



Herbert Lee Murrie was born in Chicago, Illinois on September 4, 1935.

Herbert's father Benjamin immigrated from Russia to the United States when he was six and his mother Anne arrived from Russia at the age of seventeen.

Benjamin was an orphan, and was the ward of his older sister. He grew up on the East side of New York City. Some of his closest friends were Eddie Cantor, a famous comedian, and Al Jolson, a famous vaudeville singer. Benjamin joined the two in vaudeville at a time when a profession of that type was not considered very respectable. His career was very short lived, as his sister and custodian removed him from the business. Years later Murrie's father became a semi-pro baseball player.

In 1932, Benjamin's first wife died and he was left with a 12-year-old son, Bernard. He soon met Murrie's mother, and they were married. Hopes to have a better chance to earn a living during the Great Depression drove the family to move to Chicago. Herbert was born three years later.

In 1946, at the age of 11 years old, Herbert's father died of a massive heart attack. It happened at the fishing pier, on a morning that Herbert decided to sleep in. Fishing had been a passion, and the early morning father/son time was something both cherished. Herbert's father's death has impacted him in many ways. He is unable to get close to others including his own family, his fear of loss has never left him. His mother never remarried and passed away in 1992 at the age of 91.

Herbert's only sibling, his brother Bernard, joined the Army Air Forces during World War II as a navigator at the age of eighteen. After the war, he met his wife, and the couple moved back to New York. Herbert was basically an only child at this time, as he rarely saw his brother after.

Herbert was raised in a middle class neighborhood on the far North side of Chicago. Fortunate enough to never be more than three blocks away from beautiful Lake Michigan, Herbert would spend summers at parks playing his beloved game of baseball or fishing with his father at the pier.

His passion and his dream, was to be a major league baseball player like millions of other kids, not an artist. A dream that lasted throughout college until a freak knee accident ended that. And although his father had been a semi-pro baseball player himself, he saw something in his son's art when he was only five or six years old. He was constantly encouraging Herbert. He had a great influence on his art career. When Herbert was nine, his father went to an art teacher, Lucille Layton, herself a prominent watercolorist, who held classes in her apartment in the building where they lived. At the time she only admitted adults, she did his father the favor of giving him a two week trial period. Herbert shined throughout the trial and was accepted into the class.

At the age of twelve, Herbert entered an oil painting into a Chicago art contest for kids twenty years and younger. He won first place and his painting was exhibited at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

After three years of studying with Layton, she sent him to the Chicago Academy of Fine Art. He studied there for two years. In the winter he would often come home alone in the dark, in those days the streets were safer. In 1951 he transferred over to the American Academy of Fine Arts, attending classes every weekend until he graduated from Sullivan High School in 1953.

After high school, Herbert went to work in a large commercial art studio in downtown Chicago. A prominent fashion illustrator at the studio took Herbert under her wing. One day he showed her some of his paintings and without his knowledge she called the Dean of the Art School at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, an old friend of hers.

He spent time cleaning brushes and flapping art work in order to save enough money to go down to Champaign-Urbana. Herbert believed that the day you stop learning you might as well give it up. The university painting school program was excellent and attracted prominent artists as instructors.

He went down for a visit with no idea of how he could afford the cost of living away from home, the fees, and the school expenses. The university helped Herbert get jobs that included sign painting and map making on campus. He also worked as a waiter at a fraternity and as a soda jerk.

With the help of close friends, his mother had opened a dress shop after his father passed. She had golden hands for making and altering clothes, and managed to scrape enough money together to make Herbert's college dream happen.

Watching his mother's struggles after his father's death, and the sacrifices she made to put Herbert through university had a profound effect on his psyche. He often wondered how he could earn a living as a painter when most artists were driving trucks, or working at something other than practicing their art in order to eat and pay the rent.

Herbert learned how important it is to paint everyday. How important it is to feel the tools in your hands everyday. To play with the paint and see how colors react to one another. But the most important thing that university taught him was independence. It was the first time he had been away from home and on his own. He also learned to love books, and to this day when he is not painting, he reads; everything from the classics to Dylan, trash to philosophy.

