

BARRY MCCARTHY

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PLACE OF BIRTH:

Deep River, Ontario, Aug. 11,
1951

EDUCATION:

Grades 1-13, Thunder Bay,
Ontario
University: 4 years, honours BA,
University of Guelph, 1975
Teachers college: Western
University, 1976

EMPLOYMENT:

Art instructor, Waterloo
Collegiate, 1976-2006
Art instructor, Waterloo
University, 1988-89

PRESENT STATUS:

Retired, full time artist

RESIDENCE/ STUDIO:

1976-1999, Fergus, Ont.
1999-2004, Belwood, Waterloo,
Fergus
2004-2016, Elora, Ont.

GALLERIES:

1975-1977, Gallery Pascal, Toronto, Ont.
1976-1979, McCarthy Gallery, Elora, Ont.
1978-1979, Beckett Gallery, Hamilton, Ont.
1978-1980, Gallery 480, Elora, Ont.
1983-1985, Studio Colleen, Ottawa, Ont.
1984 - Gallery 12, Waterloo, Ont.
1985 - Cambrian Rose, Ottawa, Ont.
1985 - Gallery 1667, Halifax, N.S.
1987-1990, Quan Schieder Gallery, Toronto, Ont.
1991-1999, Nancy Poole Studio, Toronto, Ont.
1999-2006 stopped exhibiting publically
2007- The Loch Gallery, Toronto, On., Calgary, Alta
2009 - The Loch Gallery, TO, Loch Gallery, Calgary
2010 - The Loch Gallery
2011 - The Loch Gallery, TO, solo exhibition
2012 - The Loch Gallery
2013 - The Loch Gallery, TO, solo exhibition
2014 - The Loch Gallery, TO, solo exhibition
2015 - The Loch Gallery
2016 - The Loch Gallery, TO, solo exhibition

PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS/RETROSPECTIVES

1992 - Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener,
Ont.
1986 - Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph,
Ont.
1991 - Wellington County Museum, Aboyne, Ont.

1995 - Kitchener- Waterloo, Art Gallery, Kitchener,
Ont.
2006 - The Burlington Art Centre, solo retrospec-
tive
2007 - Wellington County Museum and Archives,
solo retrospective
2011 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.
2012 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.
2013 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.
2014 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.
2015 - Wellington County Museum and Archives,
shared exhibition with two others called "90 Proof"
2015 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.
2016 - Wellington County Museum and Archives,
"Death Perceptions" group exhibition
2016 - International Art Fair, Toronto, Ont.

FUTURE:

One Man Exhibition at The Loch Gallery, Toronto,
Ont.
New sculpture for The Elora Sculpture Garden,
Elora, Ont.

MEDIUMS:

Watercolour	Etching
Oil	Serigraph
Drawing	Sculpture in clay

STATEMENT OF INTENT

ON PAINTING: ON OBJECTS

When I was five years old, I got a rocking horse and cap guns for Christmas. Since then I have always wanted to be a cowboy. I couldn't and I didn't so I decided to be an artist.

I have been drawing and painting since I was a young boy growing up in Thunder Bay. It was a surprising preoccupation as there were no artists or galleries to speak of. Thunder Bay was far too isolated to find motivation and inspiration from a limited culture that was this city's inherited reputation. However, growing up wandering the woods and shores of Lake Superior with my buddies was a great experience and helped develop my formative years as an artist. I soon discovered that I was drawn to large bodies of water such as the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Huron because of its grandeur and charm much akin to Lake Superior. I eventually purchased a house in Nova Scotia so that I could be near this power. Similarly, the nearby forests, lakes and rivers of Northern Ontario created my liking towards landscapes and such. My small collection of tin toys and rocking horses from my wanderings through antique markets when I was in university encouraged me to purchase old rather than new. These small curiosities helped develop my love for historical objects, hence my antique collection. These chattels or object des art had character. With all of their dents and scratches, these wonderful old friends could tell an intriguing story from the past...how old were they, where did they come from and who played with them. Perhaps it was my romantic notion that odd and old were warm and friendly. Perhaps it was the fact I had no toys of my own and this might be compensation. Who knows how characters are built. But I eventually found myself not only looking, buying or photographing them; but painting them as well. Having this strange connection or communion, if you will, with old things, gave me great inspiration for still life paintings both in a study form and large major works. (See: Range Rider, Rocking Horse, Sunflowers) To this day, I still wander old shops or visit antique markets waiting for some small amusement to call out to me to take them home.

