

PATRICK MILBOURN

By Sarah Taft

The Annual Beaux-Arts Ball at Hunter Mountain is one of the premier events of the season. Now in its 14th year, the event raises funds for the Greene County Council on the Arts, a non-profit organization that promotes the art and culture of the county. For the past six years Patrick Milbourn, a New York City- and Catskill-based artist whose work can be found on book covers and in numerous national publications, has created the posters for the ball. Mr. Milbourn is also an award-winning portrait painter, having received accolades from organizations such as the National Academy of Art, The Pastel Society of America and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His portraits may also be found in private collections in Europe and the United States.

Mr. Milbourn's poster for this year's ball, entitled "Dawn of a New Day," is a departure from his previous work in that it is a pure landscape painting. He has always loved the genre, but his work as a portraitist and illustrator has kept him away from it in the past. The genre seems quite natural to him, however, given his close connection with the American landscape. Mr. Milbourn spent his formative years in Nebraska, Colorado and Texas. His boyhood experiences in the American West developed within him an appreciation and love of the mountains, especially the serenity they offer. After moving to the eastern part of the United States, he sought out that same type of serenity by coming to the Catskill Region, a move he made with his wife about 15 years ago.

It was, in fact, his love of the Catskill Mountains that inspired him to create this year's poster. A Catskill Region landscape with a mountain topped by an American flag standing under an ominous sky in the background, the poster also expresses a sense of hope for the future, a hope that is especially needed in the wake of the events of September 11. "I'm especially fond of this landscape," he said, "and hope it will continue a feeling of the Hudson River School of Painting."

The completion of this painting has inspired Mr. Milbourn to pursue this genre in the future. "It is a very freeing sort of genre because you are not a slave to the subject matter," he said. "When I paint a portrait, I must always think about making an accurate representation of the sitter. When I paint a landscape, I can allow my imagination and creativity to take over."



"Dawn of a New Day," by Patrick Milbourn



Portrait of Mrs. Milbourn, by Patrick Milbourn

While Mr. Milbourn is clearly excited about the introduction of landscape painting to his oeuvre, his portraits and illustrations for both book covers and magazines remain his primary focus. His portraits, worked in both pastels and oil paints, are done both for himself, using artists' models as subjects, and on commission. His "on commission" portraits now hang in the homes of noted people such as Liam Neeson. His illustrations have appeared in publications such as *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Forbes* and *The New York Times*, as well as on the covers for a number of mystery and science fiction novels.

An underlying theme in his portraits and illustrations is his interest in people with unconventional appearances: painting conventionally beautiful people holds no interest for him. "I like faces with character," he said. "If a person has big ears or a lazy eye, I'll put it in. I find that much more interesting than a conventionally pretty person." He also tries to insert humor and, sometimes, social satire and commentary into his illustrations.

Mr. Milbourn has also developed his own unique way of painting his portraits: rather than focusing on the specific details of a person's appearance, he instead concentrates on the translation of the sitter's features into a collection of likable, interesting shapes. "The models are very important to me," he said. "If they're interesting or odd, I know I can create the shapes I need and get more and more excited about what I'm doing."

Wholly self-taught, Mr. Milbourn cites artists such as William Bouguereau and Jean-Auguste Ingres among his influences. He is a frequent visitor to the galleries and museums of both New York City and the Catskill region and finds that these visits both invigorate within him his love of painting and teach him that for any artist, there is still much to learn from the masters of the past.

The Greene County Council on the Arts 14th Annual Beaux-Arts Ball will be held on Saturday, April 6 from 6 pm until midnight at the Restaurant at Hunter Mountain. The black-tie event will include a cocktail hour, dinner, dancing, live music and both live and silent auctions of items donated by members and friends of GCCA. The reservations deadline is March 23rd and donations are \$75 per person. Signed copies of Mr. Milbourn's poster will be available at the ball and at the Greene County Council on the Arts Catskill Gallery, 398 Main Street in Catskill, NY and at the Mountain Top Gallery on Main Street in Windham, NY. For more information please call the Greene County Council on the Arts at 518 943 3400. To contact Mr. Milbourn, call 212 989 4594 or 518 943 2189.

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