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## 'Mask' paintings reveal how people perceive others

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While some artists make work in traditional genres such as landscapes and still lifes, other artists like Jason Davis turn to subjects that are more personal.

"Many of my paintings are about myself or a rendition of what's going on around me and the people in my life," states the largely self-taught artist. "The inspiration for my work stems from the cultural world and day-to-day life."

The 24-year-old Elmwood Park artist is continuously working on numerous pieces at the same time, but says that he usually only has five pieces a year that he considers his personal best because he is always experimenting with his work. Many of his paintings are works-in-progress.

"I would consider most of my work figurative paintings, but I also paint a lot of 'mask' work; they're not really masks, but I paint my subjects as people perceive them, so in essence I'm painting a 'mask' on top of the painting," Davis explains.

Most of Davis' works are oil paintings, which he favors working with over with other types of painting. Oils dry slower and give him time to make changes. He also finds oils easier to work with, particularly in terms of smoothing out the surface.

Davis has been oil painting since he was 19. During his years as a student at Elmwood Park High School, he learned to appreciate art and also discovered that he wanted to devote his life to art. He learned to experiment with his artwork at an early age because his art teacher in high school let him experiment and do whatever he wanted to do. Even though he has been working with oils for about five years, Davis still considers his work with oils as

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a learning experience. As he has matured as an artist, he has also matured as a person, which has become a theme repeated throughout his work. During his years of experimenting with art, Davis says his mother has been the one who has stuck by him and has supported him throughout his life.

Davis' works can be seen at Studio 239 in Oak Park, but his works have been on display at many galleries and in exhibitions throughout Chicago and the western suburbs, including El Senor Studio and Polvo in Chicago, in "The Seven Deadly Sins" show at the Oak Park Art League in February, 2001, the Awakening group show at The Hilton in Chicago in 2000, and in another Awakening group show at Wilbur Wright College in April, 2000, in Chicago.

Davis also paints on a much grander scale. He was commissioned to paint five murals in Chicago and the western suburbs, including Room 3 at the Superior Street Studios in Chicago in 2002, Longfellow Park in Oak Park in 1998, and Oak Park Hospital in 1997. Davis also does some painting on wood, which lets him create a more three-dimensional effect.

Davis supports his love for painting by doing carpentry work and house painting. He also does some graphic design sub-contracting work. Davis has also sold a number of his art works.

Jason Davis' paintings are on view at Studio 239, 239 Harrison St., in Oak Park. Call (708) 358-1820 for more information.

