the time—birds and all these things that are of nature and the divine.” grenninggallery.com