

## Justin Canha

**Justin Canha**  
**Born 1989**

Justin has a neurological disorder called autism, which severely affects his functioning. As his verbal communication skills were heavily compromised as a child, Justin would draw to express his frustrations. The drawings served as a bridge to verbal expression.



In time, he expanded his repertoire to encompass a range of subject matter in a variety of media including watercolors, pastels, charcoals and oils. Justin also taught himself how to create computer animations. His childhood passion for drawing animals and cartoon characters revealed an innate artistic talent that attracted the attention of the mainstream art community.

Justin attended Montclair High School in New Jersey where he was mainstreamed with the proper supports. Though he still copes with autism, Justin feels comfortable in most social settings and loves to interact with people. His favorite way to interact has been through his artwork. He loves to talk about his art to whoever is interested, and especially about his cartoons.

Currently, Justin explores a wide range of subjects that showcase his clever sense of humor and unusual sensitivity to human and animal relationships. His paintings celebrate still life and portraiture. His charcoal drawings have an innocent and ethereal quality that captures poignant moments of friendship and the love between mother and child. Justin's computer animations are full of action-packed stories of original characters. His commissioned illustrations demonstrate the intensity and perspective of the autistic mind, and serve as a powerful form of communication.

Justin is represented by the Ricco/Maresca Gallery in NYC and was the featured artist in their Autism/Aspergers Art Exhibit in January of 2005. Justin's animations received an "honorable mention" by Jerry Saltz who juried the Studio Montclair "Taboo" exhibit in May 2005. His work has also been exhibited at The Cooper Union in New York, and at Montclair State University, in Montclair, NJ. Justin has had solo exhibits at The Montclair Public Library in Montclair, NJ, Pace University in NYC, at The JCC in Manhattan and he is currently exhibiting at Bloomfield College, Bloomfield, NJ. In August 2006 his artwork was featured in "Oprah Magazine" and aspects of his autistic and artistic life have been described in two recent documentaries: "Autism: A Different Way of Communicating", and "Sidecars". In Jan 2008 Justin made his world debut at the Outsiders Fair in NYC, where he was a huge success.

Check out Pulitzer Prize winner Amy Harmon's new article on the challenges that face Justin, and autistic people like him, as they transition into adulthood –

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/us/autistic-and-seeking-a-place-in-an-adult-world.html?\\_r=1&hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/us/autistic-and-seeking-a-place-in-an-adult-world.html?_r=1&hpw)

Justin also currently teaches a cartooning class at Strokes of Genius – Train The Talent<sup>SM</sup> Brooklyn Art Studio!



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