

Blue Monkey®

Teddy VanSign

Teddy VanSign (Blue Monkey) is an American artist, gallerist, curator and martial artist who lives and works in New York City. At ease moving between artistic mediums, VanSign is a singer, songwriter, composer, musician, photographer, video director, poet and visual artist (includes drawings, paintings and collages).

VanSign is known for his acute attention to detail and holds an inherent belief in the natural order of the universe. His work is rich with symbolism and contrast, held together by simplicity. He brings to his work passion, integrity and an Eastern eye for discovering beauty in the most basic elements.

During his childhood, VanSign did the typical things kids in the Midwest do to make money. He had a lemonade stand and two paper routes. He shoveled driveways during the winter and mowed lawns in the summertime.

VanSign is no stranger to hard work. Starting at the age of 10, he spent his summers working 10 to 12 hour days on his grandfather's farm, toiling in muck fields under the blistering summer sun. In his teens, he found backbreaking work loading 48-foot tractor-trailers with 10 to 60-pound crates of produce.

Music was VanSign's first artistic interest. He was introduced to the music of Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Chuck Berry, and other 50's rock and popular country music, by his father. His mother exposed him to classical, symphonic and jazz music, and was partial to trumpet players. These early experiences instilled in him a passion for music.

In the fifth grade, he started playing a cornet his older brother had abandoned. He soon transitioned to a trumpet, which he practiced religiously each day and continued to do so for the next seven years. An accomplished trumpet player at the age of 17, he toured Europe as a member of the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp International Jazz Ensemble. Bringing his first SLR camera with him on tour, he took photos of his band mates, the cities they visited and the people they met. This was the start of VanSign's interest in photography as more than a weekend hobby.

At the age of 18, VanSign began working as an orderly in the trauma unit of a hospital emergency room. After several intensive years and having carried one too many dead babies to the morgue, he transferred to a relatively quiet position in the hospital's x-ray lab, where he worked in the film room and darkroom.

Due to his growing interest in photography, VanSign left his job at the hospital and opened his own photography studio in downtown Grand Rapids, focusing on advertising and portraits. From there, he moved his photography business to Chicago where he specialized in fashion and portraits and then to New York City.

While in New York City, VanSign transitioned his focus to fine art photography, and opened A Space Gallery to exhibit his work and later the work of others.

Returning to his first passion, in 2007, VanSign began creating music as Blue Monkey, drawing from over 1,000 personally written poems for lyrics. Composing, recording and producing the music digitally using a MIDI keyboard and a drum pad, he released his first album "Endangered Species" in 2013.

In 2016, VanSign began experimenting with video, which he intends to use as a medium to visually expand the Blue Monkey music experience.

A practitioner of Uechi-Ryu Karate-Do for over 29 years, VanSign holds the rank of Nidan (second degree black belt).

VanSign's artwork has been shown in Chicago, New York, L.A., Berlin, Hamburg, Greece and Switzerland.

VanSign lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.