

An OPEN HEART

*Whether at home or traveling, **EUDES CORREIA** is constantly on the go, observing and appreciating the individuality of the people he meets and paints.*

By Ani Kodjabasheva



LEFT
Menina, Black Power Fun
(watercolor on paper, 11½x15¾)

ABOVE
Italian Guy
(watercolor on paper, 15x22)



Among crowds filling Mediterranean public spaces, Brazilian-born Eudes Correia finds unforgettable characters. “After a long time painting people, I started liking them even more,” he says. The artist has made a name for himself painting tourists in his adopted hometown of Lisbon, Portugal. His lively renditions of passersby in the city give the viewer a sense of being on the scene, crossing paths and exchanging looks with people of all kinds.

The portraits convey an exuberant bonhomie—a sense of feeling comfortable with whoever happens along. The artist—a part of the crowd himself—captures the many brief encounters that make up city life. His process entails wandering on foot or on a bicycle, “hunting for pictures” with his camera. “I love

painting life on the streets,” he says. “Lisbon is a very interesting place, so I like to just roam around. Sometimes I find my motivation for painting in the least expected places.”

Correia collects candid shots and stories. “Every time I have the opportunity, I like to reach out to people and learn their stories and get to know them. I like to capture their natural movements, so I take pictures when they don’t notice.” In the studio, the photos turn into portraits that “immortalize” people who, not long ago, were strangers.

IN THE MOMENT

No two encounters are alike. Some subjects look outward, as if addressing the viewer directly. In *Menina*, *Black Power Fun*, (opposite) a young



Summer in Lisbon
(watercolor on
paper, 11½x15½)

woman squints into the sunlight. Her expression is quizzical, lips parted as if she's caught in the split second of making up her mind about what to say. The viewer is invited to guess what might be her opening question, the introductions exchanged, the conversation that follows.

In *Italian Guy* (page 19), a man in a denim vest stops on his bicycle and poses for the artist, one leg swung over the frame. His hands rest by his sides as he turns his torso and head toward the viewer. His demeanor is relaxed and self-assured; his pose a kind of modern contrapposto. Correia picks out just a few details to build the character: the man's rings and watch; his neatly trimmed beard; the confidence of his open, full-chested stance and tucked-in chin, as if he's used to posing and being seen. It's up to the viewer's imagination to fill in the rest.

Summer in Lisbon (above) captures a woman whose sunglasses catch the light as she turns, holding a cocktail, to her invisible companion. That companion may be the viewer; the woman's outstretched arm comes out of the picture plane to invite us in. Only a splatter of bright, saturated magenta balances the composition. Apart from it, the right side of the picture remains blank. That burst of color seems to stand in for the interaction between the woman and the unseen person. What might they be saying?

In the majority of Correia's portraits, however, the characters don't

engage the viewer. They're absorbed in their own world, and we're simply present to witness them. A young couple sweeps by on a motorcycle, which is cut off at the edge of the picture plane. A jogger runs past, not registering any spectators as he looks ahead. A smudge of paint across his torso conveys his trajectory. A little boy and his dog notice something on the ground and turn toward it. The boy's right hand and foot signal the change in direction. (See all three paintings, opposite.) A woman with a mass of curly hair tilts her head back as she observes something in the distance—perhaps a building or a monument. An older tourist in a New York Yankees cap browses through photos on his camera screen. A few loose brushstrokes convey the tattoos on his arm, adding drama to the character. Each person is an



TOP TO BOTTOM
Filipinos on Motor
(watercolor on
paper, 19½x27½)

Aleta (watercolor on
paper, 11x15)

Best Friends
(watercolor on
paper, 11x15)

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—EUEDES CORREIA



island in the archipelago of the city. (See both paintings on page 22.)

When the characters aren't contemplating their surroundings, they're engrossed in conversation or in each other's presence. Two workers share a laugh during a break, their bodies locked in a diagonal composition (page 23). An elderly tourist couple sits quietly side by side, their backs curved with the softness of relaxation. Two men in South Asian attire turn their heads towards each other as they walk in lockstep out of the picture plane. (See both paintings on page 24.)





Often, when people sit or stand together, their gazes form perspective lines. The human figures generate the space in the paintings. “I don’t like backgrounds because they take the attention away from the main figure,” Correia says. Context is only suggested by sweeps and splatters of paint that extend the movements and colors of the figures themselves. There’s hardly an architectural detail in sight. One exception, in a group portrait of female tourists, is a cast iron lamppost lightly registered in a gray wash (see *Germany Girls*, page 25). Apart from such sparse details, Correia’s Lisbon is literally made up of people and their diverse perspectives.

