



Marc Barker, Oklahoma City, *Ominous Clouds*, Oil on Masonite, 12"x36"

## AT A GLANCE

# OMINUS CLOUDS: The Paintings of Marc Barker

by Elizabeth T. Burr

*Time flies over us, but leaves its shadow behind.* –  
"The Marble Faun" - Nathaniel Hawthorne

A notable exhibition of paintings by Marc Barker recently ended at the Firehouse Art Center (FAC) in Norman.

In the statement accompanying the FAC show, Barker let's us know that "these paintings are from a series entitled *The Illusion of Mattering*, which embodies metaphors and their relation to personal icons, the signifiers that we retain and become the core of our stories." The artist chose subjects that have resonance for him: caves (*Landscape*), clouds (*Ominous Clouds*), the movement of clouds across a landscape (*Procession*), and even a magical depiction of the moon as it traverses the sky (*Transit*). The more the viewer studies these "icons," the more universal they seem to become.

This transformation from private to public meaning is partly the response of the techniques used by the artist. Barker has painted his pieces in a *grisaille* manner. *Grisaille* is the name given to "a method of painting solely in shades of monochrome grey or another neutral colour." [*Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art Terms*] Barker uses a brown-toned monochromatic palette, which enhances the hauntingly timeless quality of his images: they deal with his personal icons by locating them in a neutral, dreamlike landscape. This is a country we probably have all visited.

Most of Barker's works are painted with oil on masonite, sometimes with the use of collage elements, and even the manipulation of his fingers. Barker is also a skilled printmaker. He managed the Paseo Intaglio Printers in Oklahoma City along with artist Sharon J. Montgomery. One of his graphic pieces, *Transit*, is made as a digital and intaglio collaged combo print.

This last print reveals another theme explored by Barker's work - the passage of time. *Transit*, *Procession*, and *Decomposition of a Skull* are all images that engage the viewer in following the movement in time of subjects across a canvas or print. We may not be able to interpret the complete meaning behind the private icons of this artist, but the depiction of the moon or clouds moving across a horizontal landscape is a *memento mori* for all of us here living in time.

For those who missed this show, Barker's work can be seen through Jan. 10 at La Baguette Bistro in Oklahoma City, or on his website at [www.cosus.com](http://www.cosus.com). ■

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Marc Barker, Oklahoma City, *Riddled*, Oil on Masonite, 40"x40"

