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My Art

by Brice Miller



Charlie's Shed

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.

When people view my artwork, one of the first things that many ask me is “How long does it take you to do a drawing?” The question irritates me. What does that matter? Would the piece be better if it took me a month or a day? Time is meaningless; results count.

There are many more relevant questions I could be asked... “Where do you get your inspiration?” “How do you decide upon your models?” “How do you create snow with a pencil?” I could go on and on. The list is endless.

Born in 1953 and raised in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, I lived a life rich in the flavor of rural 1950's America—farms, fields, streams, animals, and rural people. Each had its own fascination and attraction. I spent many days roaming through the woods and fields and along the streams. Here I spent my days building rafts, tree houses

and crafting various forms of outdoor gear. Nature that was all around me became a part of me and I found a way to reveal it to others through my drawings.

Early on, a storyteller was lurking inside me. I developed a vivid imagination. Whenever a new person moved to our little town of Woodbury, I would weave a story around the stranger. Was he running from gangsters that he had wronged or was it the law? Was he to be feared? Did he need watching? I felt a desire to fill in the missing pieces of his story, to discover this new character's mysterious motives. I needed to fashion a tale rich in untold details.

As I got older, I read the stories of Ray Bradbury, a fantasy/science fiction writer, whose tone and style struck a chord with me. His characters have always fascinated me, especially the carnies and freaks. Even today, when I'm out in public, I find myself staring at unusual people, much to my wife Lisa's dismay. They capture my focus and make me wonder about their untold stories.

As a child, I was continually drawing, and even then, I could sense that my art was different than the other children's. In ninth grade, I began private studies under Loa Joan Stern, a local artist. She encouraged me to further my studies, including taking summer art courses at Millersville College. I also attended art classes in high school.

After graduation I studied for two years at Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Florida. Later I studied figure and portrait painting privately under Robert Brackman in Madison, Connecticut.

In the beginning my medium was mainly oil. The brushes were eventually put away. When I was painting, I enjoyed my time in the sketchbook more than on the canvas. Students in the painting class would pass my book around for a look or ask me to draw different things for them. I knew I was onto something. Today I work exclusively in graphite. I used to think that I was one of a select few to go this route. However, I now realize that I am only one of many. I have seen some amazing talent in this area.

My professional artist role began as a depicter of the local rural Bedford County scene. I would go out into the field looking for the settings for my work. The local characters were revisited and became the source for my subject matter. My mission was to duplicate the current setting while conveying an earlier savored atmosphere, mood, and emotion. The pieces were presented in a straightforward, honest manner.

My style is definitely high realism and this became the center focus of my earliest works - sheep under a snow covered tree, a girl leaning against the milk house wall, and an old shed. Each I replicated. I can vividly recall the pressing desire to duplicate the images authentically. However, even when I merely depicted a scene, I felt compelled to create an atmosphere.

My approach has since evolved. Now what I most desire to convey is the underlying feeling. Without that, the drawings are lifeless. Andrew Wyeth, an artist I deeply respect



Wilf's Daughter

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



Winter Sheep

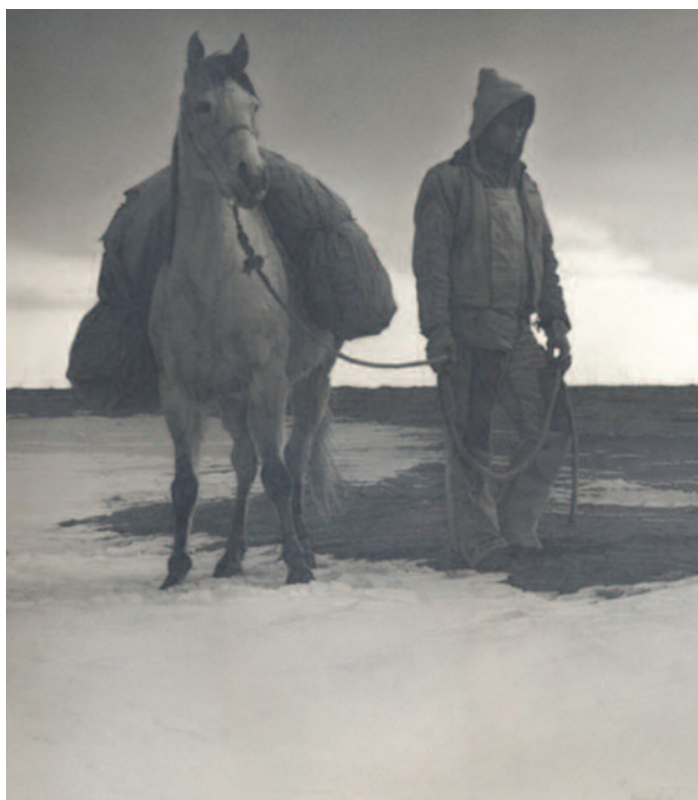
Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.

and admire, has had influence on my later works, especially his feel for mood and mystery. When it comes to Wyeth, people don't see the forest for the trees. They miss it.

