

## Catching Up With... Justin Taylor

By Bonnie Gangelhoff



**DOSSIER  
REPRESENTATION**

Terzian Galleries, Park City, UT;  
Blue Rain Gallery, Santa Fe, NM.

WHEN Justin Taylor's painting *SUBWAY* appeared on the cover of *Southwest Art's* annual emerging artists issue in September 2007, the piece sold immediately to a California couple who bought it without even viewing it in person. Soon after, another collector called Taylor and also wanted to purchase the piece, but it was too late. The collector bought another painting instead.

For the Utah-based figurative artist, it's been quite an exciting year.

In February, just two weeks before the deadline, Taylor entered the Portrait Society of America's 10th annual International Portrait Competition. With more than 1,100 entries in the prestigious event, he says he didn't have high expectations. So a month later, when an official called to tell him he was one of the 20 finalists and was invited to Philadelphia in April for the awards presentation and annual conference, Taylor was totally amazed.

"All the great portrait painters were there—Burt Silverman, David Leffel, Daniel Greene. I was showing with some of these artists, plus others that I admire, like Jeremy Lipking and Joseph Todorovitch—who are young guys like me but have been in the market longer. It was an awesome experience," says the 31-year-old artist.

Taylor said he was even more shocked to learn that he had won an Honor Award, which was presented at a formal awards ceremony. "I came away energized. I was excited to keep going, to enter again and try to do something even better," he says.

More good news unfolded in April. At the Springville Museum of Art's annual Spring Salon, Taylor's *CLARITY AT THE END OF THINGS* won first place, the top prize awarded at the juried show. The exhibit attracts some of the foremost artists in Utah, including well-known painters such as Michael Workman, Brian Kershnik, and Robert Barrett. When Taylor first heard about his award, he thought someone was playing a practical joke on him. "I thought they were messing with me," he says. "It was just totally unexpected."

In addition to toiling away in his studio in the Salt Lake City area, Taylor has teamed up with three artist friends—Sean Diediker, Ben McPherson, and Jeffrey Hein—to launch Bridge Academy of Art in downtown Provo, UT. The academy is set up like an atelier, with an emphasis on classical painting and drawing. Over the summer, the cadre of friends gutted and remodeled an old building, and they recently opened their doors to 25 students who will take classes from them as well as visiting artists such as Todorovitch, Kershnik, and Workman.

Since appearing in *Southwest Art*, Taylor says, his prices have jumped from the \$1,200 to \$6,000 range to the \$3,000 to \$9,000 range. "It's been a good year—a really good year," says Taylor. "I feel fortunate. And hopefully I can keep the momentum going." ❖

**WHAT TO THINK ABOUT IT, OIL, 24 X 24. ▲  
CLARITY AT THE END OF THINGS, OIL, 40 X 47. ▶**