

August 2005

# JONESBORO OCCASIONS

PHILANTHROPY ■ SOCIETY ■ CULTURE

## Comfort ZONE

Roger Carlisle at Home  
in the Art World

© Roger Carlisle

**SPECIAL SECTIONS:  
ARTS SEASON PREVIEW**

# An ARTISTIC Point of View

Photos By Dero Sanford

## The FRONT DOOR makes the FIRST STATEMENT.

As you approach the blue door at the entry way of Roger Carlisle's home in southwest Jonesboro, you get the sense that something special awaits on the other side.

The home is neat with clean lines all about. The eye is first drawn to the dominant features, many of those being Carlisle's original works of art perfectly lit throughout. Almost effortlessly, the eye is next directed to the supportive elements, all of them working together in perfect harmony. The works represent a lifetime of imagination, study and detailed work by the artist.

It is a pleasing experience to walk through the home, especially as Carlisle offers insight into a piece to which you may be particularly drawn.

Carlisle, one of the most prominent and accomplished artists on the local arts scene has a particularly inquisitive nature about the way color, texture, organization and balance come together to create

"space" on a canvas or a piece of paper.

In the end, he says, it's successful when he likes it. He enjoys it when others appreciate his work, but not too disappointed when they don't.

Many do.

Carlisle's work is well received beyond the local scene. His work is featured in galleries and private collections across the country, and he has been honored with official

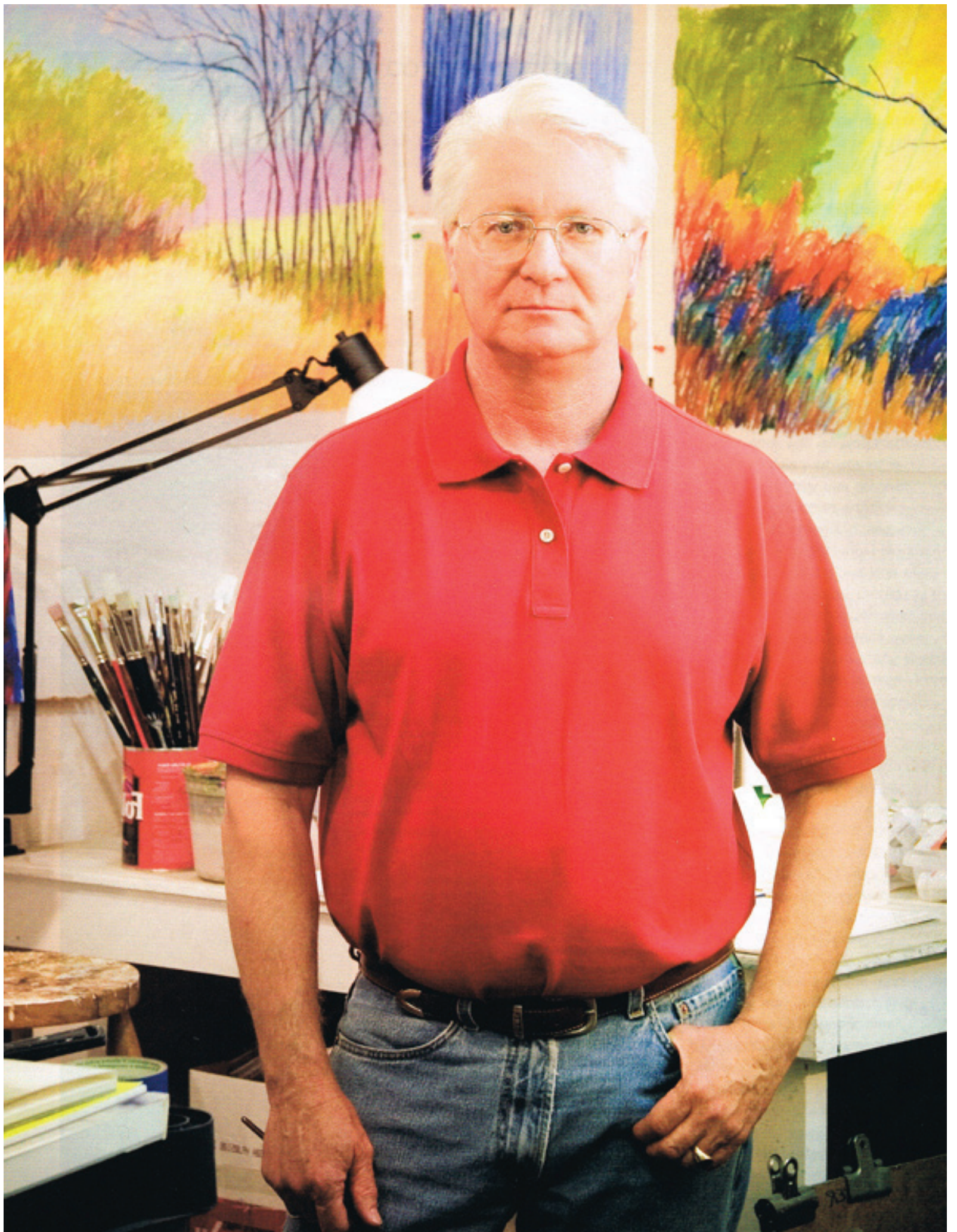
"From the time I was three years old or so I would take my toys and draw them – things like a cap gun and the star that went with it."

invitations to develop significant pieces commemorating events such as the Louisiana Purchase and the Arkansas Sesquicentennial.

