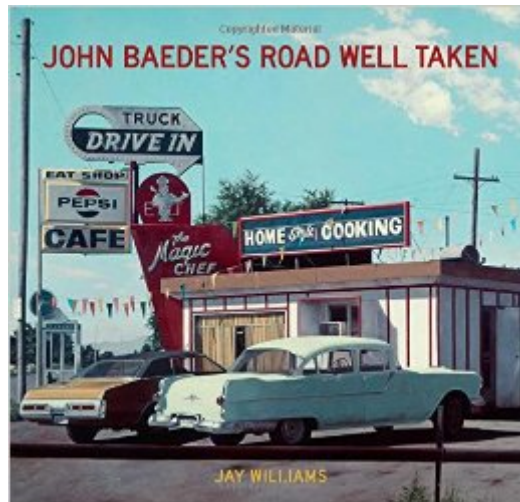


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John Baeder's Road Well Taken



Synopsis

A fascinating trip through the evocative remnants of a vanishing America, this book is also a portrait of an artist who has captured the nostalgic essence of what's been lost. In 1972, John Baeder (b. 1938) left a career on Madison Avenue to become a full-time painter, gambling his livelihood on art dealer Ivan Karp's evaluation of his first four canvases: a diner, a motel, a gas station, a tourist camp. Based on color postcards in his growing collection of roadside memorabilia, they launched a career that put him at the forefront of the growing photorealist movement. Baeder's paintings, particularly of classic diners, were an immediate success, and he scoured the country for prime examples to document before they disappeared. Here, Jay Williams recounts the inside story of Baeder's multifaceted career. With more than 300 illustrations of his highly collectible paintings, watercolors, vintage photographs, printed ephemera, and three-dimensional memorabilia, this is an artist's journey, traveled along the back highways of the United States.

Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Vendome Press (October 20, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0865653194

ISBN-13: 978-0865653191

Product Dimensions: 10.4 x 1.2 x 10.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (8 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The back cover of this chunky book has an interesting photo of John Baeder standing next to his 1975 'The Magic Chef' painting (part of it is on the front cover, too) interesting because it graphically shows how big the canvas is at thirty by forty-eight inches wide. I only mention it because as you look at the paintings in the book they seem even more photographic and magical because of the reduction from the originals, some of which are seventy inches wide and displayed no more than nine inches on the page, nicely none of them run over the gutter. After many years as a Mad Man,

Baeder started his diner painting career at New York's Hundred Acres Gallery presenting his first show in September 1972. Surprisingly some of his early work, of historic street scenes, is oil on canvas but in black and white, five of these are in the first few pages. Another pleasant surprise are many examples of his photography (the obvious reference point to create the paintings). Some from the sixties show close-ups of amateur signs, others are what might be called American commonplace: gas stations; drive-ins; storefronts; motels and of course, diners. Thirteen black and whites intrigued me, taken in a poor section of Atlanta on one day in March 1963 and looking like those remarkable FSA photos of the Depression years. There are page after page of wonderful diner paintings (I counted 125 of them) and other works showing food vans, restaurants, Las Vegas street scenes and diner ephemera. So many of the diners seem like a labor of love because they contain extensive brickwork, all carefully executed. Even harder is the lettering, whoever saw a diner without a Coca-Cola or Pepsi sign, both names have repeat letters that must look absolutely identical to the original signs.

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