



reallife

SKILLS



Point Ball

Illustrator **Adam Port** brought a childhood love of hoops into his studio. Now his work is in AI's house.

LIKE HIS IDOL Michael Jordan, Long Island's Adam Port knows when to dish and when to take over the game. As an enterprising Syracuse art major, Port passed off a portrait he'd done of Jordan to a friend with courtside seats to a Knicks-Bulls game in hopes of getting a signature from the Great One. The ruse failed to get MJ's attention (or signature), but it did get Port his first big break: a meeting with NBA merchandising executives, who were impressed enough with his work to offer Port a licensing agreement to sell his portraits at the League's sprawling 5th Avenue retail store.

The 25-year-old illustrator developed his realist style as a kid by tracing over images of Jordan he found in magazine photos and ads. "I always looked up to him," Port says of MJ. "His passion was a big influence on me as an athlete and as an artist." Now, Port's original colored pencil and airbrushed acrylic portraits are selling for upwards of \$10,000, often landing in the home collections of today's superstars.

Thanks to the social overlap between entertainment and professional sports and some relentless hustling by his manager, Cory

Gersten, Port's work has evolved from being a popular personal accessory among pro athletes like Allen Iverson and Ray Lewis to becoming a component in the merchandising campaigns of music industry figures, including LL Cool J, Cash Money's "Baby" Williams, and Ludacris. Port calls the task of custom-designing album art and posters for some of the biggest names in entertainment "a thrill" and says that "word of mouth has been huge in terms of opening up new opportunities for me."

Gersten, whose relationship with Port has grown from a childhood friendship to a manager position, sees huge potential for his client and friend, naming Violator Management and Jay-Z as potential business partners. "Artists and their labels recognize something innovative and dynamic in Adam's work," says Gersten, "and we've found that having the ability to incorporate that into branding and merchandise attracts them even more."

Once this starts happening regularly, Port can just let the game come to him.—**KEM POSTON**

✦ To cop your own art, log on to adamport.com