

## Kevin Booher Artist Statement

My name is William Kevin Booher, and I have two names. Teachers called me William, but my mother called me Kevin after my namesake, her father, had died. This was a harbinger for duality in my life. **I have a story which I love, hate, fear or simply live with. I make images that only my life experience can inform and narrate. Perhaps that is true for all artists, but it is the only truth of my artwork.**

I come from a family of five siblings on either side of me, with two professional parents -- my mother, the only female law school graduate in her class who successfully practiced criminal law, and, my father, an internationally renowned cancer surgeon, both having begun their lives in a small town in Iowa before writing their personal story of the American Dream.

My family and friends became very valuable to me after I was hit by a speeding cab going 60 mph while crossing the street outside my high school, where I suffered catastrophic lifetime injuries, many of which were permanent. My father once reflected to me that the struggle of my extended hospitalization and unlikely survival as a 15-year-old had "changed" me. My high school, The Loyola School in Manhattan, was located only two blocks from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I remember first climbing the grand staircase holding my mother's hand before I was old enough to attend grammar school. Along with the Met and other art museums, another major influence was Helen Farr Sloan, and her art club, held in the basement of my high school. Mrs. Sloan was the second wife of John Sloan, an original member of the Ash Can School. She became a mentor to me, who I feel saved my life as a teenager by introducing me to the power of ideas within images in versus self-expression through acts of aggression.

I began attending the University of Notre Dame in 1968, a volatile time, that had just witnessed both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's assassinations. The Vietnam War was on everyone's minds, and while supporting service-members, I was opposed to the war. Painting, drawing and printmaking became part of my daily study. After early graduation with a Fine Arts degree, I performed my graduate work at the University of Cincinnati to earn my MFA, where I sat in on a class taught by Wendell Berry, whose autobiographical nature of his writing greatly influenced me and my subsequent painting.

In 1980 I designed and built, with my brother, Brian, the second passive solar house in the state of New York, in Montauk. Fifteen years later, I completely restored our three-story 1871 Italianate home of a former Cincinnati merchant grocer, from what had become a discarded former prostitution and gaming house that was wholly damaged by fire into a home, studio, workshop and gallery that looks directly across to the Covington Cathedral Gothic Church, the interior of which is modelled after the Basilica Saint-Denis de Paris, and the exterior after the Notre Dame Cathedral de Paris.

In more recent years, treatment for multiple different forms of cancer and subsequent gifts of remission cause ongoing consideration of my life. Further moved by the courage and remarkable lives built by my three adult children, and their own children, my grandchildren, I have redefined the blocks of my successes. Two sons graduated from the United States Naval Academy, among other higher education institutions, and my daughter obtained her master's in teaching. All three continue to rely on the edict, *carpe diem*, in a recurring dance and dialogue with me.

My experience teaching college courses for 37 years involved the constant feeling and reward that I was caring for other peoples' children in addition to my own for most of my adult life. This gift still extends to me now as a friend to many of my former students, one that functions as a life-force to me. Making art is part of caring. All forms of art are about defining yourself, meeting yourself and standing in the light of day for something you believe in.

Facts, thinking, competence, effectiveness, and genuine engagement are traits that I admire. Making a mark with confidence because you have earned the confidence is a credo. I strive to march into different skills of artmaking that are new to me and use the elements for my own needs. **As an artist, I do not believe resolution or integration is possible. Opposites and differences exist. Art connects those two facts peacefully. At worst the audience can only see who they already are but at best art says what we felt but did not previously know. -Kevin Booher**