

Artist scores with classical paintings

By MYRNA PETLICKI
CONTRIBUTOR

David C. Hancock's artwork hangs in private homes in New York and Atlanta, as well as in foreign cities such as Berlin, Toronto and Florence. A



ART

portrait that he did of pop stars Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey is on display in their Texas home.

Recently, Hancock's work has been exhibited in the prestigious Oil Painters of America 2004 National Juried Exhibition, and his murals cover walls at the Northwest Assembly of God in Mount Prospect, and a restaurant in Missouri.

The Buffalo Grove native, who specializes in portraits and figure studies, is making a name for himself in the art world. And he just turned 23.

Hancock has been creating art for as long as he can remember. "My friends used to joke that I was born with a pencil in my hand," he said.

By the time he was in first grade, Hancock's tracings of Walt Disney cartoon characters had drawn the attention of his classmates, teachers and parents. "I kind of thought the joke was on them because they were tracings," Hancock said. "But, after that I received some attention that



This portrait commission by David C. Hancock is of a Buffalo Grove resident. The title "Tsuma no shozoga (The Wife's Portrait)" derives from a Japanese mythological account of a field worker who is so madly in love with his wife — the most beautiful woman in his entire village — that he hardly gets any work done because he keeps running home to look at her. His solution is to commission a portrait of her that he carries with him to the fields, until it is carried away on a windy day and lands near the emperor's palace. After the emperor kidnaps the wife, the story ends with the field laborer coming to rescue his beautiful beloved.

encouraged me to draw more on my own."

Hancock's early training was confined to taking art classes at school. By the time he was 16, Hancock was earning money as an artist by drawing caricatures at Six Flags Great America.

"That was kind of boot camp for me for drawing from life," he reported. "I worked 12-hour shifts and I had to work one-on-one with people."

After graduating from Stevenson High School, Hancock entered Wheaton College, where he studied philosophy. He had applied to a number of art schools, and had been accepted at all of them, including the American Academy of Art, where he

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initially planned to pursue his education. He decided against that path because "I didn't find that the work that was coming out of that place was something I wanted to do," Hancock explained. "I was more interested in traditional, classical painting."

While attending Wheaton College, he interned under Chicago-area artist William Utterback.

Then, at the age of 19, Hancock journeyed to Italy to study at the Angel Academy of Art in Florence, after learning they taught the style of art he desired to learn. He studied one year in Florence, then for a year at Michael John Angel Studios in Toronto, which is operated by the same artist. "The academy I attended was one of the finest in the world," Hancock said. "The program is extremely rigorous. It was kind of like military camp, only we were holding pencils instead of guns. It was hardcore, old school training, based on historical techniques."

Hancock's work received high praise there, and he was an exceptional student in another way. The majority of his classmates were middle-aged or older, and had completed master's programs. Hancock finished the five-year program in two years.

Since completing that program, he has been concentrating on doing oil portraits on commission and figure studies. Although people are his favorite subjects, Hancock was named a still life category finalist in a national juried competition held by *The Artist* magazine in August.

Hancock works mostly in oils, but also greatly enjoys drawing in graphite and charcoal. "Drawing is the basis of painting," he said. "There's a certain rapidity of execution. A pencil is like an old friend to me — an intimate conversation that goes so well."

