

View from the Porch

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acrylic, ink, oil pastel on Arches paper, mounted to board

Some of the most naturally beautiful places in this world are in the Central Catskill Mountains of New York State. In the 1970s, along with many other people of my time and from my neighborhood in New York City, moved to these mountains to get closer to the earth. We became industrious rather than part of the rat race. We became earth lovers, rather than disregarding the beauty and importance that was the earth. It was a time of returning to simplicity, growing our own food without chemicals, trading and bartering to exist, living in simple structures and raising our children without war games and guns, but with good food, healthy lifestyles, a sense of community and caring for others, and no television. It was not easy. Winters were difficult. We would use oil lamps for light in the evenings and woodstoves to keep warm. We played board games and card games and read to each other and listened to "mystery theatre" on the radio. We talked and took photos and made videos of the beauty we saw every day. We played music on our guitars and pianos and drums and spoons and tambourines just about every night. Our children played in the mud, ran in the creeks, watched the deer prance around in the woods and mountains, wrote stories and were secure. We didn't have much at all. I left those mountains 15 years later, only when daily living became too difficult for me alone. But I return (as does my son and his family) to be in that place again. It doesn't change much. It is Appalachia and people have no way to make the money that most desire in this day and age. But folks and friends are still living there, and it always feels like home again. Doors are open.

When we first moved there, my son and I and my then husband, Lee, lived in a little cabin/cottage in Big Indian. Population was 50 or so in the winter and about 500 in the summer.

The cabin had a front porch and we would go there purposely whenever there was lightening, wind and thunder, and even during the snow storm, just to be in the middle of nature's power, without being destroyed by her. These are some of my most precious memories.

This painting was created from memory, with that porch in mind. The poem is written this year.

A storm in summer

(the screened in porch, Big Indian, New York, 1973)

A screened in porch across the long front of it,
This old cottage sits with its back against the creek,
away from the dirt road.

100 year old pines shade the white paper birch
And the ironwoods' slender, purple trunks twist
beneath them.

The summer heat is stifling.

In a burst
The rain falls straight down, hard and heavy as we sit
surrounded by its loud roar.

It stops. Suddenly quiet.

The air is still.

All is still.

Washed in milky mist.

C. Khali Ghari
January, 2016