

Sometimes the best art is born on the fringes

Rising like a Phoenix from the ashes of a Dead End Town



Richard Birt was born in Southern California in 1958, the middle son of Bernard and Donna Birt.

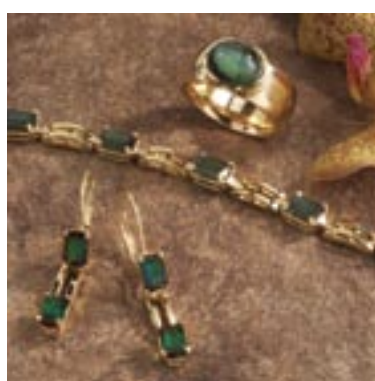
His parents met in Detroit, Michigan, wed in 1954 and came to Southern California along Route 66 on their Honeymoon. The local economy was booming and Bernard got a job immediately. They would settle in the San Gabriel Valley, 45 kilometers from the center of Los Angeles.



This region was the leading producer of lemons in America in the early 1900's. As Los Angeles grew from 2 million to 13 million people in the next three decades, the citrus groves fell under the axe to give way to Suburbia. The family would maintain residences in the adjacent bedroom communities of Covina and Glendora from 1954 to 1986.



Richard's father was an accomplished artist to explore his artistic urges. Richard began to a special lapidary and jewelry program would confine his endeavors to the creation 1970 to 1976.



and photographer and encouraged his son drawing at the age of three and was accepted offered by his middle school at age 11. He of gold jewelry with hand-cut stones during



Richard would witness and participate in the dual emergence of skateboarding and Punk Music during that period. Covina was home of Vita-Pakt, maker of the first commercially-made skateboards. Richard took up skateboarding at age 6 and continued to ride until the age of 17. The foothills of Glendora allowed for insanely fast downhill runs.

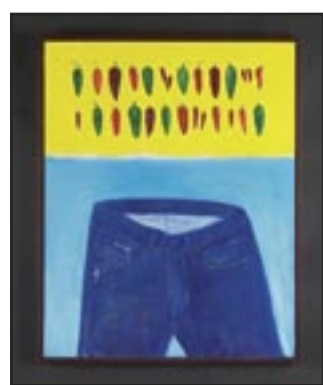


KROQ, a Pasadena-based radio station, was the first to play such seminal bands as the *Sex Pistols*, *The Clash* and *The Ramones*. In 1976 to 1980, Richard attended college, obtaining a M.B.A. with a minor in Advertising. He then began a respected career in direct advertising in 1981. He bought a camera with his first paycheck. He began to travel extensively on assignment to clients, visiting 42 to the 50 U.S. states. On vacation, he would make pilgrimages to Maui, Europe, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. The Punk-influenced series, *Bad Postcards*, was started in 1981.



From 1987 to 1997, Richard moved his career to Los Angeles, including a three year stint in Venice Beach. He was much in demand, working with over 100 advertising clients, including Apple Computer, Ferrari, H-P, Nike and Nissan. Traveling 150,000 air kilometers per year, Richard worked in America, London and Paris.

Away from the demands of his work, Richard began exploring the medium of painting. In 1987, he met up again with John Scane, a neighbor from Glendora, who was just starting his artistic studies at California State University at Long Beach. John taught Richard basic oil and acrylic techniques. Other artist friends put him in touch with the emerging artist loft community in downtown Los Angeles and he met established artists based in Venice, such as Ed Ruscha, Ed Moses, Peter Alexander, Derek Van Nimwegan and Maria Walsh.



Richard started the *Portrait* series in 1989, using objects as metaphors to describe people.

The paintings reflect the personality traits of his models; emotions divided into opposites. Richard would spend three to six months with each model, learning the intimate details of that person, before setting upon the group of objects used to create this tension. These portraits, from 1989 to 1996, drew on a diverse group of family and friends from the U.S., Hong Kong, Belgium and the U.K.



In 1996, Richard would meet his future wife, Sylvia, Virgin Islands. They would marry in 1998. He would artistic community of Laguna Beach. In 1995, he began the design of furniture for his new house. He also resumed daughter. Heavy travel through work continued unabated. trips to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore.



while on vacation in the U.S. resettle in Orange County, near the collaborating with John Scane in making jewelry, for his wife and In 2000 to 2001, he made numerous



In 2004 and 2005, Richard returned to the original aims of the *Portrait* series, exploring three dimensional objects suspended in glass blocks with acclaimed glass master Pino Signoretto.



In 1974, Richard began to summer on the island of Maui in the state of Hawaii. He has made over 40 trips there in the last 31 years.

While this circumstance might evoke the thought of a life spent in Paradise, Richard would see his adopted home succumb to the pressures of development as it grew from 25,000 to over 100,000 people, at the expense of the 5,000 native Hawaiian people living there.



Started in 1986, the *Liquid Skull Therapy* series is centered on the visual perception of corrupted traditional values and objects and the meaning of this compromise.

It explores items of cultural importance to the Hawaiian people, looking at traditional storytelling, chant and religious ceremony, and their reaction to the Western introduction of alcoholism, disease, the military build-up, pestilence, runaway construction and tourism.



In 2004, Richard revisited *Liquid Skull Therapy* as rendered in Muranese glass. *Bites and Kites of Fish*, which appears both as a painting and a Muranese glass structure, looks at aspects of unsustainable fishing practices. The artist's proceeds from this work will be donated to the Obirame Restoration Group, Hokkaido, Japan. This group of local fishermen and residents are restoring the health of the Shiribetsu River to the native huchen fish. The river has no sea-run spawning beds or young fish.

