

Jim Buckels

Among the generation of American artists now in their early forties, the Iowa born painter and printmaker Jim Buckels is a delightful anomaly: An artist more driven by his inner visions than by fashions and trends. Yet, his work possesses an innate sophistication that places it prominently within the post-modern mainstream.

In fact, Jim Buckels is a Neo-Surrealist of a peculiarly American breed – a creator of dream-like images, rendered in a meticulous modern airbrush technique with the crystalline clarity of a colonial limner. In his lithographs and serigraphs, as well as in his acrylic paintings, Buckels limns a seamless realm of fantasy that has won him a major reputation in remarkable short span of time.

Jim Buckels' fascination with fantasy began in early childhood. Later, his artistic talent won him a scholarship to the University of Northern Iowa, which his adventurous spirit compelled him to interrupt in his sophomore year, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army for a three year stint, including a tour of Vietnam.

Returning to civilian life in 1971, Buckels resumed his studies at UNI, earning a bachelor's degree in art, and began his career as a freelance illustrator, becoming known for his stylized landscapes, inspired by such regional artists as Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, as well as by the primitive dreamscapes of the great French painter Henri Rousseau.

This unique confluence of influence also informs the acrylic paintings, lithographs, and serigraphs for which Jim Buckels is now best known, with their visionary vistas and fantastic architectural details offering the viewer a restful respite from reality. For, these are paintings and prints that one can not only live with but enter into like a magical refuge, a return trip ticket to the storybook realm of childhood reverie.

More recent prints by Jim Buckels reveal his unique ability to make even more mundane subjects magical. As one New York art critic recently noted, the pictures of Jim Buckels "tell stories that linger in memory long after one has viewed them, hinting at truths that lie just below the surface of the seen world." For this reason, as well as for his outstanding technical skills, Buckels has emerged as a contemporary master whose work will continue to enthrall us for many years to come.

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