

Marc Barker

by Susan Grossman

As Marc Barker speaks, a computer announces, "It's 11 o'clock." He smiles and stands up. The vocal interruption is a gentle reminder that it is time for a break. "I tend to get absorbed in what I am doing so I have programmed the computer to chime every 30 minutes," he explained.

It's easy to see why. A man of many diverse interests, Barker lives, works and creates out of his small home in The Village. His living room hums with the sounds of computer banks and a window air conditioner that regulates the temperature for the nerve center of his interactive business. Surrounding him are works of art from friends, colleagues and of course, his own. Leaning against the wall are pieces draped and waiting for an upcoming exhibit in the East Gallery of the Oklahoma State Capitol.

Seemingly everything about Barker's life experiences comes together in his art, from earning a bachelor's degree in zoology to surviving the dot.com bust. The name of the company over which he presides as president, Aeternitas, is named for the Roman goddess of eternity. Barker oversees the development of Web and CD-ROM projects for a number of clients. His years in the business world have given him the appropriate balance between creativity, attention to detail, providing excellent customer service, and seeing before others do what is on the horizon. In fact, the horizon is a source of his inspiration.

"The horizon is my teacher," Barker said. "It is not heaven and it's not hell but somewhere in between. Whenever I am in a new town I look to the horizon. When you look there, even in your own town, you see things not seen before. You can refresh yourself."

Growing up the son of a psychiatrist, there was a certain expectation that Barker would have a career in the sciences as well. Thinking he might like to be a researcher, Barker began a master's degree in limnology where he discovered his attraction to caves.

"I love everything about them, the smell, the bats. ... you can see things that you can't see anywhere else," he said. Caves figure prominently in many of his works, and Barker also belongs to the National Speleological Society and Central Oklahoma Grotto.

Although he dropped his degree plans, Barker picked up a camera and began photographing caves. He took a class in drawing (his first teacher was Brunel Faris) and started painting caves. Barker has worked as a camera operator and stripper in the graphic arts, learned fine art intaglio printmaking on the Paseo and took up oil painting. He also taught at the University of Central Oklahoma.

His background in science and in art culminated into his current career in interactive media where he and his team members have produced identity, collateral and interactive projects for national and international clients including Delta Dental, Enron Corporation, America Online, Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition, Allied Arts, Oklahoma Arts Institute, Artworks, RED Prime Steak, to name just a few. "I really did not



Marc Barker, Oklahoma City, *Nebulus Clouds*, Oil on Masonite, 14"x11"

anticipate where all of this would lead me, but when I look back, I can see that there was a natural progression," he said.

"It's 11:30," a computer announces. Again, Barker smiles and stands up.

There were a few lost art years when he was executive vice president of Interactive Services for Vectrix Corporation out of Dallas, Texas. Between 1995 and 2002 to be exact. "I was working day and night and I could not do it," he recalled. "There was a sign above my door that read, 'If you got here before Marc, you got here yesterday.'"

Today, he reserves weekends for art, his studio a converted single car garage. The images he has assembled for the show at the Capitol are from a series called *The Illusion of Mattering*. Barker is reluctant to title the pieces because he does not want to interrupt the personal stories people bring to the images.

"You can make up your own stories when you see them," he said. "These should conjure up something in you."

Marc Barker's exhibition *The Illusion of Mattering* will be on display at the Oklahoma State Capitol through September 14. For more information on the artist, visit his website at www.cosus.com. ■

About the Author: Susan Grossman is assistant director of marketing for University of Oklahoma Outreach and a freelance writer based in Norman. She can be reached at susangrossman@cox.net.