Herbert graduated from the University of Illinois in 1957 with a degree in Fine Arts. He turned down an assistant professorship when he graduated, and went back to Chicago to join an advertising agency as an apprentice art director. Herbert designed ads for Red Label Beer and General Motors/Chevrolet division. Within a year of working at the agency, he won the New York Art Directors Club 24 sheet billboard award for a beer advertising campaign. In 1959 Uncle Sam called, Herbert joined the Army Reserve and served for a period of 6 years.

In 1960, Herbert met his wife Lisa. Lisa came to America from Denmark in 1957. He was in the hospital having an emergency appendectomy, Lisa was his nurse. It was love at first sight; painful but nevertheless love. The two were married in 1961, and she has been the support of Herbert's life ever since.

The couple currently reside in Highland Park, IL and have four children. The first two, Linda and Karen, were both born in 1962. Five years later they had a third girl, Jennifer. In 1969, their fourth child, a son, Michael was born. Linda works as an assistant to a dental surgeon. Karen was a brand identity/package design business executive at MLR, one of Herbert's businesses, for thirteen years until she left to care for her three children. Jennifer works in the financial and insurance business. Michael is an artist, musician, and sound engineer working in the film industry. They have eight grandchildren of which two show a talent like Herbert for the creative arts.

Travel has always been important to Herbert and Lisa. The family started to travel to Denmark, Lisa's home country in 1966. Herbert and his wife continued to travel to Europe; Copenhagen, London, Paris, and Italy. They fell head and shoulders in love with Italy. Over the next ten years they took every opportunity to vacation in Italy.

In 1998 they found their dream; a three hundred year old ruin of an old farmhouse in the Crete Senesi area of Tuscany, outside the little town of Asciano. Two years later after a marvelous restoration by Signora

Patrizia Lanzarotti, an architect from Milan, they moved in. Herbert and his wife try to divide the year more or less equally between Asciano and Chicago.

After graduating from the University of Illinois, Herbert went to work as a designer, forgoing his education as a fine arts painter. He worked for several years at a couple of design studios until he started his own firm named Sovereign-Lee in 1961. His cousin Marvin Lee was a silent partner. Marvin owned a printing company and Herbert worked out of his offices on 22nd and Indiana in Chicago. Business grew over the next three years and help was needed. He worked with a great designer he had met a few years earlier named Tom White. The two joined forces and formed Murrie-White in November of 1965.

The two promoted themselves as a marketing design firm creating high-end promotion pieces for a variety of manufacturers. Over the next four years they began to work for some of the largest manufacturing firms in the country; Dow Chemical, Goodyear, Jockey Menswear, Bell & Howell, and Zenith to name a few.

When Goodyear created a synthetic rubber called Natsin, Murrie-White created a sixty page book promoting the new product to five hundred corporate presidents in the country. Dow Chemical created a binding agent for brick construction that would enable buildings to be built higher with single layers of brick rather than the normal limit of double layers. For Dow, Murrie-White created a promotional brochure which was directed to over ten thousand architects and construction company presidents. The firm also created all of the Jockey Menswear in-store promotion programs throughout the country.

In 1970 Jockey Menswear asked Murrie-White to design the packaging behind a new bikini underwear line called Scants which launched Jockey into the sportswear business. The success of the packaging changed the firms perspective on what they wanted to do in the design world, and over the next two years package design and brand identification took over the business.

Soon the client list included Quaker Oats, Nestlé, Kraft Foods, Colgate-Palmolive, Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola, Coke Foods, Pepsi-Cola, Keebler Cookies, Oscar Mayer, Bristol-Myers, Lever Brothers, Lipton Tea, Dow Brands, and SC Johnson.

Some of the hundreds of products that they brought into the marketplace in their initial introductory packages or updating previous product packages were:

Procter & Gamble's Sure Deodorant, Puffs Tissues, Secret Deodorant, Bounce Fabric Softener, Kimberly-Clark's Kotex and Kleenex lines, SC Johnson's Shout, the Keebler tree logo and the entire redesign of 160 Keebler packages, several Nestlé candy bars, Dow Brands Alka-Seltzer and One-A-Day Vitamin lines, the entire 300 Jockey Menswear product line, Bristol-Myers Daytril, Excedrin and Ban Deodorant lines, Coca-Cola Dasani water, Coke Foods Minute Maid line, Quaker Oats Gatorade, Cap'n Crunch and Aunt Jemima lines.

