

## Thomas Paul Asklar: Biographical Statement



Thomas Paul Asklar began creating art as a toddler on the wallpaper of his home using his mother's lipstick. He continued to create, striving to emulate his older brother's art skills. Thomas began taking art classes at the Niagara Art Center and studied with Ann Page Shanahan, and also continued to work on his own, sometimes with his Mother and sometimes at Aunt Rosie's house, using her special easel and paints.

Aunt Rosie was taking a painting course at Niagara University with Louis Centofanti, and brought Thomas along one Thursday evening when he was nine. Shortly thereafter Centofanti permitted Thomas to enroll in the course, and he studied with Centofanti for the next five years. At Niagara Falls High School, Thomas studied with Judith Dunbar Centofanti and Larry Bell, the latter of whom helped guide him into a career in the arts.

At Rochester Institute of Technology, Asklar majored in graphic design and painting/illustration, and then decided to transfer, after two years, to Buffalo State College to embrace a career in Art Education. In 1989, Thomas received his Bachelors Degree and in 1993, he earned his Masters Degree.

The paintings of Thomas Paul Asklar feature the subject matter of landscape. In 1986, he began to represent the subject matter of Niagara Falls, the natural wonder that had always fascinated him. It existed for him as a conscious, constant enigma throughout his entire existence; visits to the waterfalls were frequent, and the sound of Niagara's roar was a pervasive element of every day and night for Asklar. In addition, the reproductions of nineteenth century artists' representations of Niagara Falls, especially Frederic Edwin Church's 1857 masterpiece *Niagara*, greatly appealed to him.

When Thomas Paul Asklar was separated from the cataracts during his undergraduate years at Rochester Institute of Technology, his distant perspective stimulated interest in honoring this natural entity in visual form. Thundering Waters was the title bestowed upon the first painting in the series of images that continues into the present and are dedicated to the sublime nature of Niagara. An image of Niagara Falls is not what he attempts to represent, but rather a collective lifetime experience with his viewers: to glorify the power and beauty of nature.

Due to the presence of two separate waterfalls and the infinite combinations of variables such as seasons, time, weather, color, scale, and vantage point, the subject matter is limitless. Oscillation among these variables continues to intrigue Asklar, and this extreme passion provoked him to research the art history surrounding this wonder with his Masters Thesis of 1992 entitled *Niagara Falls in Art History*. This research enriched and revitalized his consciousness associated with his subject and provided him with an even greater desire to visually express his experience with others.

As a result of Thomas Paul Asklar's art exhibitions, his work now exists in art collections throughout the United States, England, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, China and Japan. In addition, the printing of his painted images has further promoted the beauty of Niagara and Asklar's representation of it internationally.

### Epilogue

In addition to his Niagara Falls imagery, Thomas Paul Asklar draws and paints many different subjects. Many of these works feature other examples of natural beauty, such as landscapes created in Northern Canada. A new direction seems to be exploring the theme of serenity in the natural world. In Addition, Thomas has been painting murals around Western New York with some of his artist friends!