My latest pieces are now created with more thought and imagination while still maintaining the use of local characters and local scenes. Rather than seeking and then depicting a scene, I now stage, direct, and create a scene to suggest a mood or atmosphere. I begin with a general idea of the feeling I want to convey. Then I set the other elements to fit this feeling. I continue to improvise as the piece progresses.

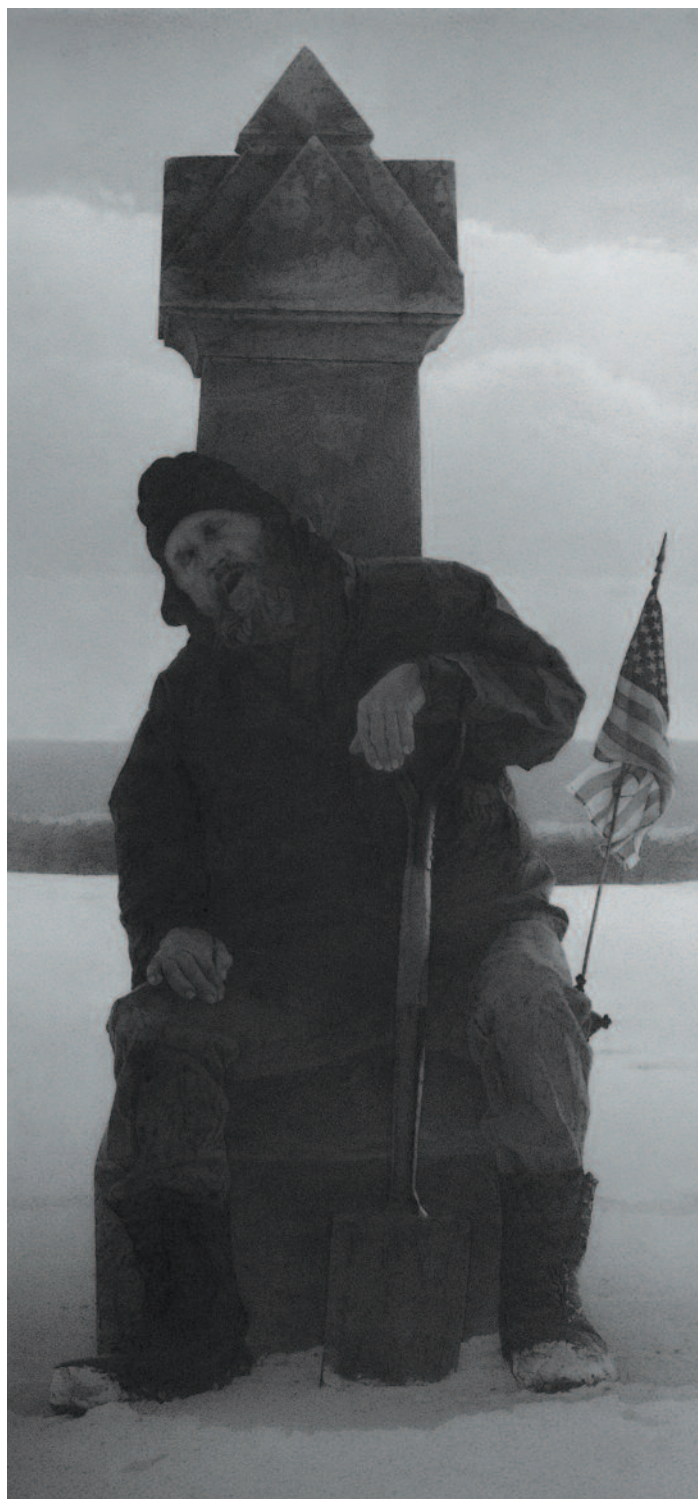
The process is similar to Edgar Allen Poe's theory of the short story. Poe believed that the work must, above all else, possess a unity of "effect" or mood. All other elements - tone, setting, characters, etc. - must be "carefully selected and crafted in such a way as to bring about this desired effect." No detail should be permitted that does not move the story toward its single mood.

For example, I desired to create a somber mood using the imagery of the "pale horse" of Revelation. I contacted my friend Dave Sell and posed him alongside his gray horse. I added a mysterious bundle draped over the horse to make the observer question, "What is that draped over the horse's back like a corpse?" The human figure's demeanor, the overall mood of the piece, and the title, *The Pale Horse*, all work together to form an image of death and invite the observer to form his own story.



