

CREATIVE WORKS

Exploring the nuances of solitude in art

Jose Morales Chavez knows solitude. As a refugee from the civil war in El Salvador, he arrived in Canada in 1987 with only ideas in his head. Now, he's the sole surgeon at the Hôpital-Dieu of St. Joseph in Perth-Andover, New Brunswick. "In my paintings I discover the solitude of the surgeon making decisions," says Morales. Ironically, within that solitude he has also found a way to reconnect with humanity.

Morales' paintings often depict the solitary figure in the abstract. He also turns to medical subjects in works such as *Healthy Pancreas*, *Aortic Aneurism* and *The Operating Room*. "I turn to art almost daily as a way to relax and get images out of my mind," says Morales.

He began doing visual art in 1984 during surgical training in Paris, and has since produced some 150 paintings, had 3 solo shows and participated in 12 group shows. Most recently, his work was featured in "Jose Morales and Other Artists from El Salvador" at The Andrew and Laura McCain Art Gallery in Florenceville-Bristol, NB. It included the works of Morales' first art teacher back in El Salvador, Miguel Angel Orellana, who died in 2009.

Morales turns to the abstract in part because it "leaves space for the looker to see and complete themselves." Indeed, a few simple strokes can evoke an entire image, and his signature colours against vivid backdrops can connote intense feeling.

These days, however, he is taking courses so he can acquire the Master's techniques to "allow me to achieve more control in figurative paintings." It will be interesting to watch his art evolve as he combines these two traditions.

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The Operating Room (2010). Acrylic on canvas. 51 × 41 cm.



Love (2003). Acrylic, pencil and charcoal on illustration board. 46 × 36 cm.