

Photo: Barb Colombo

# Master Painter Dario Campanile

## Creative Liberation in Motion

Written by CINDY CLARKE

He lives in constant motion, inspired by life and driven by passion that transcends the ordinary. Without question, his talent comes from someplace deep within and his vision goes far beyond what the eye can see.

Dario Campanile was born in Rome, home to art and architectural treasures unequalled anywhere. Like so many children, he enjoyed expressing himself with a pencil and a paintbrush during his youth, happily sketching, drawing and painting with the watercolors his artist uncle gave him. As a youngster, his artistic creativity showed promise. But it wasn't until he was bedridden for several months at the age of 14 that his gift was truly recognized.

His parents, hoping to cheer up their ailing teenage son, gave Dario a set of oil paints and a canvas to keep his mind off his illness. What they did, in fact, was give him the keys to an adventure that would not only change his life, but would put him on a serendipitous path to greatness few will ever achieve.

From the moment he first picked up his paintbrush, Dario parlayed his oils into realistic still life's reminiscent of the works of Renaissance masters, easily, effortlessly, expertly. His first painting of a candle and lemon, richly detailed and perfectly presented, drew shocked delight from both his family and himself. He had never touched oils before,

but the medium, like the method, felt extraordinarily familiar to him. In the next five years, he would master an explosion of super realism techniques that launched him as one of Rome's most sought after young artists.

His aptitude for oils was God given, not man made. His formal training in the arts was short lived. He "hated art school," finding the classes rigid, the instruction and authority too controlling. Dario wanted to discover the secret of painting himself, to find that sweet spot for his expression without being told where to look. Before he was out of his teens, he was painting elaborate trompe l'oeils for important galleries in Rome, entering and winning shows, taking top honors in fine art competitions against artists much more experienced and older than him, garnering acclaim for his work and selling his paintings to international collectors and art aficionados around the world. He completed his two-year compulsory military service not as a soldier but as a commissioned artist, creating paintings specifically for the offices of the Ministry of Defense. Later, Dario headed off to London, making inroads with his work and making a living with his talent. Not surprisingly, in spite of the ever-growing accolades that ensued wherever he painted, he was restless, ever in pursuit of his own signature style.

Chance meetings with influential art experts and gifted artists who were impressed with Dario's portfolio encouraged him to follow his heart and find his voice. His search led him, at age 22, to Cadaques, Spain, seaside home to Salvatore Dali.

Dali's surreal paintings struck a chord with the young protégée that played out in the surrealism style that had lingered unbeknownst in his imagination. This was something he could relate to on so many levels, this was what he wanted to do.

"Dali was impressed by my work," Dario recalls, forty years later still in awe of the impression the artist had made on him. "He referred



1. *Into the Depths*, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"  
2. *Unearthed*, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"  
3. *Morning Mist*, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"



to me as 'the Roman Master.' "

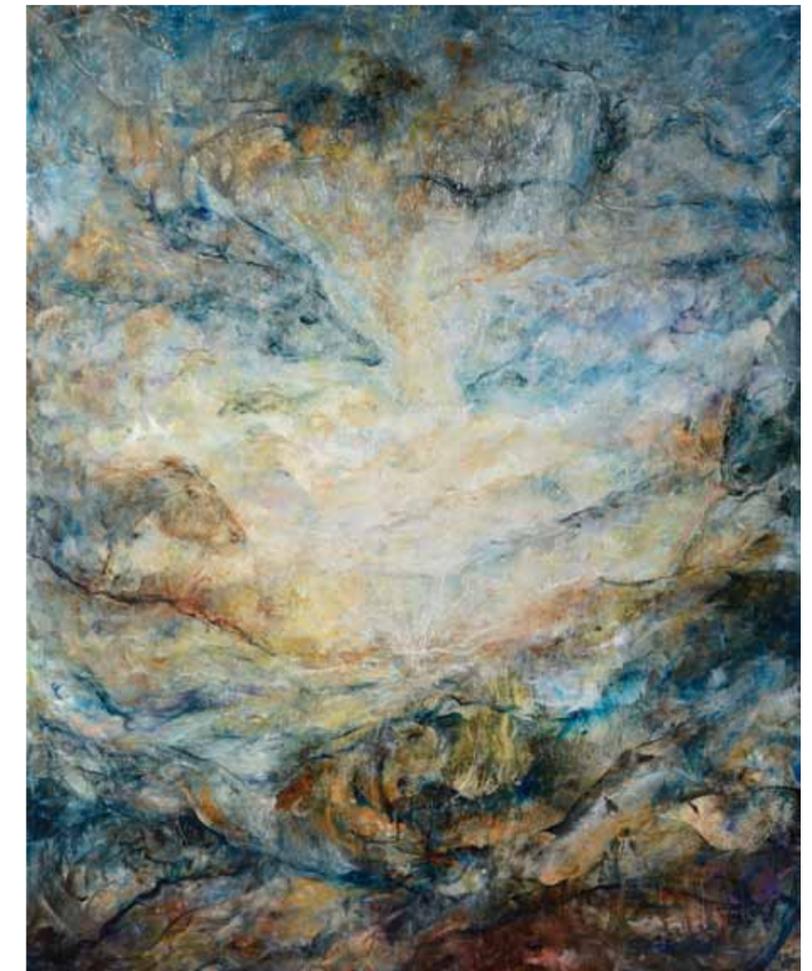
Conversations with Dali gave him the green light to use a camera to take black and white photos. "You can use photography because it will transform through you," he remembers Dali saying. "The moments you grab on camera give you the time you need to develop the paintings, to push the envelope and make the experience richer, warmer."

