

Do you plan to do any more publications?

I might think about doing another book. I wanted to do this one so I could do it right. If I did another book it would probably be probably more realistic.

In terms of what?

I would actually go far deeper into the subject that I have gone heretofore. I don't think I will have the time, frankly. Scott and I discussed the possibility that there are a lot other things that we want to do that we simply don't have the space. If we do, it will be something we paint on gradually and maybe three or four paintings a year until we get enough things that we like. I would like to do a second volume but I don't want to do another large one. I would rather it be a second volume that would match the coffee table sized one.

Did you say earlier that you would do a coffee table sized one?

I'm sure I will. It's a great way to reach a lot of people who can't afford to buy this one. I think these birds natural size ...no matter if they're going to be reduced or not. I simply can't visualize myself doing one less. I think it is neat that the museum has this collection. I don't think they will regret it. This book on Mexico is of extreme importance to us. I was with Carol McKay when I first landed in Mexico in their airplane. I want in the cab with her afterwards. I had studied.....cultures but I was mainly a Mayanist. We drove around....which was the ancient square in Mexico and I had the cab stop and Carol and I got out and got deja vu. It's stayed with me ever since. I just mentioned a few things to her about it. She just looked at me straight in the eye and she said, "This night is going to be a very important one." I had been studying the subject and she was right. I had been studying on Mexico City since 1962 and reading..... book, Discovering Conquest of Mexico and Scott had just started reading it. It was not until Scott actually got interested in the subject that I really knew what end was up as far as the city was concerned. He really began very quickly to plot out directions and to get a sense of real orientation of where these events were taking place and that was the first time, though I'd been to Mexico City four or five times before Scott had been there, it was the first time that I began to lock in on a definite sense of place. And since that time we have researched and worked our fannies off on that subject and I guarantee you, and I'm not at all modest about this, when we do it it's going to be a view of the city and it will be romanticized. It is going to be a clear vision of a highly sophisticated, fierce, and elegant people in a truly beautiful city that has never been seen before. It has never been done before. It is one subject that is almost our duty to do it. I have sat down with Mexicans, archaeologists, the whole lot, and I'm simply wide eyed. It is amazing how much these people know about the subject, but they are not good visualizers about how to make it even manageable. It amazes me. They are all helpful. All the doors in Mexico have been opened to us. All of them - the highest to the lowest. They are a little bit put off by the fact that gringos are doing this, but then they think that, well, maybe in your former life. We have to show it in the best way possible. Even then, we have to admit that there are so many things that are sheer guesswork. We have to literally invent a late Aztec painting style that doesn't exist. It exists in descriptions, fragments (pottery fragments). The Spaniards were so thorough in their destruction of that civilization. Much more is known about Mayan artifacts than about Aztec artifacts.

And the Aztec religion is extremely complicated. Scott and I have a pretty good grasp on it and it's neat to be able to read these complicated theological texts and not feel lost. There are many different and conjectural interpretations. You try to work out the placement of temples in terms of their religious orientation. We worked out a plan of the great square in Mexico City in 1975 (about three before they began taking down ~~xxxxxx~~ and I was amazed that we were extremely accurate because of what they found was not what we thought that thought they were going to find. It was like what we thought they were going to find. That made me feel good. It was amazingly close. I have done a picture which is very similar. That's all I want. I want to convey the feeling of what the city looked like based on sound archaeology and good guesswork. You are bound to be wrong some of the time. Our ideal is this: to make it where no current archaeological evidence can say it doesn't look like that. We have a pretty good grasp of how the overall look of much of the city was so that much of it is not conjectural. It just hasn't been painted by any first rate artist. You see, you've got three different types of people, you've got the historian, the archaeologist, and then you've got the artist. I happen to be lucky: I'm all three. ~~xxxxxx~~ I'm an amateur in the historian and the arts.... but I have got the same access to the same information these guys do but I can visualize it.

What's most impressive about the painting you showed me? It felt as if you had to walk through that city to paint it.

In a way, I did. Visually - I can actually move in my visualizations.

I don't see how you could paint it?

