

A.E. Barnes

I was never interested in painting or drawing when I was little. I wanted to read books and study the night sky. I loved to re-decorate my room, and move the furniture around. I was more interested in cerebral things and studied Philosophy and Comparative Religion at the University of West Florida.

My parents had an art gallery in downtown Daytona Beach, Florida when I was a baby. 1964, to be precise, during that Aquarian Age of intellectual and social reformation. My mother is a famous southern painter, Diana Barnes. My father is an infamous mathematician and story teller. So, I have certainly grown up in a world of ideas and art. We were a little bit of a gypsy family, touring with my mother on painting trips and for art show events.

In May of 1989, I had a crazy idea to paint a portrait of my mom riding a pig in her living room, for a Mother's Day gift. I got some old plywood and primed it white. Then I began to design the portrait in the afternoon. I stayed up all night working and got up early the next day and began again. I loved painting so much that I continued to find boards, painting on them for the rest of the week. Still lifes, interior scenes of my own house and garden, landscapes from my historic neighborhood. I had finished about 20 paintings in a week. I stopped eating or sleeping; I painted everything I saw and began to use wild colors. I bought a set of good oil paints and borrowed some old brushes from my mom. I had always been in love with the French painters, the Fauves. Henry Matisse, Maurice de Vlaminck and Andre Derain were my new heroes. I checked out every library book on Impressionism and Expressionism. I covered my walls in posters of paintings by Van Gogh and Gauguin. I was hooked on oil painting like a monkey hooked on chocolate covered bananas. There was no turning back. Being an expert at moving furniture, I re-arranged my house, making the living room into a giant art studio. That was week two of my new found painting career. I vowed on the grave of Henri Matisse that I would paint forever!

When I first started painting, the Outsider and Folk Art Movement was getting underway in the Southern states. Because I never studied art, I was lumped into this new and upcoming group. I was accepted to prestigious art shows like the Piedmont Art Festival in Atlanta and shows in Miami, Key West, Dallas, Houston and Washington DC. I loved talking to customers and learning about their homes and interests. I started painting special order work for private homes and corporate headquarters. I was able to place my work in wonderful galleries. I was so lucky to be able to sell paintings, enough to pay my bills. I have been painting for 23 years. It seems like yesterday when I first picked up the brush. I love oil paints the best; but I also use acrylics some of the time. I learned early on to use the best canvas and paints, which insures a high quality painting that will last for hundreds of years. I have exhibited in lots of art shows, presented work in great art galleries in the US and Mexico and sold paintings to many wonderful people including Rod Stewart and Reggie Jackson.

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