ON PORTRAITURE

I have engaged myself in finding true, honest characters to paint. Not to just record skin, hair and bone, but to reveal their spirit, their inner self, their mysticism. Francis Bacon once wrote that "the job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery." As an artist we must find this mystery by digging deeper to discover their very core... their being! I believe this rarity was found in several characters I have had the pleasure to paint: George Gracie, Tom Cako, and Guy Fields. Often it is not the portrait but the object that they are associated with, for example, "Iggy." You see, the painting isn't about Tom but about his pet Iguana. In "Dave" it's not about his likeness but it's about that jacket... that's the thing! That jacket (a WWII issued commando parka), has so much personality that when I first saw it, I just had to paint the war, a war which thank God I did not have to fight in. So you see there is power in inanimate objects but if you search for the truth, the deeper meaning, it gives your work purpose. This, I believe, is the gift we give to others... this is being an artist.

ON LANDSCAPE

Lillian Smith once wrote "I soon realized that no journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within." I believe she understands the importance of travelling to new places and not just looking but seeing. There is a difference. When you see a wonderful highlight with an equally beautiful accompanied shadow it should talk to your soul. When as artists, we are amazed at this so strongly, we just have to say something about it, whether it be in dance, music, song or paint. It's all the same spontaneous, reflective action with copious amounts of light and shadow. This is the stuff that makes great art. When I teach painting to young or mature artists I tell them there is no point thinking about painting if you're not going to deal with the light! Shape, space, composition are all inclusive as important ingredients but it's the light that is going to drive the thing forward. And this thing is called

power! Without power you have mediocrity. The Elora Gorge is a piece of this planet that drives me wild. No matter what time of day it is, one side is always bathed in light while the other is in warm to cool shadows. It's a formula that makes perfect paintings. This is the Yin Yang in art. If you have perfect balance in your composition, and mix it with a little geometry, you will have the ingredients for a perfect painting. The sea, is another backdrop that sets the stage for great landscape/seascape works. The sea, with its constant mirror-dance, still holds my eye in constant fascination and respect. The large abstract space is a never ending challenge, as is the use of texture, and techniques that get you there. The sea, with all of its austere foreboding and tension, informs me that I am but an apprentice in serving its greater glory. But to paint it you have to understand it. Picasso once said "I don't paint what I see, I paint what I know." One must also remember that technique is merely technique and a good painter must avoid a systematic approach. Great bodies of water constantly change in the light. Colours can morph from grey-blue to greens and purples. In my mind's eye, I map out the composition. I often see these panoramas in larger formats. Oil on canvas is my chosen medium here; however I have completed very large watercolours as I love the transparent quality this medium provides me. Layering several transparent colours over one another is not a thing of the past. As a matter of fact it is a "must method" if you want your work to be luminous and shimmering. This of course takes great patience, a trait I constantly wrestle with. But in the end, the effort is worthwhile, as the key to the creative process is not about time but about capturing your vision... the thought or inspiration that brought you to the canvas. One must be passionate about one's own work. The act of painting for me is serious business.

PASSION

If painting was so easy, then everybody would be doing it. Someone put the word 'pain' in painting to remind us that it isn't easy and if you don't challenge yourself to do greater works (and this includes painting surfaces and objects that are difficult and unfamiliar or in some cases downright impossible) then what's the point! Rocks and trees are some of my nightmares so I choose to continue challenging myself to try to capture them even though they are my weakness. An artist doesn't improve their status and proficiency by painting the same subjects and textures over and over again. Where is the pain there? Out of pain comes growth and an artist must be strong willed to understand that you must experience a constant epiphany if one is to move forward. As well, new challenges must be explored if one is to grow at all. Fear must be overcome. Confidence is the victor. Painting is the tool that will build the character to get you through these ordeals. It is the act of painting that allows you to live in harmony with yourself, your work and your world.