Scott and I would be down there taking car trips all the time out into the boon docks. Everybody down there didn't even know where they were. We'd studied the effects of sunlight on white stucco. We studied the colors of drainage areas, of specific things, the knowledge of which ~~you keep adding~~ ~~xxx~~ added on, you start painting Aztec walls, and people start saying "What did you paint that from?" And I take my older brother who is a real horticultural expert down to Mexico with me and I would discuss trees, and he would say, "This species was not there." We had to learn all the species of plants that were garden plants, of animals and birds ~~cultivated that were species~~ ~~xxx~~ cultivated and kept in their zoological gardens, and study the building platforms, their palaces, pavillions, canals, hydrolic systems. The laws governing how sizes and who could live in what place. We have done so much of that already. I could sit down and paint one with the knowledge of perspective which is mechanical thing. But to be able to soften it from architectural drawings. That doesn't mean that the paintings are not going to have some tremendous feeling but it's got to be an accurate one. It's got to have romance and reality. That's why women would wear a shift quite frequently- very simple and all in white hair and feathers. ~~Not fluffy xxx not smooth xxx with very large xxx~~ Not fluffy, very smooth, with large light blue/dark blue swirling disks of feather. Work set on a silver thread backgrounds and the lines of the whirlpool would be red dyed rabbit fur lightly lined. And the edges of their wheat fields would be lined in yellow parrot feathers. They wore ~~xxxx~~ necklaces with white The city was on an island in the middle of a lake.

I would like to create a classic in this book that could be the inseparable companion of all the other writings done by the conquistadores and eyewitness viewers who wrote all these romance books on the conquest and I just love it because it's a great story.

All of this work is simply answering the question I've asked myself, "What did it really look like?" ~~Part of this is self discovery. That's part of the fun of doing them. As much as you can visualize and think of them. Right now I'm doing a drawing of a skull rack, has hundreds of skulls on it. Though I know pretty much what they look like, and I know the principles by which they are constructed until you actually sit down to draw one, there are lots of little things that your mind does not perceive, that you have to work out. When you get through, it is the most dramatic vision. It is realism.~~

What is realism? Are you a realist?

No. I don't think so. Some people call painting magic. It's because the objects are identifiable. I don't think there is realism in painting. I just don't. If you want to go for realism, the reality of the painting are the molecules of paint on the molecules of paper. It's the illusion of reality, ~~the culture is always tempered by one's outlook~~ is closer to it. It's always tempered by one's outlook as is everything in perception.

Since the environments are already controlled in a painting you are already placing your imprint on them. You see Richard..... work and Robert..... work. They have the veneer of objectivity but they're not. ~~xxxxxx~~

What about photography? Photography isn't realism, is it?

You see a black and white film. It is more real than..... Unless you have had a camera set up on some sort of machine that clicks, could spiral around in a sphere, and click at random, uncontrolled, that would probably as close to objective photography as you could probably get. But even then, you cannot divorce it from the agent to accept..... It's been so hard to repeat that simple little fact to people that's been a stumbling block to their appreciation to the fine art of photography. I don't know why, because when they look at it they can tell it's fine art. ~~What is called realism in painting is a matter of intent. There are painters who want something to be real, to look as real as possible, and that is their function, not to perceive anything but its reality. I'm not that way at all. I'm always shading something with thought. So many lie to tell the truth. Artists exchange things. What you do is use visually objective elements, people automatically think that's realistic. But the emotion expressed in a picture is far more immediate and overpowering than one of those in a photograph of a woman in pain or something like that. So what are you saying, objective reality, something rendered like a Campbell's soup can. Reality in art is that outside thing from which a point of view is taken. So there is no reality in art. Only points of view. If you want to indulge yourself in..... you'll find you can't define what reality is at all.~~

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At this point, Linda says this depresses her. Me too! Therefore, I am going to skip some of the interview because they're just talking about things that don't relate to the paintings.

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If you want to take realism in art, it's objective painting. Objects appearing recognizable.

Scott and I have never come to a consensus about why he and I paint the way we do. I have often thought ~~xxxx something to do with something that has been put down until recently and now it's back in favor. It's about the literary approach to painting. We don't try to tell stories, but we like dramatic settings which could be essentially conjured up. Stuart maintains this in his own approach and I do not. I do not consider myself a literary painter in any sense of the word. xxxxxxxx promotes literature xxxxxxxx~~ If you take the drama that promotes literature, I would look at that drama as it creates a painting.

