



Markus Pierson

Kansas City, MO

About the Artist

Markus Pierson was born in 1961 and raised in the small farming town of Grand Ledge, Michigan, where his father owned a popular restaurant. A self-proclaimed reckless “racer”, Markus was the youngest and most challenging of the four Pierson children.

While a student, an encouraging art teacher swung wide the door to Markus’ talent and profoundly moved him. However, the Grand Ledge art scene was somewhat lacking, leading Markus to take on a number of odd jobs before accidentally stumbling upon accounting as a means to making a living. After a near-fatal bout with Crohn’s Disease in early 1985, he declared that the accountant was “dead” and in his place was a man pursuing his dream of becoming a successful artist.

The Coyote Series was born in June of 1986, after Markus heard the Joni Mitchell song, “Coyote.” He loved it, played it often and memorized the words. The focus of the song, a guy referred to as “Coyote,” is a reckless, footloose Casanova type fellow – Pierson aspired to be the carefree romancer described in those lyrics. Then he did something he’d never done before or since: Markus made a drawing of a song.

Over the next six months Markus painted billboards by day for a living and drew his Coyotes into the night. To the wall above his desk he taped these words, “No one works this hard and this smart – and has it come to nothing.” Within a year, he walked out of Artexpo in New York City with commitments from 110 art galleries who sought to represent his work.

In the decades that followed, Pierson’s work has evolved to include a vast array of paintings, drawings, sculpture, hand-pulled serigraphs and original found-object works. Over time, the metaphor of the Coyote has taken on a more poignant and profound purpose. At its essence, the work urges us to pursue our dreams, wear our hearts on our sleeves, and to celebrate all of life’s ups and downs. He has had nearly one hundred solo exhibitions in galleries across America, Australia and New Zealand, while also being featured at various prestigious international fairs including Art Miami, Artexpo New York, Sofa Chicago, Chicago Contemporary & Classic, and palmbeach3. Markus has amassed a collector base which includes Heads of State, major corporations and celebrities worldwide.

Markus’ wife and muse is artist, Sher Pierson. The two live and work in a converted loft in Kansas City, Missouri.

“There’s no doubt in my mind that my success has more to do with luck than talent, more to do with stubbornness than vision, more to do with ignorance than insight, but the fact remains that I pursued my dream and attained it against staggering odds. I say this now to anyone who will listen: even if I had failed, it would have been worth it. Better to face a brutal truth than to grow old wondering what might have been.” Markus Pierson

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The Coyotes are a metaphor for people. They are a symbol of your reckless or wild side – a symbol of pursuing your dreams, wearing your heart on your sleeve, and celebrating all of life's ups and downs.

Markus has chosen the Coyotes (versus painting people) because they allow him a broader and deeper range of emotional expression. "They are like a velvet glove, I can hit you with a reality, even a harsh one, but the Coyotes themselves take the edge off of the impact.

Markus Pierson on the Coyotes' 20th year

Hard to believe, but the twentieth year of The Coyote Series is upon us. Twenty years of jaw-dropping, mind-numbing victories, teeth-gnashing, heartbreaking failures, and everything in between. I might be the most alternately exalted, misunderstood, overrated and underestimated person I've ever met. Twenty years now and, safe to say, that The Coyotes have come a long way since their start as hopeful little drawings made in a cold, tiny, rundown apartment in Jackson, Michigan, their sole purpose to lift the spirits of their down-on-his-luck author, me. To my great surprise, The Coyote Series has become one of the most widely collected, longest lasting and successful bodies of artwork in history.

I've become a terrific study on the merits of chasing a dream . . . but hold on a moment. I was a dirt-poor billboard painter with an incurable disease when I began The Coyote Series and, if not for unbelievable luck coming my way, I may have remained that. But even then, when I had nothing, I was optimistic, because at last I was chasing my dream. In that experience you'll find the essence of The Coyote Series: chase a dream, live life like you mean it, love deeply, be a fool for your passions, and come what may, good or bad, book or bust, your life will have few regrets.

As you may have noticed, the tenor of my work has changed as the years have passed. This is partly due to being happily married, partly due to my experiences, both glorious and tragic, and partly due to a better understanding of time. I want to make something lasting and impactful – something impossible to simply toss aside or throw away. Given that fact, I strive mightily to make work that has lingering resonance, not just for the persons who acquire it, but for their heirs. I have cast my gaze two hundred years down the road to dreamers I'll never know who may, like me, hear sensible voices lovingly telling them to stay safe and not take foolish chances. I want The Coyotes to whisper in their ear wild, irresponsible notions about self-determination and destiny. I want them to grab people by the scruffs of their necks, to inspire them, to change their lives. I have seen Coyote Series paintings and sculptures do that countless times already, and it's a beautiful thing to behold. I'd like to think my work's desirability is timeless and permanent, but know this – I don't paint them for you. Never have, never will. I paint them for myself, because there's always a chance no one will like a given painting or sculpture, but that's okay 'cause if I like it, I can just keep it. It's an assumption I've made twenty years running and it serves me well.

Having said that let me now add this: it's strange, but I don't believe The Coyotes belong to me anymore. It's like what I imagine a mother would feel if her child grew up to be a rock star or the president or something. Like her, I can get great seats to amazing events, but it's not really about me. It's about the thing I created and helped raise. I understand him better than anyone, but he belongs to the world now. The Coyotes live absolutely huge lives now, going to incredible places and doing amazing things. Me, I'm just an artist in a studio – a beautiful studio. My creation, my rock star son, bought it for me. He's sweet, but I worry whether he's eating the right things and getting eight hours of sleep.

I have had two grand dreams in my pocket for The Coyote Series. The first was a major museum exhibition. The realization of that dream happened at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art in the summer of 2005. It won't be the last big museum exhibition either, if I can help it. The other is the telling of a Coyote story I've been writing for last 15 years of my life. I'm not sure yet if it is a movie or a luxurious and expansive book, but it is a story that deserves to be told. I feel it is, far and away, the best thing I've ever done and, as such, I intend to passionately embrace it – to be a fool for it come what may. How "Coyote" of me.

To my collectors, many of whom have become Sher's and my closest and dearest friends, you own our hearts. Try as I might, I could never properly express my gratitude for your many leaps of faith regarding my work. You have made my life a blessed existence of beautiful and profound truths. You humble me.

Warmest regards,
Markus Pierson