Occasions, had the opportunity to visit with Carlisle recently about his work, his influences, and the inspiration that has helped him achieve his current level of notoriety.

**OCCASIONS:** Was there a moment in time when you knew you would become an artist?

**RC:** From the time I was three years old or so I would take my toys and draw them – things like a cap gun and the star that went with it. My grandmother always told me I had artistic hands. So from a very early age I had the notion of being an artist and a lot of reinforcement that it was an OK thing to do. When I was a little older, about seven or eight, I entered a Disney art contest and did a drawing of Bashful. I won that contest and received all kinds of toys as an award. It seemed like a big deal at the time.



## coverSTORY



**SNAPSHOT:**  
Roger Glenn Carlisle

**Date and place of birth:**  
September 12, 1946  
Stewart, Nebraska

**Three words that describe me:**  
Intense  
Serious  
Playful

**I'm most intrigued by art's:**  
Illusion of depth and distance

**I get great satisfaction from:**  
Working

**If not an artist, I might have been:**  
A chef

**People have described my work as:**  
Energetic

**Images of my works are drawn mostly from:**  
Life experience and inventions of my mind

**Some of my greatest influences have been:**  
Teachers

**It's interesting how art can:**  
Cause people to have a moment of reflection

**I do my best work:**  
Later in the day

**My goal in every work is to:**  
Make it better than the previous work

**OCCASIONS:** *Has your Nebraska childhood had an influence on your work?*

**RC:** Definitely. The sky in that part of the country is huge. The sense of space there had a definite influence. Even to this day one of the things that fascinates me about painting or drawing is taking this flat piece of paper or canvas and turning it into space, or the illusion of space. That notion, simple as it is, has always fascinated me. My grandfather had a profound influence on me in that he coveted the land. It wasn't just a place that he worked. He was deeply, personally invested in the land and that space. He was an interesting guy and he created a lot with his hands, so all that was a definite influence.

**OCCASIONS:**

*What inspires your best and most creative work?*

**RC:** Work for me is a daily routine and a daily activity. It's a job just like anyone else has a job. It's a building process of being involved in an idea, rehashing it, changing things, thinking about color and line changes, variations on themes. People often ask me what inspires me to do things. Each piece that you do generates other variations on that theme. So the inspiration to do more work is self-generating. I really don't think serious artists get inspirational vibes from some outside source. It's more from within.

**OCCASIONS:** *At a fundamental level, what do you aspire to achieve in each of your works?*

**RC:** I try to make it the best piece I've done up to that point, and it often fails. My failure rate is probably 25 percent to 30 percent.

**OCCASIONS:** *So how do you pass judgment on whether a piece fails or succeeds?*

**RC:** If I don't like it, it's a failure. That happens a lot. As an artist I move in and out of roles. At one point I'm a doer, and at the next moment I'm the viewer. When I'm in the studio by myself I set things up so that I can work on it, walk away from it and see it as the first audience really. I do these things really for me, just to satisfy my own personal inquiry about them.

**OCCASIONS:** *Certainly, you are known for your work with landscape scenes. Can you explain your interest in landscape and how that achieves purpose for you as an artist?*

**RC:** I have an interest in landscape from growing up the way I did and I like making that kind of space. First I should say that I think of myself as an abstract painter. I work from the landscape because it offers me so many kinds of structural elements ... lines, shapes, colors, textures ... and different types of organizations that, for me, are interesting. I also like making works of relatively unimportant stuff ... grass, branches, small trees and things like that ... that otherwise wouldn't be interesting and I kind of elevate them to a level of importance.

**OCCASIONS:** *Is it true that most of your landscape work isn't necessarily a specific place at a specific time?*

**RC:** Yes. But oftentimes people will come up to me and say, 'I've been to that place.' It's fun for me to experience that.

**OCCASIONS:** *Color, pastels in particular are a signature of your work. Give us some insight into your thoughts about the use of color.*

**RC:** I think I'm pretty good with color and I move in and out of different kinds of color easily. I think of color as perhaps the most expressive element

"Over time I've had a greater sense of clarity about my work. It seems that I understand it, and I understand myself better."

in my work – that and the composition.

**OCCASIONS:** *How do you know when one of your pieces is complete?*

**RC:** It's not a finish line. It's a sense that things are in balance and organized. I really think of paintings as being organizations. Lots of people think artists should render something to look like it's supposed to be. I really believe it's more a sense of organization and unity and putting all those pieces together so they fit.

**OCCASIONS:** *How do you think you've evolved as an artist?*

**RC:** Over time I've had a greater sense of clarity about my work. It seems that I understand it, and I understand myself better. I would like to see a requirement that everyone had to take a drawing course because I think it can show you different points of view and make you think about things in a different way. Perspective and the idea of a point of view were invented in the Renaissance. In fact, perspective was a philosophic study in European universities after the Renaissance. It's interesting how all that has evolved as an idea through art.

**OCCASIONS:** *Do you see your work going in a particular future direction?*

**RC:** I think I'm getting more abstract as I go along. The landscape element will probably always be there, but they seem to get simpler over time. As soon as I say that it will probably change.

**OCCASIONS:** *What keeps you motivated to work?*

**RC:** Certainly my own ego about wanting the work to be presentable. But the fact that I have a lot of colleagues, even here in Jonesboro, who do excellent work is a great motivator. The competition is friendly, but it's high quality. People like Sara Howell, Nanci Zimmer and any number of other people, are certainly motivational for me. 