I think if Scott and I have been influenced by any other medium outside of painting, I think film has influenced us. Like the movies of the late 40s. As kids we saw these things. We saw Oliver Twist in 1949. When I saw Intruder.....that movie never left me as a kid. I was only 6 or 7. Movies like Quo Vadis and King Solomon's mines. They created interest in Rome and art interests that we have now were started very, very early. Parents never introduced us to paintings or to much fine music. We come from a perfect middle class family. My father was a doctor, a good one, at the Mayo Clinic, and came from Rochester, MN. which is a doctor's town. My parents are both well educated. But their interests were basically part of children from the depression, 2nd World War, of duty, of love, and they didn't have the opportunity to pursue a lot of interests that we were given. I think as a result they always gave us free reign. Our parents never put the cramps on our style. They even had the good taste to build our bedroom off the end of the house. We were allowed to nurture our interests very early. Our parents never showed us off as kids, but they were always proud to have us come out. They entertained a lot. Their friends were interested in our taxidermy, or our ship models or Roman bridges or buildings. There was always the tour back to the bedroom. It was like something out of a chamber of horror. Stuart would have eye hooks, brains, dead bird bodies, maybe a half collapsed dog. Maybe she would have a luncheon with the ladies and I would bring a deer skull.

It was a big thing for Mom. Our house was on some kind of Garden Club tour. It happened to be the day the eggs in my egg incubator were hatching. They were bringing people through the house. These people would get backed up. They didn't know when to leave.

Scott and I and.....and Dutch Phillips had the largest collection of ornamental pheasants in Texas. 21 different kinds. It was a beautiful collection. Now you couldn't get some of them.

Our parents used to come back to our room for a few minutes. Roby Penn used to come over. He had a big bass which I had mounted. I had never stuffed a fish before. Mom said, "Roby, It must be up on the wall." He came back after seeing the fish and said, "Barbara, I couldn't tell which one is mine." We only had one fish.

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We knew some characters. A. P. Hurley used to take Mother and some other women out. He was a former Texas Ranger. They'd take him to some of the sleeziest places out on Lancaster.

After my Mother and Father separated, my Mother had a lot of her friends over, some of the same people who came over before. We always had cocktails in the evening and Mother would cook for them and one evening, we had Dr. Curtis.....who was a dentist here, an old friend of Mom's, and Stella..... and..... Emmo.....wife, who was also estranged from her husband who was a SOB. Scott and I were off in our room at the end of the house. We couldn't hear a lot of things that were going on. I knew they were always having a party. They were all sitting on the couch, discussing and laughing. The next morning I woke up and went out to get the newspaper. Mother was sitting on the couch in the living room, and I walked out. My sister's bedroom (she was about 11 years old) and she had a friend (Patty Lowden) who was staying overnight. Her bedroom was on the opposite side of the living room. When I went into the living room, I spotted a little hole in the baseboard of the wall with a little bit of Kleenex stuffed in it. I asked Mother what that little hole was. She said, "What?" I said, "That hole." She said, "I don't see a hole." We started pulling this long piece of Kleenex out of the hole. I said, "Mother, how did that hole get there." She said, "Isn't that the strangest thing. I don't think I've ever noticed that hole there." I said, "Mother, how did that hole get there?"

I couldn't understand the rest of that story.

Emeraldwho is a wealthy man here. He and his wife have been estranged so many times that nobody pays any attention any more. Their maid was there. A. P. Hurley who was a good friend of my Mom's ~~was a police detective. It's a good thing he was there or something horrible would have happened.~~ had left. So he wasn't there or something horrible would have happened. Emerald came into the living room and just literally pushed open the front door. And there was Mother and Dr. Durham (who was this wonderful conservative old doctor). Emerald..... said "Where is he?" He looked around (Curtis was the only male there) and said, "Who is this SOB?" Curtis said who he was. Emerald started pulling his wife by the hair and pulled out a pistol. He just shot into the....and dragged her out of the house. My sister and Patty Lowden were on the other side of the wall. We didn't hear a thing that night.

