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Local Artist Brightens, Enlightens The Desert

By Pamela Price

Nicholas Kontaxis, a desert resident with an uncommon flair for vibrant hues accentuated by self-expression, has brought a dimension of 'high flying' to the desert that has taken to the sky, literally. This self-taught artist has built a successful career creating large scale paintings utilizing heavy body acrylic paints and a battalion of palette knives. During the last four years, his vast, multicolored canvas creations have triggered

sell-out solo exhibitions from Palm Desert to London. The most recent landing of his larger-than-life oeuvre took the form of a unique installation at Desert Jet, at their private executive terminal known as an FBO (Fixed-Base Operator) located at the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport in Thermal, Calif.

According to Chris Little, Chief Marketing Officer at Desert Jet, this remarkable exhibition carries over to a catalog of the artists' paintings,

which will be positioned aboard their aircraft. The 24-year-old artist, who calls Rancho Mirage home, was diagnosed with an extensive brain tumor at 15 months of age, resulting in his enduring over 50,000 seizures though his life. However, this did not hinder his talent as an artist—as the French might say, tant s'en fait: far from it! Montana Butler of Heather James Fine Art in Palm Desert echoes that sentiment:



Photo Courtesy of Nicholas Kontaxis



Photo Courtesy of Nicholas Kontaxis

"Painting has served as a respite for the artist throughout his life," she says. Nicholas's story evokes that of other prominent figures throughout art history, such as Vincent Van Gogh, who, as is widely known, had temporal lobe epilepsy. Nicholas also has a rare form of autism, which in some ways is revealed within his compositions. The myriad repetitive brushstrokes emerge as a hallmark of his inimitable artistic style. Playfully cryptic titles of his compositions range from "Go Backstage" and "Let Me Guess" to "Please Don't Ask" and "Be In London."

After Nicholas graduated

from Cathedral City High School and with his family and friends' support, he continued to brighten and enlighten the desert through his inimitable paintings. The artist's current exhibit, viewed by arriving and departing passengers, turns the Desert Jet terminal into a soaring aesthetic experience unique in the desert—and in the world. Curated to enhance each of the artist's paintings, they create a splash of color and creativity. "Only the desert sunset can compete with this gifted artist's sensitive talent. Said Indian Wells resident Rocky Randall, "this exhibit is a riveting blast of color that, even or maybe even especially in these troubled times, enhances the travel experience."