

‘Mount Mansfield Sketchbook’: Paul Calter engages directly with nature

Published 7/9/22 in *The Times Argus/Rutland Herald*, Staff Report



Paul Calter: “View from Adam’s Apple at Sunset”
Courtesy Studio Place Arts

BARRE — “Mount Mansfield Sketchbook” at Studio Place Arts (SPA) chronicles the wide-ranging hikes into the mountain wildlands of Vermont, the Whites, Mount Katahdin and the Rockies by retired mathematics professor Paul A. Calter. The show is comprised of drawings and paintings created on the spot with no further changes to the artwork in his studio upon return.

The omnipresent cellphone cameras carried by many people today capture instant “I was here” moments that ultimately raise the question, “Were you really?” When a hiker drops

their heavy pack to the ground, pulls out a tablet and sketches a sensitive response to experiencing a sweeping view of a mountain range, windswept trees or the delicate leaves of a native plant, we know it to be so. They were most certainly fully engaged in the moment and the place.

They were there.

Calter's intimate show includes work from 1984 to 2000, and the work is arranged in a manner that makes the viewer feel as if they are treated to a personal conversation about wildland adventures, sitting next to him on a comfortable sofa. The lines and colors blend tones from nature and there are quickly jotted, hand-written notes that detail the travails of an artist and mountain-climber.

He inked the pages of his sketchbook with specific notations, such as, "At 2:10: Trail narrow & thickly wooded at sides — hard to find a place to stop. Found a ... damp fallen tree to sit on. No vista. Looking up the trail and wondering how to sketch such a dark, close scene. At 4:50: Now on the Adam's Apple. It's windy & chilly but I have a spot on the east side out of the wind, but still with sun. Am wearing silk gloves though"

Calter reflected in his artist statement, "With all the distractions on a climb — fatigue, heat, cold, hunger, the search for water and the route — it is hard to begin sketching. So on my trips with my son Michael we would often set our wristwatch alarms to sound on the hour, at which time we agreed to drop our packs and make a sketch ... of anything! There was often no view, especially at the start of a climb, so we drew plans, trees, rocks and each other."

"Mount Mansfield Sketchbook" is on view at Studio Place Arts, 201 N. Main St., through Aug. 19 in the Quick Change Gallery at SPA, a tiny, white box gallery that is made from a re-purposed abandoned telephone booth. For more information, go to www.studioplacearts.com online.