

## Byron Carr



*"Chadwick Marsh" - a 24' x 30' oil painting by Byron Carr.*

### IN THE OPEN AIR

#### The Works of Byron Carr by Jane White

Have you ever stood at the edge of a pond or a small lake on a clear day, when the air is absolutely still, and gazed at the unmarred reflection of surrounding trees, rocks and sky? It is a moment that is both peaceful, and because it is uncommon, memorable. Perhaps you will notice, as I did on such an occasion, the sudden appearance of a thin, silver line, etching the water's surface, as a beaver swims lazily in the distance, underscoring the tranquility of the scene. That experience came to mind immediately, the first time I saw a painting entitled, "Chadwick Marsh." It evoked reality with a luminous quality that made it stand out from surrounding works of art. It is a good example of how a skilled artist can share an impression of a moment in time with all who look at his painting.

Byron Carr, the artist who created "Chadwick Marsh," lives in a house situated atop the banks of the Contoocook River.

It is the same house in which he grew up, and where his studio is now located. He is an accomplished artist who has enjoyed drawing since childhood. Once you get to know him you'll realize that creativity is and always has been, an integral part of his personality. During his youth, at a time when youngsters enjoyed simple pleasures such as exploring the river, and surrounding countryside, or sharing with friends, an imaginary ride in an old, abandoned truck, he also spent many solitary hours drawing pictures. It was an interest that continued into his teens. While a student at Hopkinton High School, he completed a Famous Artist Course for Young People. After he graduated from high school, he attended Vespar George School of Art in Boston, where he studied commercial art for the next three years.

After completing the program in commercial art, and despite his academic success

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and promise as an artist, he returned to Central New Hampshire, and entered the building trades. Nevertheless, his artistic training served him well in the carpentry field, in as much as he was able to put his ideas on paper, enabling clients, or potential clients to see what they were getting. During the next few years, he married, started a family, and "drifted away from art." That changed however, in 1987, when his daughter was two years old. He began working on a children's book that he had started while attending art school. Entitled DOODLES, it is a cleverly conceived book, that teaches drawing as well as verbal skills. It was written and illustrated entirely by Byron, and was published in 1988. He has since used DOODLES for inspiration, when visiting elementary schools, to work with children interested in drawing. After the publication of DOODLES, he completed a two-year correspondence course with the Institute of Children's Literature.

By 1992, Byron was working from 6:30 A.M. until 2:30 P.M. maintaining twelve office buildings, on Main Street in Concord. Given a few free hours in the afternoons, he once again became interested in art, and began working, throughout the rest of that year, to perfect his basic drawing skills. Preferring the outdoors, he roamed

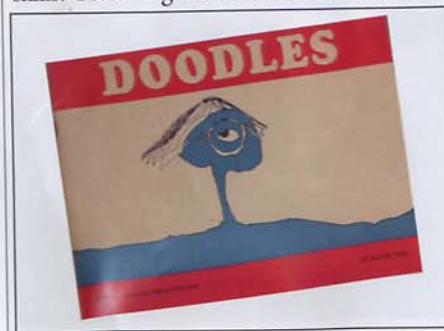


*Byron Carr holding a 6" brush that he uses, with "The Calm After", a 4' x 6' watercolor painting.*

the area, looking for objects of interest and often sketched large, gnarly, old trees. He also began to paint at that time, enthused after taking a week-long watercolor workshop.

In January of 1993, he submitted a painting, for the first time, to the Thorne-Sagendorff Regional Show, a juried event. That submission provided him with his first award, and his first sale. There have been many awards since that time, including a First Place and a People's Choice Award from the Sharon Arts Center, as well as the Costello Award from the New Hampshire Art Association, and the 2000 Theme Award from the New Hampshire Antiquarian Society. If you have an opportunity to view his paintings at his studio or at a gallery, you will understand why his work has been critically recognized.