EMBRACING UNIQUENESS

Correia is a participant in the urban scene, not just an observer. His images of tourists, in particular, are a product of mutual curiosity and recognition. “Because I travel a lot,



TOP TO BOTTOM
Bruna Sarga
(watercolor on
paper, 11x15)

Marcão (watercolor
on paper, 11½x15½)



I’ve always felt this kind of connection. All the backpacks and everything else about these people attract me,” Correia says. He also notes that tourists are “always happy,” a reflection of his own *joie de vivre*.

Correia’s interest goes far beyond travelers, however. “People always ask me if I like painting tourists, but all I like painting is people. I have no preference over their jobs or their lifestyles. If they’re interesting, I’m going to paint them,” he says. Even if he’s depicting a landscape or seascape, he adds human figures. “It seems that there’s no meaning if there are no people in there,” he says.

Trabalhadores
(watercolor on
paper, 22x30)

Correia’s abiding interest in strangers is rooted in his realization that each person is singular. From his childhood in a small town in Brazil’s state of Pará to his current life in Portugal and travels around the world, Correia has met people of all walks of life. His experiences have made him deeply attentive to their stories. “After I started traveling and painting people, I began meeting very ordinary individuals who would pass

unnoticed by others,” he says. “When you actually stop to paint them, when you meet them and you speak to them, you realize there’s a whole universe in and around each person. I like to pick people that others pass by without really noticing.” Art is a way to start paying attention.

When meeting someone, Correia is aware that “there won’t be anybody like them ever again.” His real subject is the astounding diversity of humanity, which can only be observed on an individual scale. He encourages aspiring artists to embrace their own unique qualities in the same way that he celebrates those of his subjects.



“It doesn’t matter if you want to be van Gogh, because van Gogh already existed, and you need to be yourself,” he says. “You’ll only be recognized when people start identifying your artwork with you. For that, you need to have an identity and a personality in your work. You can only find it if you’re yourself. There are no two people who are identical.”

PAINTING WITH FEELING

Correia’s days are split between time in his studio and time outside in Lisbon

TOP TO BOTTOM
Speechless
(watercolor on paper, 11½x15¾)

Pakistan 5
(watercolor on paper, 15x22)

“Fifty percent of painting is technique. The other half of what you paint and how to paint, that’s on you. That’s feeling. There are no rules.”

—EUEDES CORREIA

or traveling. “I need to go out often because being outside is what inspires me,” he says. “There are days when I leave my house with the sole purpose of taking pictures and gathering information.” Observing and sketching people has been his passion for decades, ever since he was working as an illustrator and graphic designer in Brazil. He savors the sense of unknown possibilities created by each encounter. That’s why he goes out with no route or destination in mind. “I prefer to be free,” he says. Later, in the studio, Correia likes to cultivate a festive environment—by listening to bossa nova, for example. With his art, he “transmits emotions,” and to do that, a proper work atmosphere is necessary.

A self-taught artist, Correia distills his process into four steps: a light pencil sketch, a fuller sketch, an application of a light wash and, finally, a second layer of paint that adds shadow and volume. “It’s easy. Really easy,” he insists.

He goes on to point out, “A lot of artists complicate things instead of simplifying them.” He relies on a radical reduction method that he learned through his work in illustration and design. For his figural works, he isolates the main subjects and then conveys their individuality through distinct, well-chosen details. He deliberately leaves room for the viewer to fill in the blanks. As a result, his paintings often remind viewers of someone they know, and Correia says that’s the main reason they’re drawn to his work.



Germany Girls
(watercolor on paper, 39½x59)

One challenge for him is the fact that watercolor is full of surprises: “It works together with the artist. It’s as if it’s alive.” This lack of control has led him to scrap a lot of paintings. Undaunted, he says, “I started learning how to work with my mistakes. I use the mistakes in my favor.”

A few years ago, Correia started doing live demonstrations with the goal of showing that painting “isn’t as complicated as people seem to think it is.” At a demonstration filmed in 2019, in Fabriano, Italy, Correia whistles along with a live band as he works (view the video at bit.ly/correia-demo). At one point, the musicians start playing the song “Coração Vagabundo” (“Vagabond Heart”). The lyrics describe hope and yearning in the face of unrequited love. “If you don’t like my painting, this song is perfect,” Correia jokes with the audience. Later, he sings

along: “Meu coração não se cansa ...” (“My heart can’t get enough ...”).

“Fifty percent of painting is technique,” says Correia—something he believes anyone can learn. But he also points out, “The other half of what you paint and how to paint—that’s on you. That’s feeling. There are no rules.” Accordingly, he approaches each painting as he does his subjects in the street, alive to feelings and open to any surprises. **WA**

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Meet the Artist

Hailing from Brazil and living in Lisbon, Portugal, Eudes Correia (correiawatercolor.carbonmade.com) is a self-taught artist who



began his career in graphic design and illustration. He now paints, teaches workshops and exhibits his work

around the world, and he’s sponsored by Winsor & Newton Global. Follow him at facebook.com/eudescorreiawatercolor.