

Timothy Cummings

**ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL**



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**ABQ artist designs cover for Rufus Wainwright album**

By Kathaleen Roberts on November 6, 2016

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248 Utah Street  
SF, CA 94103  
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313 W 14th Street 2F  
New York, NY  
By appointment only

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[www.cclarkgallery.com](http://www.cclarkgallery.com)



ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Timothy Cummings' portraits revel in Elizabethan finery and the haunted expressions of faces caught in the cross hairs of youth.

The artist, born and raised in Albuquerque, recently scored a professional coup with his selection as the cover artist for his friend Rufus Wainwright's latest CD, "Take All My Loves: 9 Shakespeare Sonnets." The portrait presents Wainwright as an Elizabethan theatrical character, complete with a winged lace ruff as intricate and delicate as a spider's web.

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This is one of the Timothy Cummings paintings that will be displayed at the Rufus Wainwright event.

Cummings was instrumental in luring the famous singer to the KiMo Theatre in a benefit concert on Friday, Nov. 11, for 516 ARTS, founder/executive director Suzanne Sbarge said.

The KiMo will host an art reception for Cummings' work, as well as a silent auction. The exhibit includes a set of 20 limited-edition, hand-colored lithographs created at Tamarind Institute to 516 ARTS donors for \$1,000. The exhibition of about 20 of Cummings' works will hang through Jan. 15, 2017. Call 516 ARTS at 242-1445 to reserve a print.

Cummings grew up in the city's Northeast Heights and graduated from Manzano High School. His mother kept her four children regularly occupied with art supplies.

"Since I could hold a crayon, I've been working," he said from his airy, second-floor Old Town apartment.

His job experience was limited to a brief stint as a busboy at the Four Hills Country Club when he was in high school.

“I hated it so much I realized I had to make this work,” he said. “I said, ‘Oh, my God, this is worse than school!’ ”

He launched an art career by selling dolls crafted from clay, twigs, fabric and found objects in an Old Town gallery.

To look at his finely wrought acrylic paintings is to fall into a world of court finery, where his adult/child figures play period instruments such as the lute. Their large eyes and small features resemble his own.

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“My face is the face I see most often,” he said.



Albuquerque artist Timothy Cummings at work in his Old Town studio. (Dean Hanson/Journal)

Art books are piled in Cummings’ studio like talismans. Stacked next to the couch and beneath his desk, they lean against bookshelves groaning with still more books. A doll collection sits beneath a poster for a San Francisco art exhibition displaying a series of Cummings portraits like Irish doors. Some of the faces appear angular, almost Picasso-esque. Others emerge in a hailstorm of beauty spots. Some decay with the cancerous rot of a Francis Bacon grotesque.

“I start painting the face, and it tells me where to go,” he said.

Cummings met Wainwright and Wainwright's cousin, Anna, about 18 years ago when he was living in San Francisco and the young singer was performing in an Irish pub.

"I knew they were both spitfires," he said.

"It was before he even had an album out," Cummings said. "I was very impressed by his talent."

The pair stayed in touch over the years, and Cummings encouraged Wainwright to perform at the KiMo.

"Rufus called and said he had this Shakespeare sonnets CD coming out," Cummings said. "We've talked about different art projects over the years. I was always hitting him up — 'Let me do an album cover.'"

Cummings had seven days to complete the painting, working from several photographs. He looked up grand collars in his mélange of art books, making it wildly detailed. He added flowers to Wainwright's hair, and it was done.

As a child, Cummings was obsessed with Walt Disney, Betty Boop and Norman Rockwell. He discovered Andy Warhol as he matured and lists the early 20th century Austrian painter Egon Schiele as an influence.

"I do know if I didn't (paint), I would be dangerous," he said. "I'm half-joking. It keeps me level. It brings me outside myself. It's like a meditation."

**If you go**

**WHAT:** Timothy Cummings Exhibition

**WHEN:** Friday, Nov. 11 through Jan. 15; Open daily 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., except during performances.

**WHERE:** KiMo Art Gallery, 423 W. Central

**HOW MUCH:** Free. Call 242-1445.

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