

Jeff Hanson

For Immediate Release

For more information contact: Kimberly Winter Stern, (913) 449-4294
Julie Hanson, (913) 681-6456

Kansas Kid Paints for Paris

Jeffrey Owen Hanson tapped by world-renowned optical designer THEO Eyewear to paint for major September exhibition in Paris.

Overland Park, Kan. (Aug. 30, 2010)—Jeffrey Owen Hanson is a Kansas kid who knows a thing or two about looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. The visually impaired teen painter was diagnosed in 2006 with neurofibromatosis, a rare genetic disorder that dramatically compromises his sight. The creative genius makes it his business to create spectacular, color-drenched art that has snagged the attention of contemporary art collectors worldwide and donated more than \$180,000 to local, national and international charities.

In fact, the award-winning 16-year-old artist who lives with his mom Julie and dad Hal in Overland Park, Kan., a suburb of Kansas City, Mo., started painting four years ago in a simple basement studio while still undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. The teen regularly mounts his own shows and produces commissioned canvases and pieces for non-profit organizations, including the Elton John AIDS Foundation-sponsored Baphumelele Children’s Home in South Africa. Sir Elton John himself ordered that series of 12 canvases.

Jeff is a regular on the busy Kansas City and Johnson County, Kan., charity auction circuit, known for producing canvases punctuated by explosive color combinations, captivates people with his enthusiastic personality, wide smile and hand-painted cummerbund that matches the original Jeff Hanson piece up for bid.

“But Jeff’s story is really about a teen with a great heart,” says Julie.

Though Jeff’s philanthropic and innocent spirit has touched thousands, his focus is to give away what he has received. His personal mission statement reflects an honest desire personified through his brightly imagined works of art.

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“Every act of kindness helps create kinder communities, more compassionate nations and a better world,” Jeff is fond of saying. “Even one painting at a time.”

Jeff, who is inspired by sublime vistas and scenery in foreign lands that he encounters on travels with Julie and Hal, met the prolific designer and founder of the celebrated Belgium-based, ultra-contemporary spectacle firm, THEO Eyewear, during a June cruise. Patrick Hoet, whose company’s moniker is an anagram derived from his family’s name, was enamored not just with the Jeff’s unshakeable optimism and poignant journey, but also with the wunderkind’s exquisite canvases emulating the brilliant colors that trademark THEO eyeglasses.

Jeff, who regularly sports THEO glasses along with Hal, was initially asked by Patrick to create a 12 x 12 canvas for his personal art collection.

“And then Patrick had a brainstorm,” says Julie.

Patrick requested Jeff to do a series of five paintings for the 2010 Silmo Paris Eyewear and Optics Exhibition September 23 – 26. Nearly 40,000 buyers searching for the next hot look in eyewear attend the international Silmo show, similar in scope to New York’s Fashion Week. THEO, one of the major exhibitors at the Paris show and a trendsetter in the world of optic wear, is known as a singular fashion sensation and sported by luminaries such as Sir Elton John, Bill Gates and Robin Williams.

Jeff spent several weeks perfectly matching THEO’s specific color palette to his abstract and exuberantly hued acrylic canvases, all the time peering through the lenses of one of three pair of his own hip, high-tech THEO designer frames.

“The series that Jeff created for the THEO booth at Silmo is titled ‘Crazy ‘bout THE-O’,” says Julie. “The paintings perfectly dovetail with THEO’s vast array of colors and fabulous shapes.”

And indeed, Jeff’s Technicolor canvases will make a dramatic splash in the vast Paris exhibition hall. The five paintings will be suspended above the THEO booth, creating an overhead floating art gallery sure to be an eye-grabber. Initial plans include a raffle of four of the paintings to Silmo exhibition attendees; the fifth will find its way to the Antwerp, Belgium, headquarters of THEO for permanent display.

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The Crazy 'bout THE-O series of five highly textured, glossy canvases were shipped from Overland Park, Kan., in late August to Belgium. They will then make the trip to Paris under the watchful—and artfully framed—eyes of THEO executives for the crowning addition to their Silmo booth.

“It felt like another child left the studio,” laughs Julie. “Jeff puts his heart and soul into his work, and the THEO opportunity was one he particularly treasures.”

For more information on Jeff Hanson, visit www.jeffreyowenhanson.com.

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About Jeffrey Owen Hanson

Jeff Hanson is a philanthropic artist from Overland Park, Kan., USA. Jeff is visually impaired from an optic nerve tumor associated with a genetic condition called neurofibromatosis. The tumor started causing severe vision loss in 2005 and Jeff received radiation and chemotherapy in 2005-2006. Despite his low vision, Jeff sees well enough to continue creating original artwork for myriad charities, as well as commissioned pieces for local, regional, national and international art collectors.

Jeff never had a pity party about his medical condition. He kept a great attitude throughout his treatment, despite losing his hair and chemo's usual side effects. Jeff said goodbye to his home school friends and spent three years at the Kansas State School for the Blind. Taking all of this in stride, Jeff used humor, creativity and a headlong immersion into his artwork to defeat “Clod,” the optic tumor.

Jeff started painting watercolor note cards in the spring of 2006, when he was 12 years old. It was a hobby and pastime for him, since his visual impairment prevented him from doing sports and the usual kid stuff. Jeff's art was totally abstract, with bright bold colors. His vision did not permit him to create any concrete images. But his color combinations were explosive. Jeff sold the note cards at Jeff's Bistro, a glorified lemonade stand he set up in his driveway in the summer of 2006. Jeff painted and sold more than 5,000 note cards that summer, along with mom's baked goods, raising more than \$15,000 for [The Children's Tumor Foundation](http://www.childrenstumorfoundation.org) to help fund research for neurofibromatosis and optic tumors.

He continues to create canvases in his simple basement studio in Overland Park and his work and mission continue to grab the attention of some of the world's most philanthropic individuals, including Warren Buffet, Harold Ramis, Bill Gates, Patrick Hoet, Sir Elton John, Hoda Kotb and others.