

Selma Bortner

Date of Birth:
06/18/1926

Place of Birth:
Cleveland, Ohio



The Journey, c.
1990

hand-colored
linoleum print on
paper
H. 24 x W. 35.5
inches
Group I

“For me, being an artist was always a question of survival. I could not survive in this world if I could not do something creative. It’s a commitment that I made when I was a child. I knew from the first time I could think about it that I wanted to be an artist.”

—Selma Bortner

Printmaker Selma Bortner is familiar with all printing techniques, although she prefers to work with surface techniques such as fine cut, wood cut, and collography. She often combines these techniques, using nontraditional materials in order to express the message of her work as clearly as possible. Her works often seem to be the visual embodiment of dreams. Bortner places the message of a piece at the forefront, using her work as “a pipeline to feelings which cannot be expressed in any other way.” For example, her artwork is a forum in which she discusses breast cancer and women’s issues.

Bortner’s most recent work deals with new beginnings, mortality, and women’s perceptions of themselves as contrasted to the world’s perception of them. Though these artworks include a strong narrative element, the images can be jarring and unexpected. The works include a series on domestic violence—the Woman’s Place Series—and the Car Bomb Series that commemorates the Mideast crisis. The Aida Series deals with Bortner’s battle with breast cancer.

Bortner earned Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in art education from the Tyler School of Art in 1948. She and her husband, Judge Oscar Bortner, moved to Levittown in 1952. Bortner has taught locally and spent twenty-three years in the art department at Bucks County Community College, where her classes included printmaking and design. Despite time commitments to teaching and raising a family, Bortner continued working on her own projects, always seeing herself as a working artist. She has won numerous awards for her work, including the Pennell Memorial Medal in 1970 and 1971 and first prize from the American Color Print Society in 1995. Her work is featured in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, and the James A. Michener Art Museum, among many others.

“I am not interested in an image that can be captured by a camera. I must have an emotional response to my work. My painting is purely improvisational since I move into it without a sketch or any preconceived idea.”

—Vincent Ceglia

Painter Vincent Ceglia began at an early age to pursue his interest in art, experimenting first with drawings and watercolors, and by high school with linoleum-block prints. After high school, he worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for several aircraft companies but continued to paint using transparent washes. In the 1950s, he began to exhibit actively and to hold Saturday classes in the Bucks County area. In 1959, he moved with his wife to a seventeenth-century farmhouse in Washington Crossing, along the Delaware River in Bucks County. His experimental pieces of this time used collage and broad sweeps of color. He continued to teach at numerous locations, including Mercer County (New Jersey) Community College. Between 1973 and 1975, Ceglia traveled in Italy, where the strong light and color influenced his palette and choice of materials, which diverged from watercolors to acrylic paints. During the 1980s, Ceglia returned to Italy, but to the southern region, in particular to Positano. He also spent time teaching at privately run summer painting workshops on Lake Maggiore in northern Italy.

Ceglia describes his work as semiabstract. He works in a variety of media, producing assemblages of found objects, collage, and ink drawings, but he is best known for his watercolor and acrylic landscape paintings. He is most noted for his use of a strong, jewel-toned palate. His work, which is primarily produced from memory, is a mix of planned and spontaneous application of color. He recognizes both the need for control and the importance of accidents in his work.

Ceglia has continued to live in the Bucks County area, moving in 1989 to Lambertville, New Jersey. He had previously established the Lambertville House Gallery in 1956 and the Yardley Art Association in 1957. He finds inspiration and solitude in Bucks County, just as he does in Italy.

Vincent Ceglia

Date of Birth:

03/11/1923

Place of Birth:

Braintree,
Massachusetts



Early Light, 1984

acrylic and collage

H. 21.5 x W. 29

inches

Group I



Paul Keene

Date of Birth:

08/24/1920

Place of Birth:

Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania



**Jazz Series #4,
Chicago Blues, 1983**

pencil on paper
H. 22 x W. 29.5
inches
Group I



Orpheus I, 1997

collage on paper
H. 24 x W. 29.75
inches
Group I

“Through deeply personal pictures Paul Keene brings together the painter's visceral love of color with the mystery of memory and the subconscious mind. Mr. Keene is a quiet man who chooses to speak with line, shape, and most passionately- with color. Always avoiding the didactic, he gives us hints and suggestions, then leaves us to discover our own meaning in his work.”

—Bruce Katsiff

Color serves as the compositional key in the works of painter Paul Keene. Working primarily with acrylic paints on paper, Keene describes his painting as “abstract realist.” His window scenes and landscape studies demonstrate his skillful manipulation of scale, color, light, and atmosphere. Keene often utilizes grid compositions, juxtaposed against the concentric circles of radiating color that he considers his “unconscious” personal symbol.

Keene has explored the iconography and symbolism of African-American life and culture. In his work, he has created new icons of black urban life with his anonymous portraits of jazz musicians and documented the movement and vitality of city life.

