

# An International Success

By Paula Grubbs | Photos by George Mendel

**H**ow does one determine whether they are officially successful in their field? Turning down *Time Magazine* would be a good indication.

David Bowers of Eighty Four, Pennsylvania, recently received a call from the famous weekly requesting he paint the cover for *Time's* legendary "Man of the Year" issue.

"They said they needed it in three days," said the affable artist. "I turned them down."

Bowers gave up a successful career as an illustrator four years ago to focus solely on oil painting. His works mainly hang in and are sold from the Halcyon Gallery in London or in several private collections throughout the United States and Europe. His art is also displayed in The Museum of American Illustration in New York and the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Bowers' artwork is popular in the higher echelon of society, and sells at a rate of approximately one painting per month at a range between \$10,000 and \$50,000.



- 1 Birdkeeper II
- 2 Mysteries of Medusa
- 3 Portrait of Scot Tubbs
- 4 Suburban Taboo



“Where are the Words,” an oil-on-linen sized 26-by-32 inches, recently sold for \$70,000 at the Halcyon.

“That was the most one single piece has ever sold for,” said the soft-spoken Bowers with a chuckle. “Not bad, I guess.”

Born in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and raised in Key West, Florida, Bowers first moved to southwestern Pennsylvania as a young man after his parents divorced and moved from Florida. Always an artist, Bowers enrolled in

the Art Institute of Pittsburgh in 1977 after a stint in the army.

He graduated in 1979, and the Institute hired him as an instructor two years later.

Bowers worked as a teacher there until 1991.

“The freelance work started getting good, so I quit teaching,” said Bowers. “I’ve been a professional artist since then.”

Four years ago, Bowers gave up the illustrating that served as his source of income for so long.

“It wasn’t my passion,” he said.

Most recently, Bowers became the subject of a 168-page coffee table book entitled, *David Michael Bowers: The Evolution of an Artist* by Robert J. Trombetta.

All this success has provided Bowers with an impressive and interesting history in the nearly 30 years he has worked to achieve it.

As an Art Institute student, Bowers’ goal was to illustrate a *Time Magazine* cover.

“They are plastered all over the world for a week, so you are famous for one week,” Bowers said of his goal.

It took 20 years for that goal to be realized when his talent finally became well-known in discriminating art circles. Bowers first cover for *Time* celebrated the 500th anniversary of Viking Leif Ericsson’s discovery of the New World.

Bowers explains that *Time* keeps the original painting and donates it to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

“That was actually more important to me than doing the cover itself,” said Bowers. “Even if it is in a cardboard box in the National Portrait Gallery’s basement, it’s there.”

Bowers also painted a *Time* cover in 1993 of Pope John Paul II, who was chosen as the magazine’s Man of the Year. Although the painting, which *Time* gives artists three days to complete due to the secrecy of the subject, wasn’t used, Bowers was paid \$5,000.

Many magazine covers have been graced by Bowers’ artwork over the years. Two of his more prominent covers include his painting of J.P. Morgan for *Cigar Aficionado* and a portrait of the Rothschild family at the Letour Chateau Winery for the cover of *Wine Spectator* magazine.

Halcyon Galleries became aware of Bowers’ oil painting after pop artist Burton Morris asked his agent to take a look at Bowers’ work. Soon, Bowers and his wife Kimberlie were jetting off to London, which they have visited nine times since his work first appeared at the Halcyon.

“My painting career is more rewarding than illustrating because I get to meet my clients,” said Bowers.

His works hang in Halcyon’s four locations, including Harrods Department Store and a gallery on the exclusive Bond Street.

“It’s one of the most expensive streets in the world,” said Bowers. “(The Halcyon Gallery there) has clients that come in and drop a couple million dollars, no problem.”

Bowers recalls his first trip to London, where he met a woman who was in the process of purchasing one of his works for \$20,000. She asked how long it took him to complete the painting, and the gallery’s director, Paul Green, piped up.

“He said ‘46 years!’” recalls the now-51-year old artist. “So that’s what I tell people when they ask that question, whatever my age is.”

Many of Bowers’ pieces are miniatures, as his art is extremely detailed and meticulous. His works normally range from \$10,000 to \$50,000, and he produces about 11 each year. Bowers said actually painting a piece is simple compared to finding a subject.

“That is the hardest part,” he said. “My art is pretty out there.”

Bowers said he will regret saying goodbye to 2007, as it has provided him the most exposure of his career.

“It’s been a good year,” said Bowers. “I’ve been in 10 different publications. A Chinese magazine did an eight-page story on me in October.”

But the result of his career the local artist most enjoys is the renown he has gained in his hometown.

“I get to hobnob with some of Pittsburgh’s most rich and famous.”

Bowers’ art can be viewed and his book purchased at his website, [www.dmbowers.com](http://www.dmbowers.com). □

New Year's Resolution #3:  
eat more vegetables

Bella Sera  
A UNIQUE VENUE

Greco's  
Gourmet Catering  
Est. 1999

724.745.5575 www.grecosgourmet.com