In the early 1970s Arch Drummond, an internationally renowned packaging expert, and Jim Lienhart, an internationally renowned designer, joined Murrie-White. The firm renamed to Murrie White Drummond and Lienhart or MWDL, becoming one of the most recognized packaging/brand design firms in the country.

In 1978 Herbert and Jim Lienhart started a greeting card company named California Dreamers. It was primarily created as a diversion for the designers, a break from the package design business.

In 1980 California Dreamers introduced a fifty card line at the New York greeting card show, one of the largest shows in the country. Within one year the line had grown to over two hundred fifty cards and was being talked about throughout the United States. During the next five years the line grew to over fourteen hundred cards covering all of the major holidays as well the typical birthday, get well, etc. lines.

In 1981 Shel Rysner, a well-known design executive joined Murrie White Drummond and Lienhart.

In 1985 Forbes magazine did a cover story on the alternative greeting card boom. Out of four hundred greeting card companies in the country, California Dreamers was named amongst four other greeting card companies Hallmark, American Greetings, Gibson and Recycle Paper. In 1988 Herbert and Jim sold California dreamers to Recycle Paper and the two rejoined the design world.

The years of 1989 thru 1994 proved to be the greatest five years in the history of Murrie White Drummond and Lienhart. A recession had hit the country, and while manufacturers were drastically cutting their

advertising budgets, packaging which cost pennies compared to the millions advertising cost, became an extremely important vehicle in order to continue to look vital in the market place.

The business grew from ten sales and design people to forty four people, and sales grew from one million to six million dollars. Herbert had always wanted the firm to remain small in order to be able to control the quality of the work, which is why some of the largest package goods manufacturers in the world came through the MWDL doors.

In 2000 Shel Rysner became a partner and the firm became known as MLR. In 2007 Herbert sold the business to one of the leading design executives in the country, Sam Ciulla. The firm has continued to prosper even through devastating economic times. Forty years in the design world was enough and although Herbert had continued to paint over this period, he had never shown his work until 1998. A Chicago gallery, Lydon Fine Arts, picked him up, and from that point Herbert put the design world behind him and has never looked back.

Herbert's art school training was classic in nature. His love of painting leaned toward the French Impressionists, Monet, Cezanne, Sisley, Gauguin to name a few. Never the less, he greatly admired what was happening in the early 60's and 70's by the American abstract painters, Wilhem de Kooning, Arshile Gorki, Mark Rothko's early abstractions and Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. The Renaissance painters of Italy as well had an influence on him especially in the area of color. His early landscape paintings came from his many trips to Italy in the early 70s.

He entered many juried contests in the early 90's and was excepted into several shows. Herbert was recommended to Lydon Fine Arts in Chicago by a fellow artist friend from New York. In 1998 Lydon Fine Arts started to represent him, and did very well selling landscapes rendered in an impressionistic style.

Over the past 10 to 12 years his painting moved slowly to the abstract. He knew he had to keep pushing forward toward a totally non-objective, purely emotional state. He never felt the same emotion or excitement before that he feels in his abstract work today.

Herbert does not find it easy to explain what it is he is doing with his painting. One presupposes, of course, that words are used to convey information about the idea and the context. None of his paintings function as illustrations of an idea; ultimately they are the idea. The shapes and forms emerge through the constant blending and manipulations of the paint. A non hierarchical interweaving of form with space and color...interlacing forms, bows and curves that constantly intersect to produce fantastic spatial structures that change with the light, could be altered endlessly. To cause something to change and flow, to make it relative, suits him very well. He will edit out and build upon what he feels is working. Sometimes when images come about by chance they are fresher, more organic, more inevitable. Instinct takes charge. The composition of different forms, colors, structures, proportions, harmonies come out as an abstract system analogous to music.