Keene was born, grew up, and went to school in Philadelphia, first at the Museum School of Arts and then at Tyler School of Art. From 1949 to 1951, he studied in Paris under the G.I. Bill. While in Paris, he was part of a group of artists who exhibited at Gallery 8, where he met Romare Bearden, another African-American, who later became one of the United States’s twentieth-century masters.

Keene’s love of art extended to a love of teaching; he began to teach at Tyler School of Art in 1948. He also traveled to Haiti and taught at the Centre D’Art in Port-Au-Prince. From 1954 to 1968, he taught painting, drawing, collage, and design on the faculty of the University of the Arts. After moving to Bucks County, Keene taught painting and drawing at Bucks County Community College from 1968 to 1985, serving as the Art Department’s chairperson for three years. He has exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the James A. Michener Art Museum, the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Keene has also received numerous prestigious awards.

“Even when the landscape is greatly disfigured or brutalized, it is always deeply animated from within. When one really sees an awesome, vast, and terrible place, we tremble at the feeling we experience as our sense of wholeness is reorganized by what we see. . . This is the gift of a landscape photograph, that the heart finds a place to stand.”

—Emmet Gowin, April 1994

Arguably Bucks County’s best-known living artist, Emmet Gowin is a distinguished photographer who is renowned for his poetic and evocative approach to the medium. At the age of sixteen, his interest in photography was sparked by a photograph by Ansel Adams. Gowin graduated in 1965 from Richmond Professional Institute, Virginia, and from Rhode Island School of Design in 1967 with an MFA. He later received a Guggenheim Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a Pew Fellowship.

His early work, begun while he was in graduate school, deals with themes of family and community by exploring the lives of four generations of his wife’s family (he married in 1964) in Danville, Georgia. The photos are considered mannered, as well as autobiographical; Gowin admired the family for their simplicity and generosity and tried to show these characteristics of theirs in everyday situations. Though many of the pictures have the appearance of snapshots, he posed his subjects and used a camera with tripod.

In 1967, Gowin began his teaching career at the Dayton Art Institute. In 1971, he moved to Newtown, Pennsylvania, to teach at Bucks County Community College, and in 1973 he began teaching at Princeton University. During that time, the subject matter of his work changed dramatically.

In 1980, Gowin became fascinated with the devastation caused by the eruption of Mount St. Helen’s in Oregon; he began to make aerial photographs of the area, then expanded the project to include aerial photography of such far-flung locations as Kuwait, Japan, and the Czech Republic. In 1982, Queen Noor of Jordan (a former student of Gowin’s at Princeton University) invited him to photograph Petra, an ancient city in Jordan. Gowin was the subject of a major traveling retrospective in 1990 organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2002, the Yale University Art Gallery organized another traveling exhibition of his aerial photographs, accompanied by the major publication *Emmet Gowin: Changing the Earth. Aerial Photographs*.

Emmet Gowin

Date of Birth:

12/22/1941

Place of Birth:

Danville, Georgia



***The Buffalo Jump
Called Chugwater
and an Irrigation
Pivot Near
Wheatland,
Wyoming, 1991***

silver gelatin print on
paper
H. 15.75 x W. 18.25
inches
Group I



David Graham

Date of Birth:
10/11/1952

Place of Birth:
Abington,
Pennsylvania



**James Gallagher as
George Washington,
1992**
dye-coupler print on
paper
H. 19 x W. 18.5
inches
Group I

“For more than twenty years he has been recording the scenes of a mobile America looking for meaning at the crossroads of kitsch and culture, past and present, and fantasy and reality—and has indeed given us a portrait of a country that refuses to fit, like himself, into neat categories.”

—Jeffrey Hoone

Photographer David Graham portrays the United States through the eyes of its people and their habits, in what he calls “cultural landscapes.” His subjects have included everything from abandoned buildings, to giant doughnuts, to historical impersonators. Graham has a way of taking the viewer on a trip to illustrate the unique side of the country through the objects people display—the creative expressions of ordinary people as evidenced by their homes, yards, cars, and decorations. His photographs are like the genre paintings of the seventeenth century, showing people enjoying themselves, yet juxtapositioning elements of contradiction.

Graham studied at the Philadelphia College of Art, now the University of the Arts. Though starting out with a traditional camera, he began to use a large-format camera while he was at Tyler School of Art working on his MFA. He used this camera on several cross-country trips, with the results being published in his first book, *American Beauty*. This was followed by many subsequent books based on the theme of how America lives. He has completed two books with the author and poet Andrei Codrescu (*Road Scholar* and *Ay, Cuba*) and has worked on magazine assignments for *Details*, *Fortune*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Graham lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania, and is a close neighbor to the photographer Emmet Gowin, whose work was an early influence on Graham. Currently, Graham is a professor at the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.