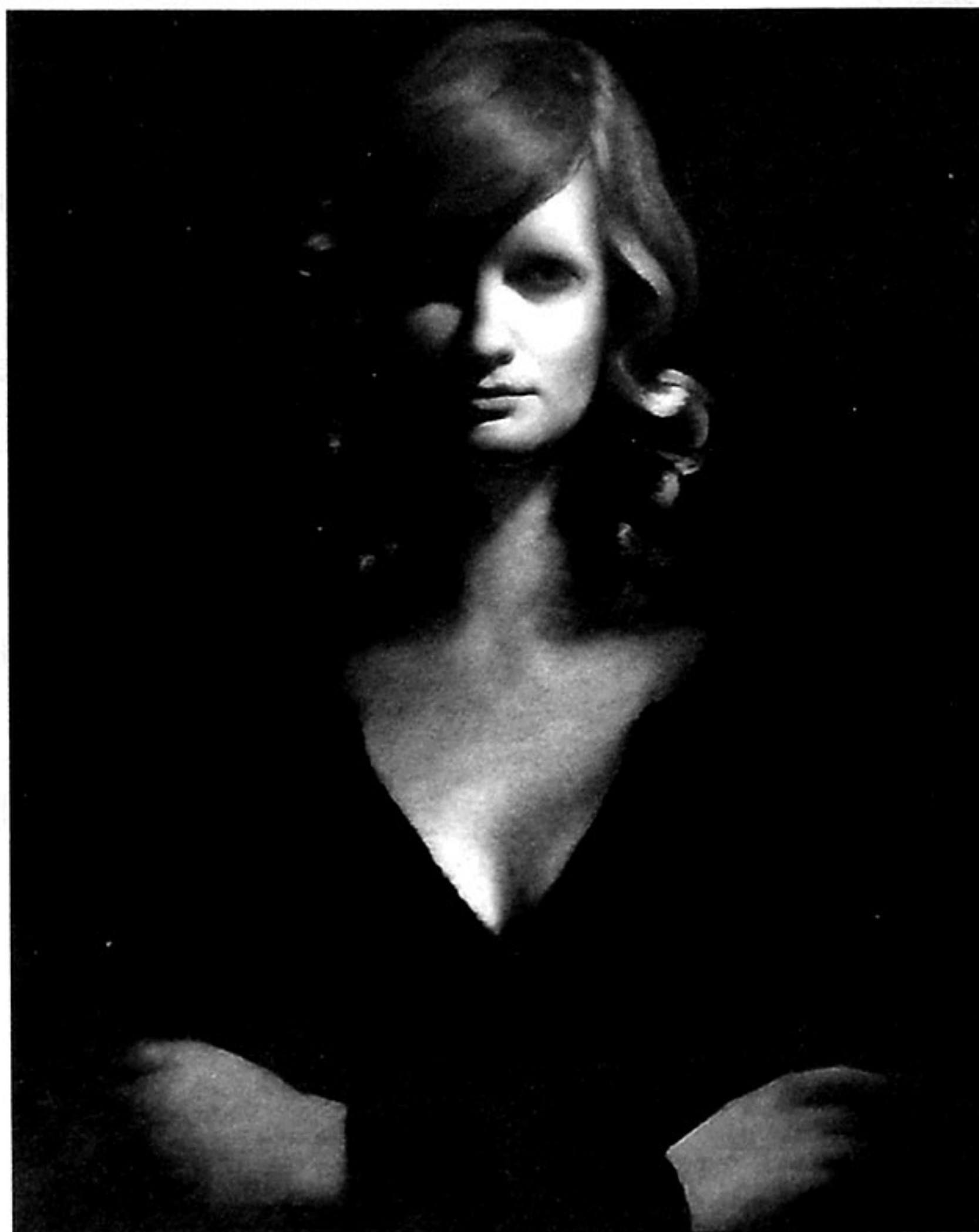
The artist said he has a similar feeling when he creates oil paintings, "but in oil paint I'm thinking about other technical considerations, like layering, glazes, chemistry."

Hancock, who has taught art workshops for children through such places as the Chicago Park District, College Church in Wheaton and Grace Church in Anchorage, Alaska, currently gives private art instruction in his Chicago home studio. "I try not to take on a lot of students at once because I'm building a career as a painter and that takes a lot of time," he said.

He loves to teach, though. "It probably comes down to my enjoyment of being social and working with people," Hancock said. "Creating art and teaching are both ways to share with other people. While it sounds kind of warm and fuzzy and hand-holding, I really mean it. For me, art is about sharing ideas and inspirations. Anyway, I'm able to do that — whether it's through my painting directly or through teaching — I enjoy it."



Hancock did a portrait a commission for Jessica Simpson's marriage to another pop star, Nick Lachey. The artist reported that she loved it so much that "she was in tears."



This portrait, titled "Miss Jennifer Swank," was lost in transit to London for a high-profile international portrait competition for young, upcoming painters at the National Portrait Gallery.