



BARRY DeBAUN:

The journey of a contemporary master

By CB Wismar
arts@mainstreetmag.com

Entering Barry DeBaun's studio/gallery resonates as the entry to a private museum. There is no sense of the restrained chaos of some artist lairs, rather a sense of awe at the scope of his work, the richness of his painting style and almost a sense of *déjà vu* captured in several of his large canvases.

Barry DeBaun paints with what he terms "a soft realism" that captures the essence of his subject while giving its presentation the benefit of his peaceful, insightful vision. *New England Autumn*, *Kent Falls* pays tribute to the towering waterfall that courses toward the nearby Housatonic River, but tempers it with the welcoming structure of the covered bridge that serves as the entrance to the park balanced by the whisper of color on the surrounding trees. The scene is welcoming, gentle and thoroughly engrossing. Here is a place to spend quality time. And, perhaps that is the feeling that best describes Barry's work.

From weakness to strength and health

"I was quite sickly as a child," announces Barry as he begins the

narrative of his journey to being the fine artist he has been for his entire career. "The first ten years, I grew up on Long Island and because I didn't have the stamina to become involved in sports, I found drawing consumed my time and gave me great satisfaction."

When his parents bought the Trail Motel in Boiceville, NY, DeBaun transferred into the local schools and came to the attention of the art teachers through middle and high school. "I was largely self-taught," says DeBaun, "but the encouragement and the introduction to art history and the wonders of the Hudson River School were captivating."

The mighty Hudson was, after all, only 20 miles to the east "as the crow flies," so seeing the vistas memorialized by Thomas Cole, Asher Brown Durand, and the rest of the Hudson River School of painters became the context for Barry's landscape background. His *The Grandeur of Kaaterskill* serves as a colorful homage to both Cole, who painted the falls in 1826, and Durand whose *Kindred Spirits* offered a more expansive view of the frequently visited falls and the river valley beyond.

Passtime to vocation

From school into the world of art

became a fairly simple step for DeBaun. With space available, he established his studio and gallery on the grounds of his parent's hospitality property and flourished there until the dramatic event that changed the landscape surrounding Boiceville and the lower Catskills. Hurricane Irene retained some of her wrath from the Caribbean and her march up the Eastern Seaboard to dump torrents of water in the Catskills in August of 2011. The Esopus Creek was one of the recipients of all of that water, and as it overflowed, it swept away buildings and businesses in the heart of Boiceville.

The Trail Motel and DeBaun Gallery were among the casualties of that storm and required the DeBaun family to find a new home ... and Barry to find a new studio and gallery. Now situated on the bluffs above the Hudson River, Barry's painting focus became more outward looking as he joined the latter day inheritors of the Hudson River traditions of Cole, Church, Bierstadt, Durand, and Morgan.

Beautifully rendered watercolors

Well before his endeavors with landscape oil painting, Barry DeBaun was a watercolorist. His efforts were both elegant landscapes and the ex-



Above, top to bottom: *Peaceful Valley*. The artist, Barry DeBaun.

tremely difficult pursuit of painting portraits in watercolor. So successful were his efforts that his *Morning Rain ... The Lady in Blue* not only allowed him to work creatively through a dramatic separation in his own life, but to attract the attention of the judges at Washington, DC's International Platform Association who awarded him the Gold Medal for his efforts.

The casual wanderer on his website will be encouraged to view the gallery of watercolor portraits which reflect the gentle grace of the subjects and the sensitive nature of the artist's perception ... his look into the character of his subjects. In the same section are landscapes that capture times spent in Maine and the quiet elegance of New England winter scenes.

Awards and recognition

Competitions and recognition have been a staple of Barry's career, with awards coming from Art Impact USA, Northeast Watercolor Society, the Salamagundi Club, and the Hudson Valley Art Association. In 2016, he was selected Best of the Hudson Valley by *Hudson Valley Magazine*. His credits also include exhibitions at several museums and, notably, a special invitational show at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC, in 2001.

Influenced and schooled by the observations he has made of the world's greatest artists, Barry has traveled extensively to view, first-hand, the works of the masters. He credits exposure to the Pre-Raphaelites and American Impressionists as



Above: *The Grandeur of Kaaterskill*. Below: *New England Autumn, Kent Falls*.

influences in both his choice of subjects and his perspectives on painting. The "mimesis" doctrine of the Pre-Raphaelites Millais and Rossetti are well memorialized in DeBaun's landscapes. *The Crossing*, celebrating the lush floral growth south of Millerton, NY, captures the two natures that carry through DeBaun's work ... "beauty and tranquility ... that's what I'm striving for."

It has been, after all, the outdoors and his pursuit of those scenes that share both beauty and tranquility that have assisted the self-described "sickly" young man from Long Island to become a robust outdoorsman ... in pursuit of the right scene, the engaging landscape that can be transported onto vibrant canvases.

From studio to gallery

As might be imagined, DeBaun's work has found its way into many private collections. Represented and exhibited by several galleries within the tri-state area, they have enjoyed success with Barry's work. Neumann Fine Art in Hillsdale, NY, and The Good Gallery in Kent, CT, both have selected works and schedule shows with some regularity. In addition, The Galleries at Win Morrison Realty present his work in Kingston, Saugerties, and Woodstock, NY.

Two galleries in Virginia, Berkley Gallery in Warrenton and Jarrett Thor Fine Art in Colonial Beach, represent DeBaun, as does the Eisele Gallery of Fine Art in Cincinnati, OH.

Motivation for artists is often an ephemeral and fleeting thing. "Artist's block," like "writer's block" can overcome the creative spirit and render the victim powerless to move forward. Artists stare at blank canvases. Writers reflect the white glow of a blank screen, waiting for the appearance of their muse to begin the often painful process of creation.

Motivation from Motown

For Barry DeBaun, the potential for a block in his creative process seems effectively tempered by a quote he

shares with the gentle laughter of one who has stepped close to the edge, but managed to pull back with great success. "I love the quote from Smokey Robinson," acknowledges DeBaun. "If you're going to write a song ... write a song." No pretense, no excuses, no temptation to wander off and not accomplish anything. Writers write. Painters paint. Barry DeBaun welcomes the muse every time he takes a brush in his hand and celebrates his enormous talent by creating beauty with tranquility. ●

Barry DeBaun Studio and Gallery is located at 21 Tuiytenbridge Road, Lake Katrine, NY. To reach him you can call (845) 399-7574 and online at barrydebaun.wixsite.com/barrydebaunart.

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