Letting a thing come rather than creating it is more genuine, richer, more alive. Anything is possible in his paintings; any form, added at will, changes the picture but does not make it wrong. The fact that Herbert's paintings evolve their motifs as the work proceeds is a timely one because there is no central image of the world any longer: He must work out everything for himself. He wants to capture the energy one finds in the music of Beethoven, Mozart, the Beatles, the poetry of Bob Dylan. Music has that abstract energy that is difficult to put into words. You feel it, sense it to produce a specific emotional effect.

In his black-and-white paintings, the elimination of color creates a simplification that has to carry the emotion alone on the shapes and special relationships that are formed by the intertwining swirls and blobs of paint.

Herbert believes that the computer is a great technical development that adds to the creative process. It doesn't replace painting, it either supplements the process or creates its own domain. The same goes for the art of installation. It has created its own domain.

Artists will always search for the new idea; impressionism, Dada, Color Field, Abstract, Pop, etc. and within these fields of art who will be noted or revered; only time will determine how long a school of art lives and has value. We always look for the original, be it a method, an execution, a talent, but only time will evaluate it's true value; Vincent Van Gogh is a good example of that.

Artists must, first and foremost, do what pleases them; critics change, collectors change, tastes change.

Herbert does what he does, that which pleases his senses above all else! You read that painting is dead, passé; painting is not dead and will always be there in some form or another, declares Murrie.

Artist Statement (Written by Herbert Murrie)

Chance plays an important role in my paintings, however, it is never blind chance; it's a chance that is always surprising. I'm often astonished to find out how much better chance is than planned.

Chance has two meanings in English, it can mean accident or Hazard. In French "avoir de la chance" means to be lucky. I have questioned for a very long time if there is a destiny for us or is it completely blind; the push pull between accident, destiny and luck.

In the initial phase of my painting chance or accident plays a major role. I pour various colors onto sheets of acetate in various shapes and patterns. Shapes and forms emerge through the constant blending and manipulation of the paint; interlacing forms, bows and curves that constantly intersect to produce spacial structures that could be altered endlessly.

The second phase of my process is editing; finding the forms and shapes that work for me. I cut these forms out from the acetate and begin to adhere them to the canvas or wood panels which I've prepared having a color and spatial sketch in mind before I start the painting on acetate. This is where I have more control or destiny, if you will, over where the work is headed.

In some way, my method of painting provides me with an answer to part of the question of chance or luck verses the control of destiny...at the very least, in my work.

Exhibitions

ARC Gallery - Chicago, IL 2011

Jennifer Norback Fine Art, Inc. - Chicago, IL 2010

Palazzo Pubblico, Magazzini Del Sale - Siena, Italy 2010

The Tucker Gallery - Evanston, IL 2008

The Tucker Gallery - Evanston, IL 2006

The Tucker Gallery - Evanston, IL 2005

Illinois Center - Chicago, IL 2004

Zolla-Leiberman Group Show - Chicago, IL 2004

Australian Exhibition Center - Chicago, IL 2002

Lydon Fine Arts - Chicago, IL 2002

Illinois Center - Chicago, IL 2001

Lydon Fine Arts Group Show - Chicago, IL 2001

Lydon Fine Arts - Chicago, IL 2000

Sloane-Jordan Gallery - Austin, TX 2000

New Art International Exhibition Group Show- Woodstock, NY 1999

Westmorland Center of the Arts Group Show- PA 1999

Quincy Art Center Group Show- Quincy, IL 1999

Maryland Federation of Art Group Show- Annapolis, MD 1999

Navarro Council of the Arts Group Show- Corsicana, TX 1999

Sloane-Jordan Gallery - Austin, TX 1999

Lydon Fine Arts - Chicago, IL 1999

Olin Fine Art Gallery at Washington & Jefferson College Group Show - Washington, PA 1999

The Baker Arts Center Group Show- Liberal, KS 1999

Tubac Center of the Arts Group Show- Santa Cruz, AR 1999

Lydon Fine Arts, Inc. - Chicago, IL 1998

Corporate Collections

Novo Nordisk Corporation - Princeton, NJ

Illinois Center - Chicago, IL

IRON Financial Corporation - Chicago, IL

Chicago Growth Partners - Chicago, IL