Byron's growth and success as an artist has continued. During the 1990s, four of his paintings depicting waterfalls were purchased by the State of New Hampshire, per-



*"DOODLES" - an imaginative children's book.*

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"Sap" - a 16" x 20" Oil Painting.

haps because of his ability to capture the essence of moving water. These paintings now hang in the Rockingham County Court House in Exeter. The following year he had a well-received show at the Covered Bridge Fine Art Gallery in Contoocook, New Hampshire. He sold more than half of the paintings shown. It was there that I first saw his painting of "Chadwick Marsh," the work which so readily reawakened my memory of a similar scene. Byron's paintings have a powerful way of reuniting people with the out-of-doors, and the natural world.

Continuing his artistic growth, and inspired by Richard Whitney of Stoddard, a noted illustrator, portrait, and landscape artist, Byron began painting with oils. His next show at the Covered Bridge Gallery featured several large oil paintings as well as watercolor pieces. Painting with oil has enabled him to paint outside, *en plein air*, or as he calls it, using his best New Hampshire accent, "in plain ayah." He feels, and viewers of his work, will certainly agree, working outside gives his pieces a sense of immediacy, and enables him to capture the spirit of what is in front of him. He told me, "I've found that I could say things with color and

shapes, that I couldn't say in any other way.....things that I had no words for."

Painting outside is challenging due to the changing light conditions. Byron must paint quickly, because he feels that his window of opportunity to capture the "essence of a scene and its visual impression" is two hours or less. Since he paints in all sorts of weather, everything from sun to rain, snow, and black flies, the quality of the light can change quickly depending on conditions. Regarding the black flies – light is less of an issue than texture. Some paintings are accidentally "embellished" with bits of wings, from hapless insects. Paintings executed "en plein air" become references from which he creates larger works in his studio.

In addition to painting and working with elementary school children, he has instructed watercolor workshops entitled, "Paint Until the Magic Happens." He has also conducted oil painting workshops, and demonstrations at his studio in Contoocook, and in other locations such as the Sharon Arts Center in Peterborough, the New Hampshire Art Association in Manchester, and the Nashua Art Association in Nashua. During the last few summers he has conducted workshops for the Art Teacher's Convention in Acadia, Maine.



"Andrew Brook", a 3'x4' watercolor painting.

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"Rowe Mountain View", a 24" x 36" oil painting on display at the Woodsum Gallery at Sunapee Harbor.

At the present time, in addition to his job in Concord, Byron is very involved in town affairs, such as the Hopkinton Open Space Committee, and Contoocook River Advisory Board. As a result, he is unable to paint as much as he would like. He hopes that will change, so that he can spend more time doing what he enjoys, having fun "slopping, splashing, spraying and scraping," keeping his works "simple with shape, value and color." A busy man, Byron also belongs to a Yahoo.com Group, known as NH Plein Air. It consists of artists who are interested in joining other artists to paint together "in the open air." They also discuss matters related to painting such as supplies, locations and useful tips.

Blending creativity with community involvement, Byron has made a DVD which beautifully captures the change of seasons on the Contoocook River. This presentation, together with dozens of slides are being considered as a fund raiser, perhaps by

an organization such as the Hopkinton Women's Club, to promote conservation along the River.

If you would like to see Byron Carr's paintings for yourself, you can do so at the Covered Bridge Gallery in Contoocook, or [coveredbridgegallery@conknet.com](mailto:coveredbridgegallery@conknet.com), the Woodsum Gallery in Sunapee Harbor, the New London Gallery, New London, and Through the Artist's Eye Gallery in Woodstock, New Hampshire. You can also see some pictures on the Internet or contact Byron directly by calling him at 746-3370. He will be happy to provide information concerning his paintings and prints available for sale, demonstrations, and workshops. Also, other examples of his creativity are two "Welcome to Contoocook Village" signs, one of which is located on Route 103. Byron designed and constructed the covered bridge portal that encases the blue sign. His rich talent and creativity await one and all.