



True Nature

By Chris Bacon



"To keep seeing, keep feeling, staying focused on my vision... and knowing that how I respond to things and how I convey them through my art is a reflection of myself, my true nature."

<http://chrisbacon.com/>

From as far back as I can remember, I've been acutely aware and fascinated by wildlife. As a child, I was always drawing and would usually include it in my renderings. Now, it occupies my work, no longer as simply a celebration of the things I love, but as vehicles that help me explore and hopefully convey the ever so subtle, sometimes sublime and always things felt.

It wasn't until I reached the age of thirty and only after some serious introspection, that I discovered the true meaning and reason for being within these works. I reached a point in my evolution as an artist, when I

realized that my very life was starting to reflect in my art. There appeared to be a correlation between the things I responded to in nature, which was somehow connected to what was going on within me. It was a milestone in more ways than one.

Learning to 'see' what resonates around and within me, searching for truths and how to convey them through imagery has been an ongoing journey of discovery. As well, from a visual perspective, I am drawn to those gaps in between sound and movement; those timeless, moments of stillness seem more believable to me as a 'picture

maker'. Within that framework, so much can be said, for those moments can speak volumes ... for all time.

When I go out in the field, I have no expectations and rarely go looking for anything in particular. Instead, I slow down and get absorbed in a place. I become awakened to life as it unfolds around me. If an idea comes, I make visual 'notes' in the form of field sketches and gather reference and a few photos that seem relevant at the time. The chances of being in the same place again both in mind and location, with exactly the same set of circumstances that triggered the 'idea' are minimal to non-existent.

What is the evolution of an idea? What is the very essence of the final piece that must be kept alive throughout its development at all cost? It begins with

a conceptual 'thumbnail' drawing, born from thoughts and supported with a sundry of gathered reference. Then I produce colour and compositional studies to help me establish a foundation upon which I can build a solid painting. In some cases, these final 'studies' develop their own legs and can stand well enough on their own. They manage to convey the very thing I mean to instill in the viewer. When this happens, I sometimes get it out of my system and rarely feel the urge to tackle the final painting. At other times, a fully resolved work is what it takes to convey the idea completely.

My practice is slow and methodical. Whether it is a watercolour or an acrylic, when all the drawing is there, I secure it by building up very thin transparent layers from light to dark. Every subtle nuance of the work is carefully

'LIQUIDITY' 2010 • acrylic on rag board • 23.50 x 28.75 inches



considered as it starts to evolve. Then I listen for when it starts to 'speak,' as it tells me exactly what it needs to make it all it can be.

My favorite part of this process is the beginning. The rest is just plain hard work, frustration and torment. Bringing a piece from conception to fruition can be both mentally and physically exhausting and in the end, they rarely look the way I imagined they would.

I work on my painting every day and focus on one piece at a time. They take on average about three months to complete, but have also been known to evolve over a number of years. When I'm not actually painting, I'm thinking about them, either problems inherent in the existing piece or working through ideas for future paintings. Always with me are the thoughts that I

must continually strive to push my own boundaries. That there is so much more to learn and apply and that deep down inside, I know I can get even closer. Therein lies the challenge and reason enough for me to stay on course. To keep exploring and hopefully one day arrive at that place, where I can make paintings that reflect the way I see them ... in my mind's eye.

"There are a few artists who stand out, and they stand out because they are artists. They do not just make pictures of animals. Chris has a unique style. His paintings are immaculate. They are conservative in their handling, perfectly rendered, well designed, and conceptually original."

George McLean, Artist

Excerpt from: Leigh Yawkey Woodson

'SARUS CRANE' 2003 • alkylid on rag panel • 11.50 x 11 inches



'STUDY FOR WESTERN BLUEBIRD' • watercolour on arches paper • 7.75 x 15.25 inches

Art Museum. 'Birds in Art' 2004 Catalog. 'The Moment between Movement' by Rebecca Rowland. Page 8.

Chris Bacon was born in England in 1960 and raised on Ascension Island, Fiji, Bermuda and England before moving to Burlington, Ontario, Canada. He is self-taught and made his artistic debut in 1980, exhibiting twenty-two watercolours at the Alice Peck Gallery in Burlington. This first solo exhibition sold out in three minutes on the preview night and marked an auspicious beginning. He has worked at his painting on a full-time basis ever since. Chris is a 'Master Signature Member' of

the Society of Animal Artists and has received seven 'Awards of Excellence' from that organization, in addition to the 'Elliot Liskin Memorial Award' for painting. He was honoured to receive the prestigious 'Master Wildlife Artist Award' from the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum (U.S.A.) in 2004 and in 2008 received the 'Trustees Purchase Award' from the National Museum of Wildlife Art (U.S.A.). In 2012 Chris was presented with the 'Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal' in recognition of his achievement in the arts. His work is included in private, corporate and museum collections around the world.

"Bacon's remarkable watercolor paintings bring to mind adjectives that range from ethereal to meticulous and vivid to subtle. He simultaneously creates environments that are recognizable yet not of this world. Are they places we know or ones we'd like to know? His birds display an elegance that is rarely equaled and the overall effect of his paintings can seem magical. Chris's gentle manner and powerful personal style translate into artworks truly worthy of the 'Master Wildlife Artist' honor."
Kathy Kelsey Foley
Director of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.
Excerpt from:
L.Y.W.A.M. Press
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'WARM FRONT' 2005
acrylic on rag board
21.50 x 30 inches

