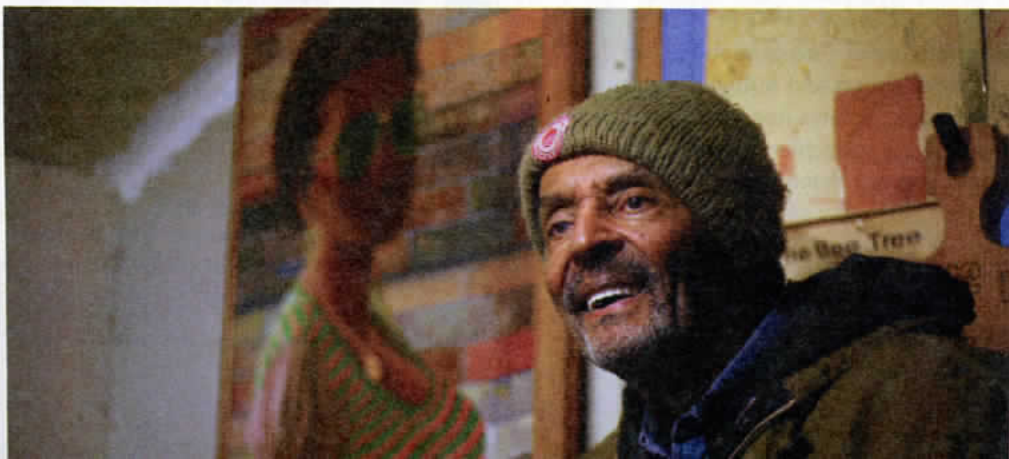




A PAINTED LIFE

Busy like the beekeeper he used to be, Carl Gardner spends his eighth decade in this world creating art in the old honey house.

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"I FEEL AS IF THEY ARE ALL MY CHILDREN. THAT'S ONE REASON WHY I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT SELLING THEM BECAUSE I'M ATTACHED TO ALL OF THEM AS TIME GOES BY, I GET MORE AND MORE ATTACHED."

— Carl Gardner, Tye River





Carl Gardner says art is his way of communicating, and with close to 90 paintings hanging in his tiny cabin in Tye River, there's a lot of chatter.

"I like painting realistic things with a little twist to them here or there," Gardner said. His art is inspired by his every day encounters and the walls of his home are covered with landscapes and portraits of all sizes. It's not that Gardner couldn't get rid of his paintings, plenty of people would like to buy them, but Gardner just doesn't want to sell.

"I feel as if they are all my children. That's one reason why I'm not crazy about selling them because I'm attached to all of them," Gardner said. "As time goes by, I get more and more attached."



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Gardner made a living as a beekeeper in Nelson County but says he “got too old for that.” Now the 84-year-old focuses on his art. His honey house has been transformed into his painting workshop, where he spends most of his time. Gardner paints with acrylic and oils and dabbled recently in pastels. He sketches each idea on masonite and then paints it. Some pieces take a few weeks to complete, others take a few years.

Gardner has also experimented with stained glass. “I look at stained glass as a way of painting with light,” he said. “You’re always keeping in mind the light that comes in the back.” Gardner said the texture and transparency of the stained glass work is a challenge he embraces. Along with his dozens of paintings hanging in his house, Gardner has about ten stained glass windows.

Through a fellow stained glass artist, Gardner met Christi Saunders in 2014. “He has an incredible imagination,” Saunders said. “He gets up and goes into the shop and the way he talks about his work, he talks about all of his pieces like he has a relationship with them.”

Saunders joins Gardner in his former honey-house turned workshop to paint. Gardner made her an easel and brush holder to use and Saunders paints in an old beekeeping apron of his.

“I couldn’t believe in this teeny little cabin in the woods of Nelson there were all these beautiful works of art,” Saunders said. “All of them have a story. He has something to say about all of them and he cared about all of them.”

All of the storytelling on the walls of the Gardner home can make things crowded. Gardner said his wife wishes he would get rid of a few of his paintings. “But she humors me and lets me keep them.” **BRL**

