

# Jeffrey Neumann: An American Original

By Audrey Levin McLaughlin

“I MPORTANT ART IS BORN OF INTENTION,” says Jeffrey Neumann, contemporary American realist. “When I make a painting my intention is to create something that will have lasting value. There is no such thing as great art about nothing.”

Born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1953, Neumann’s family moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, Walnut Creek, California and back to New Mexico before settling in New England when Jeff was 12. Neumann’s nascent imagination was fired by his intent observation of the southwestern landscape from the backseat of the family station wagon.

The American scene, specifically the vision of 1950s and 60s New Mexico, left an indelible impression on the young artist. The vernacular American architecture that provides the settings for Neumann’s emotionally charged landscapes strike a familiar chord with many, but resonate most strongly with those of us who have spent a lot of time on America’s two-lanes. Rather than lapsing into nostalgia or clichéd sentimentality, Neumann paints his subjects as he finds them

today, adding poignancy with the implication of passing time.

Neumann’s mastery of realism conjures up the aromas of bacon frying, coffee brewing and cigarette smoke. The sounds of country music and rhythm and blues drifting from passing car windows and the buzzing of a neon Budweiser sign in the corner bar’s window after closing time – all are evoked by the artist’s singular clarity of vision.

Neumann’s luminous oils and watercolors penetrate the duality of the American experience; the thrill of adventure, the romance of the road and the loneliness and melancholy echoed by vapid advertisements on rusting signs. They invite us to step into a world where the common-



*The Drifter*, oil on canvas 48"x72"

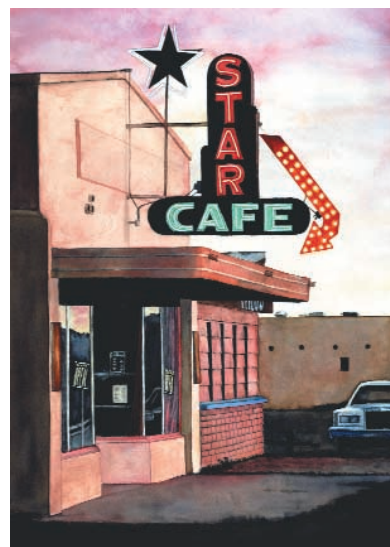
place becomes magical. Neumann’s work leaves interpretation open-ended but ultimately rewards the viewer with a soulful depth that only becomes richer with contemplation.

“Mostly it’s about feelings,” says Neumann, “personal feelings evoked by a particular place in time and how this artist living in 21st century America paints the essence of that mood. But it’s also a reflection of who we are – seen through the places we inhabit, the parts of ourselves we leave behind and continually discover anew.”

Jeffrey Neumann is represented in Santa Fe by *Art Exchange Gallery*, 60 East San Francisco St., Suite 312 overlooking the plaza in The Arcade, Santa Fe’s newest destination for discriminating shoppers. Tel: 505-982-6329. Visit [www.neumannfineart.com](http://www.neumannfineart.com) to see more of Jeffrey Neumann’s work.



*Stop & Eat*, watercolor 30"x40"



*Star Cafe*, watercolor 40"x29"