ON SCULPTURE

I have taught sculpture for 22 years working in clay, wax and resin, plaster and multiple mould making in plaster and rubber. In 2016, I created a seven piece maquette sculpture in resin for The exhibition "Death and Perceptions" at The Wellington County Museum and Archives, Aboyné, On. The piece was called "The Call for the Intervention of Shkaskmigkwe" (Ojibway for Mother Earth).

New works are in the planning stage

LIFE STYLE

Recently (the last six years), I have discovered the joys of oil painting. It is an on going challenge that finds me often frustrated, but towards the end, its just rewards. I have to keep this confidence level flowing, otherwise the undertow will drag me out with the tide! I love learning about the use of white. This is a whole new learning curve for me. With regards to my subject matter, I tend to paint in groups of five. I don't want to analyze this, it just seems to be the right number to find, feel and formalize.

I started with an aerial bowl series where the compositions were painted from above. These 30x40 water-

colours were somewhat difficult to paint as large watercolours tend to be unmanageable now because of the poor quality of Arches paper. I then completed a landscape series of Waterloo County in watercolour. After driving the space for 28 years, back and forth to school in Waterloo, and watching all of my favorite “touch stones”, I decided to paint it before the situation would cease to present itself upon my retirement.

The next series was Wellington County, including the Elora Gorge. I will never stop painting that beautiful space.

After that series I traveled throughout the countryside in France, landing in Giverny, the famous home and gardens of Claude Monet, the master of light in the artistic movement of impressionism. This welcoming garden begged to be painted. So upon my return home to Elora, I switched gears, changed to oils and executed five large scaled oils from several working studies in watercolours.

In the summer of 2005, I traveled to Cape Cod to experience the Atlantic ocean once again. This series of oils is a work in progress.

My purchase of a cottage in Southampton, on Lake Huron, will no doubt inspire several paintings, as the sunsets are the best in the world. Without getting trite with God’s paintbrush, I am thinking more in the direction of seascapes again, one of my favorite recurring themes. As well, our new property of woodlands and ponds hidden in the woods of Elora, will inspire a “fallen” tree series, a theme that keeps speaking to me when we are walking the dogs. These new works are a constant challenge for me as I continue to have a wide range of imagery in my work and each theme is pushed to its limits. I would also like to attempt to paint palm trees and Caribbean green waters as I find with my recent retirement, I have more time to travel and experience life in different parts of the world.

IN CONCLUSION

The act of creativity, whether it is theatre, music, dance or art, is the act of living life and creating life. It defines who you are. Jackson Pollock once wrote “every good painter paints what he is”. You can not stay in your backyard to discover the world. (You might as well be fashioned with blinders!) I say you are what you paint and all things that enter your life whether it be the people that you meet, the places that you’ve been to and the objects that you find, all come to define who you are through association. Artists must be passionate about their world. We are lucky to be able to go deeper to discover the greater meaning... the MYSTERY, the POWER! Is it any different than Einstein searching for the truth of the universe? Is it “la joie de vivre” that Renoir often referred to when he talked about painting wonderful, quiet, joyful subjects because there’s enough chaos in the world? How lucky are we to find this life long GIFT! How unfortunate is it that some of us possess the gift but choose not to use it because they are blinded by fear. For fear is failure. To paint is to be human. To paint is to breathe life into your subject. To paint is to connect with one’s spirit, one’s soul. This is the harmony of life itself, which I believe IS “the gift”. To celebrate the smallest things in life only to find their deeper meaning and then share it with others... is the greatest gift of all.

BARRY MCCARTHY

A stylized signature of Barry McCarthy in blue ink, written in a cursive, flowing style.