

The Vision of Timothy J. Clark

by Avery Hunt

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WEST BATH, ME — Timothy Clark is one busy guy, and famous to boot. When he's not enjoying life in his barn-red cottage on Brigham's Cove in West Bath, he is painting furiously, or teaching, or hosting art openings or traveling the world. He is always accompanied by his wife, muse, sometimes model, and saavy business manager, Marriott — née Small, a Bath native.

His schedule is hectic, to say the least. In the last 18 months, the Clarks have been back and forth from their other home in Capistrano Beach, California to Maine several times. They have also travelled the world: to Rome to Kona, Hawaii, to Rajasthan, India. To Ohio for an art opening of his work at the Butler Institute of Art. And to New York City, where Timothy teaches regularly at the Art Student's League, thus following a line of Maine artists who commuted from here to the Big Apple in the past, like Winslow Homer, George Bellows and William Zorach.

Clark is a critically acclaimed American artist, best known for his luminescent watercolors. He ranks, according to critics, among the best and most successful of those working in watercolor today. Interestingly, when he was younger, he worked in oils, but became highly sensitive to the solvents, so he rarely works in that medium anymore. It's much harder to become "famous" just doing watercolors, but Tim has definitely made the grade. To get a sense of his popularity, just Google his full name, followed by "artist". There have been almost 2.5 million hits on his website.

Clark is also the subject of a smashing new art book, *Timothy J. Clark*, recently published and available at Bath Book Shop, which is designed to complement a mid-career retrospective of his work shown in museums throughout the country. The show was organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art; moved to the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown Ohio, and is now at the Whistler House Museum of Art in Lowell, Mass., through Oct. 15. His work will then be on display at the Hammer Galleries in New York City this winter.

His biography is impressive, with credits that stretch longer than two arms and a paint brush. Born in Santa Ana, California, Tim knew he wanted to be an artist from a very early age. At 18, he developed his skills at the LA Art Center College of Design, and then went to the California Institute of the Arts and the Chouinard Art Institute to hone the conceptual sensibilities he would need to move his art to another level. He still serves on the Cal Arts Alumni Board in Valencia, California.

His work is in many museums in the US and abroad, including Maine's own Farnsworth. In addition to the Art Students League, he has also taught at the University of Hawaii, the Worcester Museum of Art in Massachusetts, the National Academy School in New York, and Yale University's Graduate School of Architecture's Continuity and Change Program in Rome. He was named one of the "20 Great Teachers in America" by Watercolor magazine. Closer to home, he has often taught aspiring artists each summer at the Rock Gardens Inn in Phippsburg. The Inn is owned by Ona Barnet, daughter of famed American artist Will Barnet, who happens to be Timothy's beloved mentor.

I've had the privilege of observing him working with students at Rock Gardens. He is insightful and kind at the same time. He doesn't let his "pupils" — both amateurs and professionals — off the hook for one minute, but he is a highly



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articulate critic and laces his rapid fire words with humor. I consider myself a pretty sophisticated art historian, but I learned more from Tim in a couple of hours — about form and color and vision — than I'd ever encountered academically.

And then there are his paintings themselves. I happen to love his work because it has a beautiful haunting quality, but don't just listen to me.

From fellow artist, Donald Holden: "[Timothy's] delicious watercolors remind me of the Italian word for a particularly fluent, graceful, and refreshing performance in any of the arts — sprezzatura, which means making a difficult task look effortless, like the relaxed, soaring leap of a superb athlete who's spent years preparing for this moment of triumph."

Or from Will Barnet himself: "Woven through [Timothy's] paintings are unique combinations of visual and emotional stimuli...His sense of space, light and composition combine to create graphic tensions which intrigue beyond the beautifully-painted forms of the subjects."



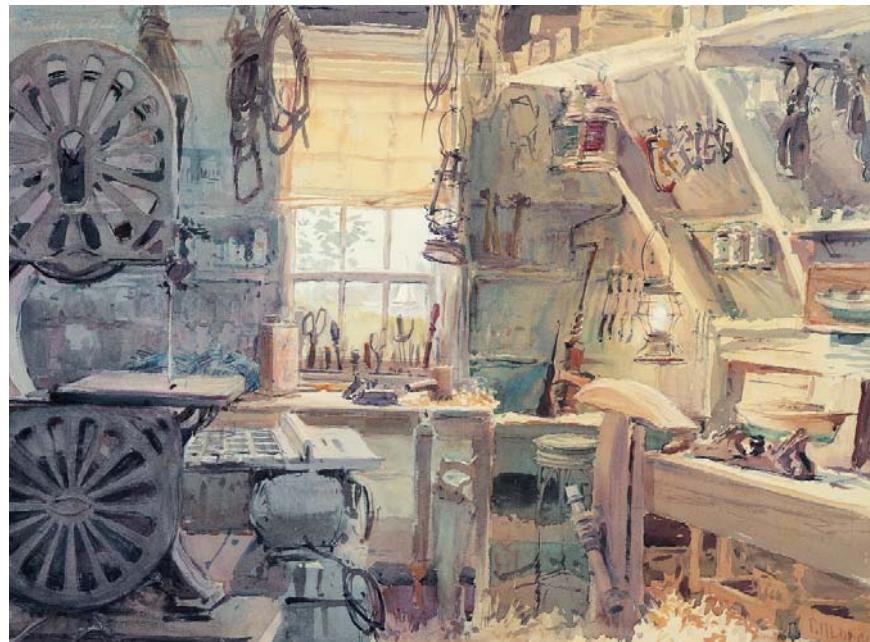
Wilbert Small's Tractor

Some of his work appears so simple: an interior with a chair and a Victorian sofa, a bonfire on a Mediterranean beach, a courtyard interior, or even a cluttered workshop.

Many of his paintings start from a point of local Maine inspiration, but they are transformed through his eye and brush into something magical. A case in point is a recent painting he did of his West Bath neighbor's workshop. Titled eponymously, "Randy's Workshop", it is precisely rendered and luminous at the same time, suffused with a rose hue. When he first viewed the finished work, Randy himself was a bit startled: "It's beautiful, Tim, but — it's sort of pink!"



Timothy J. Clark



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