In many ways, Scott and I felt more comfortable around adults than we did with people our own age. Most of our friends didn't share our interests. It got to be kind of a ceremony because people would have to come back to our room to see what we were up to. ~~That way we never packed or did anything.~~

I was interested in medicine, hopefully maybe to become a doctor. My dad took me down to see the Chief of Anesthesiology at Harris Hospital and he would take me in and let me see heart operations and brain operations. (This was when I was in the 8th grade).

It shows our interest in natural history. We also have an interest in architecture. I wanted to be an architect at one time. Even that I didn't consider too long a time. I really wanted to be an artist.

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Scott went to Tulane for one year where he really was spinning his wheels, because he didn't enroll in art courses. They wanted him to start at his level. But Scott simply outperformed these people and felt very frustrated. It was in the Spring of 1961 when Walter from Philadelphia who was a leading painter, came to judge the Tarrant County Annual. That got Scott his start. Somebody was looking at these paintings: Scott and I don't ever enter shows. Someone who is an old friend of our family's, picked up a couple of Scott's paintings (one of them was a bird painting). She took them down to the museum just to show them to Walter He was so impressed with them and liked them so much that he got the telephone number (Scott's), and when he returned to the academy, he approached the Board of Directors at the Academy and suggested to them to help him to enter the Pennsylvania Academy of Art School art school. They called Scott and issued Scott an invitation to enter art school. He entered at the beginning of the next term.

Scott went to Philadelphia and I went to school in 1961. I got a camera and took pictures to send Scott to paint. Scott had gotten into etching. In no time, Scott was teaching the etching class, or assisting. It was a lot for self protection, because a lot of amateurs were coming in and ruining the equipment.

The academy was so wonderful about making you go to class. I'm not a good draftsman but I make good drawings. There's a difference.
~~xxxxxx~~

After finishing Tulane, Scott was still at the Academy, I went to UT.... at UT. By then I was doing a lot of drawing and painting and I wanted to be an artist. I asked Scott to get me into the Academy any way he could. So he said to do three or four drawings. So I sent them up there and I think I was already in before I applied. I didn't have any trouble getting in. I was 23 years old. I was self conscious because there were 17 year old kids up there who were so good. ~~xxxxxx~~ Most of the students worked in the House which was a few blocks away from the old Academy. I would go over to the old Academy in the evenings. I worked with plaster casts which were given to the Academy by Napoleon Bonaparte, founded by Alexander Hamilton.

I went on a tiger hunt to India with a friend of mine. I went around the world. Then I came back to Texas.

Did you paint separately?

Yes. Pretty much. And yet when I had a problem, Scott could help me. When he made a mistake in the sky, and I had to remove it, because I had learned a lot of techniques. If I mastered anything, it was correcting mistakes.

Once I painted this beautiful landscape out on the Ranch out in Palo Pinto. It is beautiful dark cedar trees in the late afternoon light. It was just a gorgeous landscape, just a simple picture, but there was no meaning to it. A redtail hawk flew in and landed on dead branches. It looked like a condor. I thought I'd ruined my painting. I was in despair. Scott said, "Let me work with it. The painting's gone anyway." He dry brushed the blue sky in there and you couldn't tell.

Scott used to make a fortune selling bug collections in high school! He made a louse out of balsa wood. Then I blobbed glue on it.

I built the temple of.....for a Latin Class. She said if I just spent the time studying Latin that you do this.....

~~Do you think dry brush is important~~

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It's a more detailed type of watercolor on smoother paper. You have more pigment in the brush and less water. It's built up in a series of cross hatching, layer after layer - there can be as much as 50 layers on a portrait. It creates a density. You can use both opaques and ~~transparencies~~ transparencies so that you get what they call optical greys. It's kind of faking an oil technique. It's time consuming. But you get a kind of density that no amount of layers of pure washes can do, which allow the white in the paper to come through for clarity. So I combine dry brush and free water color in all the paintings I do, so that you get a kind of oil effect of some areas denser than others. Some people think it's some sort of strange technique, but it's not. It was used even back in the late 19th century. Early magazine illustrators used it. It's a very comfortable way of painting. In many ways it's easier to paint in dry brush than in the normal wash paints. These are intentionally tighter. I prefer to paint a little bit looser because of the combination of freedom and tightness. It's good contrast - ~~most interesting~~ ~~more interesting~~ more interesting, visually.