The Pale Horse

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



The Keeper

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.

Another piece, *Fish Boy*, returned me to my childhood along the streams of Central Pennsylvania. A barefoot boy, pants rolled up, stands on a log, his home-made gig raised victoriously, displaying his trophy, a common carp, impaled on the prongs. The stalking and eventual success of his quest is revealed in his posture and expression. His face displays his triumph over what to him was a “monster of the deep...”

So to go back to the original question, “How long did it take?”

Fifty-five years.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Brice Miller

After having tried papers from many different makers, I have found that only Strathmore® gives me a paper that allows me to do my work without having to work with or against the paper. All of my major pieces have been created on Strathmore paper. For the last 15 years I have used Strathmore 500 Series Plate Bristol exclusively. To see more of my work please go to www.bricemiller.net.



Fish Boy

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



Kate's Treasure II

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



Sick Calf

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



My Momma Says

Graphite on Strathmore 500 Series Bristol, plate surface.



Chicago Winter Stroll by Sherie Sloane.

The Great Holiday Swap for Artist Trading Cards

Strathmore Artist Papers™ is hosting a global artist trading card swap! Create your own holiday or winter-themed trading card and we'll pass it on. In exchange, you will receive an original piece of art from another artist somewhere around the world.

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Learn more about artist trading cards and download
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Ski and Sky by Sherie Sloane.

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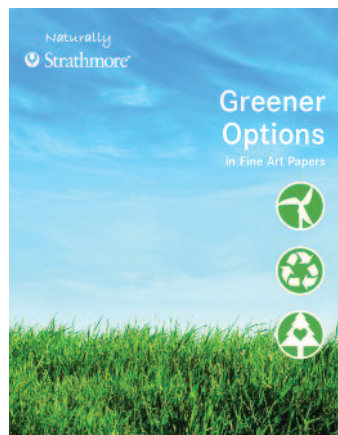
400 SERIES Charcoal

Strathmore 400 Series Charcoal Pads are made with 75% post-consumer waste fiber, and 25% hemp, a tree-friendly fiber. This paper has a traditional laid finish and provides an ideal foundation for charcoal and pastel. Also suitable for oil crayon and other dry media. Acid free.



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Visit [our website](http://ourwebsite) to learn more about "Greener Options in Fine Art Papers."

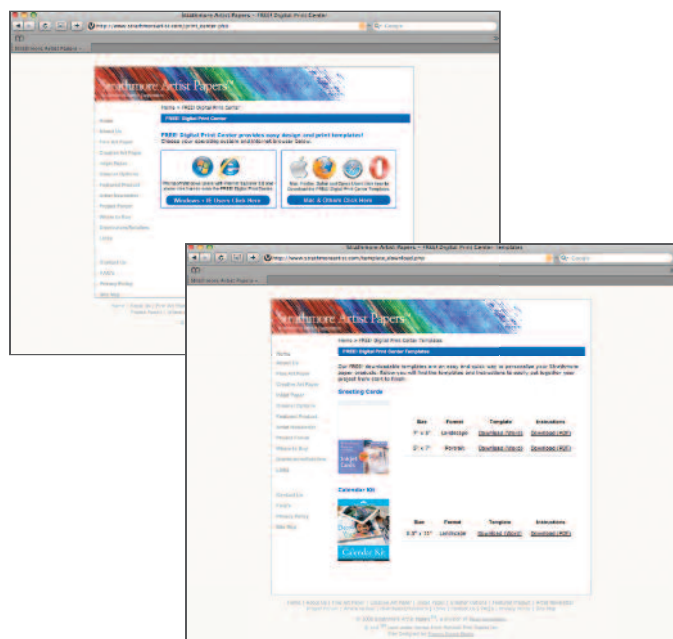
Questions From Our Artists

Your inkjet card packaging says that you have online templates for creating greeting cards. Do these templates work on Mac computers?

Strathmore Artist Papers™ is excited to announce that online card and calendar kit templates are now available for Macintosh computers.

Our card templates allow artists to position photos and text on all 4 panels of our 5" x 7" cards. You can also choose to create your card in either portrait or landscape format.

The templates can be accessed at
www.strathmoreartist.com/print_center.php



Our inkjet cards are available in a number of traditional and unique art surfaces. Replicate the look of watercolor paintings or sketch-style drawings using our Watercolor and Textured cards for inkjet printers. Or, choose Glossy cards to bring out the rich brilliant colors of your photographs.



Inkjet Cards

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Inkjet Calendar Kit