

Markers

Dan Hardison

Mementos, souvenirs, keepsakes, whatever name you may use, they are objects which we keep as reminders of a place, person, or time that holds special meaning in our lives. It could be a photo of family or friends, a postcard of a visited place, a shell found on a shore, a rock picked up on a mountain trail. What they all share is a link to a point in our lives and our memories – a marker.

Visual artists sometimes invoke these markers by changing their style, creating a series of work with a common theme, or maybe just one work of art that holds a special meaning – a representation of a place or event in their lives. Looking back over the progression of a body of work, we can often follow the changes in an artist's life, as well as his work. Perhaps artists, because of their creative ability, are more conscious of markers, but we all have them.

A potter once told me that you should always keep the first piece you make. Because no matter how far you journey or how much your work changes, it will always remind you of where you began. On a shelf in my home is a vase, wheel thrown by this man who was a friend and would later die from AIDS. Art has a way of reaching out to us and touching us – sometimes in unexpected ways.

As we grow older, we find we have a greater need for markers. They can outline the journey we have taken in life – the paths we have chosen. When recording artist Jeff Johnson was struggling with the grief following the death of a close friend he wrote, "I'm not sure why it had to be this way, but I trust the process as my friend did too, and I'm grateful for the 'markers.'"



Untitled (Milk Can), 1975
pencil, 6 1/4" x 5 1/4"
By Dan Hardison

Note: This was my first drawing.