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Christian Slater, 16 years sober: From cinema's bad boy to still-life painter

Slater never quite lost his mind, but he did have a wobbly decade or two



Actor Christian Slater during a painting class at the Arts Student League in New York. Photograph: Victor Llorente/The New York Times

John Varriano, an instructor at the Art Students League of New York, stood behind Christian Slater's easel, studying the lines that the 51-year-old actor had sketched. "You have chops, man," Varriano said. "You have got to keep practising, man."

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On a steamy June morning, Slater, spruce in a white denim jacket, black trousers and green runners, had arrived at the art school's home, in midtown [Manhattan](#), for a still-life tutorial. A movie star from the 1980s and 1990s – Heathers, True Romance, Pump Up the Volume – Slater now wears glasses and his stubble has gone grey. Behind those glasses, his eyes still have that signature twinkle – a twinkle like a floodlight – that made him crush material for misunderstood girls everywhere. When he chatted with Varriano about [New York City](#) in the 1970s or Matisse's paper cuts, that daredevil grin surfaced, too.

Back when he lived in New York, Slater wandered into the art school for the occasional drawing class. He began to pursue visual art more seriously a few years ago, at the suggestion of his wife, Brittany Lopez, who signed him up for art classes (watercolors and pastels) at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, near their [Miami](#) home.