Dario's compositions, like Dali's, are not accidental. They are well planned with color, and multi-dimensional. They have energy, motion and magic. As Dario says, "They let people dream."

Dario would leave his first meeting with Dali reenergized and inspired, even though it would take him many more years to express himself in the moment and give himself fully to the mysteries of abstract expression.

His artistic journey brought him to many new destinations, physically, artistically and spiritually. He traveled across the seas to California, where his work found a home and his first solo show in a Beverly Hills gallery. Dario's private commissions grew as did his reputation and he was regularly tapped to design logos and book and magazine covers. He also worked as a Hanna Barbera background painter. Celebrities bought up his work as fast as he created them, with headliners like Carl Weathers, Valerie Harper, Cheech and Chong and musician Herbie Hancock, loyally collecting his work.

In honor of one of the biggest movie studios of all time, Paramount Pictures chose Dario Campanile's talent and ability to recreate the 75th anniversary logo. From his painting a three-dimensional version of the studio's iconic cloud-covered mountain doubled as the opening



credit for all of Paramount's productions during that anniversary year. The original sits today in the office of the Chairman of the Board.

His star continued to rise as he moved to Carmel to open his own gallery, followed by moves to San Francisco Bay Area and Hawaii, where Lahaina Galleries has represented his art for over 30 years. He expanded his work to include monotypes, etchings and bronze sculpture created with a traditional lost wax technique. His work headlined in new galleries, and was showcased in Hong Kong at a charity art gala that attracted a personal thank you note from then President Bill Clinton.



1. God's Web, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"
2. Kaleidoscope of Life, oil on canvas, 48"x 60"
2. Nebula, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"

In 2005, Dario was invited to participate in an international exhibition with 88 renowned artists called "Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama." This exhibition sent Dario to India for the rare personal Dalai Lama interview held in his home. The interview inspired a painting aptly entitled "Missing Peace" for which His Holiness happily posed. This piece traveled with the exhibition for four years in museums and universities around the world.

"The Dalai Lama ignited a passion in my soul. He taught me about compassion, nobility and kindness – and how to be present in the moment. He affirmed the importance of connecting with your environment, with life, with yourself.

This experience is what inspires Dario every time he paints.

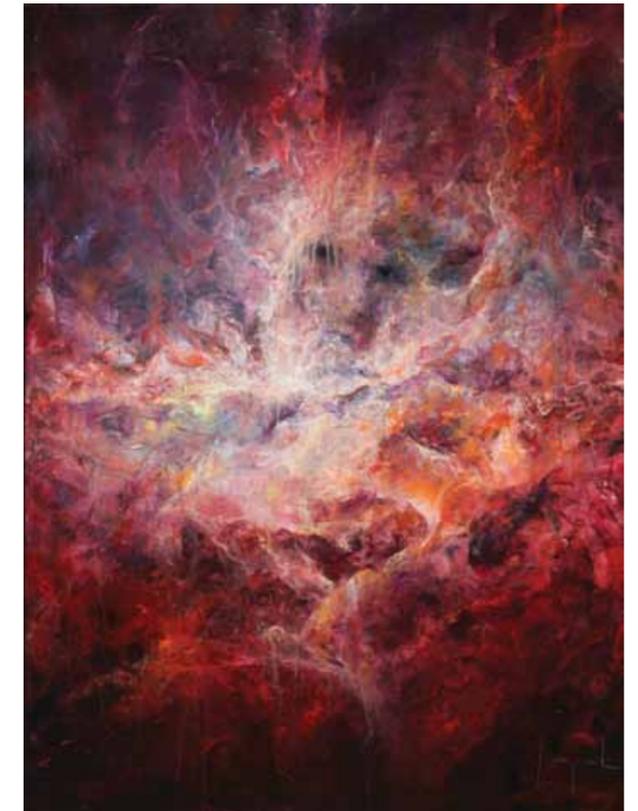
His work today has veered away from realism into the abstract, which started in the 80's in Los Angeles.

"The process of painting in the abstract is always a mystery. I become the vessel and work flows to me from somewhere else as it transforms the canvas with color. It feels magical, almost therapeutic when it comes through me. It's a direct connection between my subconscious and expression without any interference. When I paint, it's one of the only times I can be fully present and connected."

Watching people view his work, an extensive ephemeral collection of life reimagined, further inspires Dario's work. What really excites me," he says, "is to see the viewer's response. They get into the art and become engaged with its essence... and my passion."

What Dario's audience is also seeing is the culmination of an impressive 50-year career as one of the world's true art masters, a celebration of wisdom and warmth, of sensitivity and sensuousness, of hope and humanity.

Dario Campanile is on the move again, relocating from Maui to the Mainland to bring his art and his heart to the World. A realist, sculptor, filmmaker, abstract painter and musician in this life, yet he has experienced many lifetimes as an artist. After getting to know the man and his art, you'll gratefully discover he has many more lifetimes yet to give.



*Dario Campanile has exhibited his work in galleries worldwide. To view his portfolio online, visit [www.campanilefineart.com](http://www.campanilefineart.com) and [www.campanileabstract.com](http://www.campanileabstract.com)*