Slaughter Sees Nature with an Extraordinary Eye

by Peg Van Patten

Approximately 30 watercolors and oil paintings by artist Neill Slaughter were recently on display at the Alexey Von Schlippe Art Gallery in the Branford House Mansion on the University of Connecticut Avery Point Campus in Groton. The exhibit ended on June 3, but there will be more opportunities to see it later this year, and you can see two selections right here in Wreck Lines.

“Neill Slaughter, of Southampton, NY, an accomplished painter and Fine Art Faculty member of Long Island University, brings to us gorgeous, powerful landscapes of New England and other beautiful places,” said Von Schlippe Curator Julia Pavone. “His realistic style resonates with vibrant color and life.”

These paintings range from plein-air studies of Central Park to larger oil paintings of Connecticut and New England, (Editor’s note: en plein air is a French expression for painting in the open air; i.e. outdoors in nature, rather than inside a studio.)

“Neill has an uncanny ability to capture intimate details of everyday life and couple them with his extraordinary eye for light and his perception of mood to provide the observer with canvases that are at once aesthetically-appealing and thought-provoking” said Sandra Shumway, a friend who is a faculty member of UConn’s Department of Marine Sciences at Avery Point.

“I am interested in the natural environment and the psychological impact it has on the human condition,” Slaughter said. “Generally, the nature of my art is socially, culturally and environmentally inspired.”

Slaughter has spent the past thirty years as both an artist and a university professor. As such, research grants allowed him to travel to, and paint in, Europe, Africa, and India. A series of paintings and drawings based on a Fulbright Fellowship to India resulted in six solo exhibitions between 1997-2002. After the tragedy in New York City on 9-11-2001, when travel was not so appealing, Slaughter was inspired to paint Central Park, to escape the media scenes of destruction and “celebrate something positive” in New York City. Later he moved on to scenes of Long Island, then into Connecticut and elsewhere in New England.

“With this series of landscape paintings, I want to make something substantial out of the camouflaged chaos of nature that is both contemplative and therapeutically soothing to the soul.” He adds, “at the same time, I do not want to lose any of the spontaneous brushwork, or dramatic expressive color, which culminates into an artistic ‘life force’ that is part of the ‘magical’ process of painting.”

Don’t despair if you missed the exhibit at Avery Point. In January 2008, Slaughter will do a 30-year retrospective exhibit at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. His website is not up and running yet, but it should be soon, and he promises to answer inquiries re exhibits or prints made to neill.slaughter@liu.edu.