

Barry A. Gealt

Barry Gealt joined the faculty of the Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts (SOFA) in 1969 as assistant professor to teach painting and drawing. He will retire this June after doing last what he loves most as professor—traveling with students while teaching and mentoring them about his passion for life and how to see and make art in Florence, Italy. His quest, of course, is to be absorbed in great masterworks of art in the city where his energy and knowledge are enhanced most. Here he passionately and knowingly conveys his love for painting and sculpture to students he guides through the city maze of museums, churches, restaurants, and environs. He has done this for 15 Summer-I sessions since 1985 as co-director of the Florence program.

Barry, during childhood, liked art, and he attended weekly youth art classes until age 17. He studied at the Philadelphia College of Art and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in design in 1963. He continued graduate study at Yale University's School of Art and Architecture in its highly acclaimed painting program. Barry graduated with honors, was awarded a Master of Fine Arts and the Alice B. Kimball Traveling Fellowship in 1965, a distinctive prize funding his four-and-a-half-month summer tour through European museums. Upon his return, at age 24, he began his first college appointment as chairman of the newly established Wright State University studio art department, where he taught art courses and directed undergraduate studio and art history programs.

After coming to IU Barry received tenure in 1974 and was promoted to associate professor in 1975 and full professor in 1985. His professional creative activity as artist is distinguished by having over 50 exhibitions and 20 awards for research and teaching while at IU. Twelve one-person shows are highlighted by three exhibitions at Osper Gallery in Cologne, Germany, since 2001, and five exhibitions since 1991 at Mark Rushman Gallery in Indianapolis. He has participated in exhibitions in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Kansas City, and in Virginia, Nebraska, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana. His paintings, drawings, and prints are placed in over 60 public and private collections throughout the United States and in Germany, Italy, Turkey, and Japan.

He received a prestigious Lilly Endowment Fellowship in 1992, which funded a trip to Japan to visit master printmaker woodcut studios. Ford Foundation grants in 1978 and 1979 also provided travel abroad. Five Indiana University Creative Arts Grants and a Senior Faculty Fellowship for support of his creative activity were awarded between 1981 and 1993. In addition, he has presented more than 45 formal lectures on his work and on artists and their work.

Barry paints in his home studio in Spencer, Indiana. During the past five years he has completed over 40 paintings, many of large size, and almost as many woodcut blocks and prints. He has focused on these media, working from memory of the Indiana landscape, to represent its textures, atmospheric conditions, and light. His paintings evoke a feeling of looking outward, or up close to observe minute details of form, creating pictorial illusion to bend space and dramatize Nature's surround. His works are romances based on observation but concluded by imagination. They are lyrical abstractions that compose rich color densities in slowly built-up earth-like layers of wet into wet oil pigment textures. Barry works to be original—to search for and create a unique personal expression of his views within landscape forms.

To recognize his teaching the department presented Barry with Teaching Excellence Recognition Awards in 1999 and 2000 and Trustees Teaching Awards in 2004 and 2005. He established new areas of study in SOFA by creating study initiatives for undergraduate and graduate students. His love of travel inspired him to teach honors courses abroad. The Florence Summer Studio Program, combined with the Department of French and Italian, was begun in 1985, and its continuing success has cultivated subsequent overseas SOFA course programs.

Barry was given the Terra Foundation for the Arts award in 2003 as the American artist in summer residence in Giverny. His travel to Normandy, a region frequented by nineteenth-century French masters, created his initiative to attain funding for B.F.A. honors painting classes to travel to Giverny, the cliffs and environs of Étretat, and Paris, during the 2004 and 2007 Spring Breaks. Barry has led the way in SOFA to procure funding for student travel events for over 20 years. His fund-raising accomplishments in the fine arts are considerable, and they remain one of his proudest achievements. Barry writes:

Artists have an obligation to keep the field vital with young artists and their opinions, beliefs, views, and outlooks. If I have learned anything, it is that art breaks down prejudices. In art, change has been a vital and constructive element. The creative process opens our minds as well as eyes to the ideas, attitudes, and points of view of other people, other cultures, and other times. Each century has brought profound changes—changes that are sometimes exciting, sometimes frightening, and often challenging. Art has enabled me to seek and to confront the unknown.

Barry met Heidi, his wife, who is now director of the Indiana University Art Museum, about 1966, and they were married in spring 1969. They moved to Bloomington and since 1972 have lived at the edge of wooded hills in their home in Spencer. Barry likes to buy and drive tractors, and when he is not painting, or teaching, he probably is riding one of his tractors, bushwhacking tall grass, or hauling friends packed in blankets on a pull-cart hayride through the snow by the waterfall. Both he and Heidi love to cook and entertain, and their home has always been open to students, friends, and visitors.

Barry's love of life is not any different than his passion for art. The hundreds of students he has taught generously reflect on the breadth of their studies with him in letters, notes, and postcards. Barry cares; he teaches from his heart and talks of ideas and artworks with dramatic purpose. Throughout his Indiana tenure, his steadfast commitment to pursue the highest ambitious artistic goals in teaching and professional accomplishment has shaped an enduring contribution of national and international significance for him and the school.

Professor Gealt has brought distinction and prominence to his painting endeavor and our school's studio art programs these past 38 years, and we extend our many thanks to him. After all, his outstanding achievement has been his gift of giving to us, as artist, teacher, and prized colleague.

William M. Itter