

Skidmore Contemporary Art

Artist Interview Series

Richard Baker

Welcome to Skidmore Contemporary Art's exclusive *Artist Interview Series*, where we connect with our talented gallery artists to learn more about their unique processes, discover insights to their inspiration and uncover never-before revealed facts. We hope you enjoy and stay tuned for the bi-weekly interviews.

Today we're speaking with Richard Baker, whose work reflects his personal lifestyle and interests—often focusing on activities of leisure. Known for compositions that contain vivid colors, sharp shifts in tonality and subtle geometry, Baker's current paintings showcase the most mature examples of his work to date.



Richard Baker at work in his studio.

Skidmore Contemporary Art: If you could choose a different medium to work in, what would it be and why?

Richard Baker: In fact, I did choose to work in another medium years ago when I decided to become a television producer instead of a painter. I thought it would be a bigger canvas, and it was, but now I am enjoying painting.

SCA: How would you describe your creative process?

RB: Quiet desperation! Just kidding (sort of). I take candid photos of things I see in my day to day life that strike me in some way and then I try to re-create that visual experience in the painting.



Richard Baker, *Wildflowers*, 2020, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

SCA: Has social media impacted your work in any way? If yes, how? If not, why do you think that is?

RB: Not really, but I do enjoy getting some reaction to my work from other artists on Instagram and really enjoy seeing so many great paintings from all over the world. It hasn't impacted me because I don't sell online. Plus, other artists do what they do and I do what I do.

SCA: What is your most memorable museum experience? Can you briefly describe it?

RB: In 1970, I travelled to NYC to see the groundbreaking photorealism show "Twenty-Two Realists" at the Whitney and was profoundly affected by the paintings of Chuck Close, Richard Estes and others. The work affected me in some deep-seated way that I've never completely understood.



Artist Richard Baker painting in his studio.

SCA: If you weren't an artist, what would you be doing?

RB: Besides my other career in the entertainment business, I'd probably be a musician. A prominent band leader in Vegas once told me I could make a living there as a Neil Young impersonator.

SCA: What city/town/geographical location has provided the most inspiration for you?

RB: I like the light in both the California desert and the Hamptons.

SCA: Were you professionally trained as an artist? Tell us about that experience.

RB: I studied painting for 3 years at the University of Pennsylvania with the Realist painter Rackstraw Downes. The head of Penn's Fine Arts Department then was Neil Welliver, who I believe Rackstraw had studied with at Yale. Although I never met Neil, somehow his way of looking at things and reducing them into color blocks was transferred to me.



Richard Baker, *Sonoran Sunset*, 2020, oil on canvas, 45 x 60 inches

SCA: If you could sit at a dinner table with 3 famous artists, who would they be? Why?

RB: I'll go with Fairfield Porter to ask him about his use of light, Robert Bechtle to discuss his choice of candid subjects, and photographer Andreas Gursky to ask about how he captures

such amazing landscapes.

SCA: What challenges do you face as an artist that people might not expect?

RB: Fear of losing my art mojo. Whenever I start a new painting I wonder if the ability that mysteriously showed up years ago will just as mysteriously disappear. So far it hasn't!

SCA: What is your favorite time of day to create?

RB: My energy is best in the morning but I'll plow through whatever I have to finish any time of the day or night.

SCA: What advice would you give to your younger self?

RB: Be more confident with women! Oh, you mean regarding art? Paint more!

Explore the work of Richard Baker at Skidmore Contemporary Art.

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For more information please call the gallery at 310-828-5070 or email us
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