



100 Colorado Creatives: Beau Carey

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#26: Beau Carey

Modern landscape artist Beau Carey goes about his business -- painting -- quietly, but at the same time, he's earned the quiet respect of his contemporaries. Carey's been a RedLine resident and boardmember, a drawing and painting teacher, and a gallery artist at Goodwin Fine Art; he also co-founded Denver's elegant **TANK Studios**, where he's kept a studio since its inception. The sad news is that Carey's getting ready to skip town to teach in New Mexico. But before he leaves, we asked

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If you could collaborate with anyone in history, who would it be, and why?

I've always thought it would have been interesting to be an artist on one of the nineteenth-century surveys of the American West. To be a part of the Hayden survey of Yellowstone with Thomas Moran or to be on the Wheeler Survey with Timothy O'Sullivan would really appeal to me. Those artists were put in situations where they were confronted with spaces entirely unfamiliar. The images they created were oftentimes problematic because they lacked the vocabulary to describe or frame what they were seeing. For an artist, that is an interesting challenge. Painting itself is always a confrontation between the tradition of the way we used to see things and the way we see them now. But that said, I'm not much for collaboration in my work, at least in the conventional sense. I can barely get my limbs to collaborate to make the things that I do. I'm used to spending eight hours a day alone in my studio. There was a time when I was waiting tables three days a week and painting four, and during those four days, I would barely talk to anybody. We had also just gotten a puppy, and my wife would come home and look at the two of us and say, "Oh, my God, you two need to be socialized, I'm taking you on a walk." So she would take the dog and me on a walk.

Who in the world is interesting to you right now, and why?

There are a lot, and that is a list that changes quite often. As far as paintings go, I think Tauba Auerbach and Wade Guyton are doing interesting things. I just read Lazslo Kraszhahorkai's *Seiobo There Below* and Sergio de la Pava's second novel *Personae*, both of which I enjoyed. Colin Stetson's new album this year has been on my playlist for a few months now. There is currently a lot going on creatively in the world. I think there has never been a better time in history to be an artist than right now. Materials have never been cheaper or more accessible. Information has never been more available and we have never been less bound by stylistic or conceptual dogma.

What's one art trend you want to see die this year?

I told my students that 2013 was the year where it officially became cliché to hate clichés. Every so often, I come across some article that makes sweeping generalizations about the state of the work being made today and about how bad it is. I think the only thing worse than the work being made is the unimaginative and predictable response it generates. Besides, in the age of Twitter, viral videos and internet memes things become clichés almost instantly, which if you think about it is really amazing. We are capable of repeating things, even truths, so rapidly that they lose their initial punch and meaning almost overnight. It used to take us forever.

Continue reading for more from Beau Carey. *What's your day job?*

Right now I'm a full-time artist. I do on occasion teach, but as I often tell my students, if you want to make it, you better hate your day job. If you don't, the chances of you coming home and making art diminish over time. Not that you can't do it; it's just harder when something else competes with it. It also helps to be good at nothing else. I have no other marketable skills, and I've hated and been horrible at every job I've ever had. Teaching is the one danger to that rule. I like it very much, and it allows me to think in ways that resemble my studio practice. But it takes a lot of energy, and I have to remind myself that it ultimately isn't my practice. There is no substitute for being in the studio.

A mystery patron offers you unlimited funds for life. What will you do with it?

I would turn it down.

What's the one thing Denver (or Colorado) could do to help the arts?

That's a hard question. I initially would say more support for individual artists, but I think we need to think somewhat differently. I'm not sure money is the answer. In fact I think we need to think of solutions where that kind of dependence is eradicated or at least mitigated. Of course this is difficult because most of us are educated in a system where we are taught to come up with only certain types of solutions. Most of those solutions only help reinforce the status quo, i.e., at some level we end up talking about money. I think the crux of the problem lies there with how we are educated to think about solutions. The cost of higher education is a hot topic right now and so is the decrease of full-time/tenure-track faculty jobs. When it comes to the Fine Arts, this system fails. It doesn't work, it just doesn't.

Think about how many students with BFAs or MFAs end up never making serious work again. Think of how many people with MFAs end up teaching adjunct with little or no hope of getting a real teaching job. Yet for the most part, people continue to buy into this system.

I also think Colorado, and Denver in particular, is in a unique position to experiment with solutions. What I mean by that is that there is a kind of critical mass of established artists here who are now free of the shackles of established academia. If they could provide the leadership and wisdom to the always-present and shiftlessly energetic group of new grads, something special might happen. Of course, those same leaders could scatter to the wind back into a system that doesn't benefit them and ultimately leave them in the same position, but I hope not. Rethink the project; it is happening else where in the world. I just read an article about a residency in England called Fairfield International. Of course this kind of project might entail creating lovable, difficult day jobs that take all of us out of the studio.

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That could be a pretty long list. I've been incredibly lucky to work along side so many incredible artists in the short time I've been in Colorado. I've always been enamored with Rebecca Vaughn. I've seen her work up close while we were both at Redline and I've worked with her while teaching at RMCAD. She's an artist who wears a lot of different hats yet seems to excel at all of them. She's a person who changes and challenges the culture for the better no matter wherever she is. She also, funny enough, does spot on impersonations. I could also easily put **Derrick Velasquez**, Ian Fisher, Conor King, Gretchen Schaefer, Sarah Scott, Joel Swanson, Theresa Clowes, Alvin Gregorio, **Adam Milner**, **Bruce Price**, **Cortney Stell** or **Donald Fodness** on that list for the same reasons. I've fallen in love with a lot of Colorado artists.

What's on your agenda in the coming year?

I am in a group show in New York this spring called *Magnetic North: Artists and the Arctic Circle*. I just found out last week that I will be a resident artist in Denali National Park this March, as a part of their inaugural wintertime artist residency. This fall, I'm excited to have another show with Goodwin Fine Art. And finally, I'll be teaching painting at the University of New Mexico in the spring. Which brings me to what dominates my immediate future: a move to New Mexico. However, my wife and I are more than a little heart-broken to leave Denver.

Who do you think will get noticed in the local arts community in 2014?

Two young artists that should get some attention are Lucas McMahon and Caleb Hahne. Keep an eye out for them. Two new artists to Colorado that people should put on their radar are Erika Osborne and Tracy Stuckey up in Fort Collins. I also feel that anyone at TANK Studios could easily be included. I've had ten studios in five years with a host of different artists and TANK and the people involved far outshine them all.

Learn more about **Beau Carey online**.

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