

CHARLIE MECKEL

Sharing Emotions

Charlie Meckel spent the first years of his life in an adobe house near Albuquerque with no plumbing and no electricity. His sisters read to him from Ingalls, Lewis and Tolkien by lamplight. After some peripatetic years he returned to Albuquerque and lived in a room in a coffee house "working in exchange for room and board." He relates, "It was quite a

bohemian scene with lots of colorful characters: vagabonds, street urchins, 'street kids,' artists, poets, musicians, activists; eccentrics all." By then his intellectual curiosity was well established.

As for art, he brought a watercolor home from school to show his artist mother when he was 8. An artist herself, she gave him a critique and then gave him a copy of *How*

to Draw Comics the Marvel Way by Stan Lee. Meckel says the book gave him "a strong grasp of linear perspective, massing and proportioning of figures and visual storytelling. It was really awesome. It gave a list of materials you should have and then got into the fine art stuff."

In his paintings of train cars he tries to "evoke an emotional reaction." He spent time in rail yards and industrial spaces in part to escape the chaos of city life. For a time he lived next to the train tracks. "When I first moved in, the building shook and I wondered 'How am I going to sleep?' But after a while, the sounds became like the soothing roar of the ocean," he recalls.

The essence of his paintings goes "deeper than the iconography," he explains. The layers of paint, railroad markings, graffiti and rust speak to the cars' history, the people who made them and who worked with them. They tell stories that speak subliminally to the viewer. "I do high realism but not photorealism," he explains. "I'm not copying a photograph. I'm creating an emotion, a painting that looks realistic but one that not only looks right. It feels right."

Meckel says, "With science we can find out a lot, but poetry and art can illustrate things that a scientific perspective can't get across. Science can teach us about ancient cultures but when you see the cave paintings, for instance, you feel more connected." Ironically, Meckel now lives in an area of New Mexico once populated by the lost Mimbres culture, which suddenly disappeared in 1130. They left behind clay pots with strikingly unique designs.

Meckel will have his first solo New York exhibition February 26 through March 23 at George Billis Gallery.

"Art gives meaning to my life," he says. "Life is beautiful. The human experience can be terrible and tragic. That's part of the beauty. I want to share my experience—and share my emotions, too." ●

George Billis Gallery 525 W. 26th Street,
Ground Floor • New York, NY 10001 • (212) 645-2621 •
www.georgebillis.com



1
Composition in Blue and White, oil on canvas, 24 x 20"

2
Evening Storm, oil on linen, 11 x 14"

3
Erak, oil on canvas, 20 x 40"