Saloon Artist

THE DREAM BAR SERIES
“Years ago I began collecting cocktail books. I soon realized that mixology was an amazing art, but we knew so little about those who invented it. That’s what got me passionate; I wanted to take this art out of obscurity and place it next to the other great American traditions.”

–David Wondrich
Clockwise from top:

DOROTHY PARKER
JEANNE LAFITTE'S Blacksmith shop
THE NAPOLEON HOUSE
MARIO SUAZO  Napoleon House
JOERG MEYER   Le Lion, Hamburg, Germany
MICHAEL HASHIM  Knickerbocker Club, NYC 1999
THE OLD TOWNE BAR
40 x 30 " acrylic on canvas, sold by Stage Left, 2021
“Don’t bother with churches, buildings or city squares. If you want to know about a culture, spend a night in its bars.”

–Ernest Hemingway
The only place to be was New York—there I could live out my cliché dreams: I wanted to starve, write poetry on napkins, write sonnets on the subway, be the Stoned Philosopher of Brooklyn and the Ne'er-do-well of the East Village. I was sleeping on the floor of a four-room share in Harlem, drinking cheap beer, reading and writing my way into New York's heart... I didn't know why I wanted to paint myself New York so badly... the electric lights of this town emancipated my soul and I knew I was destined to become a writer... In truth, I have always been just a romantic trying to explain how much in love I am.  

– Maxwell Britten

Clockwise from top:
JOE KARCINEL (Toast of the Town)
PHILIP GREENE (Author)
FRANCINE COHEN (food writer)
SHAWN KELLEY (Cocktail Kingdom)
POPPY TOOKER (Nola Radio host)
MAXWELL BRITTEN (mixologist)
MIGUEL CALVO (designer)
I never know quite what to tell people when they ask what I do. When I say I write about liquor and cocktails, they smile at me like I’m joking. When they realize I’m not, shades of disbelief pass over their face. Then there’s often some line about how I have the best job in the world. I usually demur, mumbling that any job is, in the end, a job. I was raised to regard modesty as a virtue, which is probably a liability in a flamboyant industry like this. But quietly I agree with them. It’s a damn spectacular job.”

— Robert Simonson

“I grew up in Coney Island but was never able to go on any rides because they didn’t allow blacks or Puerto Ricans into the park. Still, blood is Taíno and I adapted well. From the age of seven I hung with the fishermen at the pier and by the time I was 14, they called me The Poacher. They’d say, ‘Anything that swims – that kid’s gonna make a buck hustling it!’ So one day they took me on a trip to Shinnecock Canal. We caught nearly 600 fish that day. When the guy in charge saw me catching all those fish he asked if I belonged to the group. I started to explain I had just came along, but then the Captain stepped in and tells him: ‘This young man is a member of the Steeplechase Fishing Club.’ That’s when I realized Captain Mike Novell had enrolled me in the club and had been paying my dues all that time. I will never forget him or the others: the best fishing partners you ever wanna meet, right here in Coney Island!”

— Harry Delgado, Coney Island, 2010
“Rainbow & Stars was the most beautiful cabaret room in New York, and all the best performers appeared there. My all time favorite was Rosemary Clooney - she came in one night and said to me “Aubrey, please take a photo of me with my nephew. He’s an actor on television.” That was my introduction to the future movie superstar, George Clooney... The Rainbow Room was the finest place in NYC for me to photograph famous people and drink glorious cocktails. It is deeply missed.”

—Aubrey Reuben

Straight on ‘til morning and West with the night means making a memory that will last all your lifetime.

Where strangers are meeting they’ll be friends come daylight

Straight on ‘til morning and west with the night

Good wines will be poured martini stir emotions, a flickering star, as you light your cigar tells you life is good again Straight on ‘til morning and west with the night

—Chris Gillespie

AUBREY RUBIN paparazzi

CHRIS GILLESPIE, Benelman’s Lounge

MR FINKLESTEIN, Scardsdale

EBEN FREEMAN, The Butterfly
"I looked at the barman with the snappy red vest dead in the eye and asked whether he could make a Sazerac, which in the `80s, was not easy to find outside of New Orleans. He looked back at me dead in the eye, and with a big smile, reached beneath the bar and placed a bottle of Peychaud’s Bitters in front of me. Over time I came to know Dale DeGroff and returned often for a Sazerac. When I walked in they’d call to him: “The Sazerac guy is here.” —Phil Halpern

The Sazerac Guy
THE 21 CLUB, NYC
40 x 30" acrylic on canvas
Sold at Swann Galleries 2021

THE CAFE ON MAIN STREET
Acrylic on canvas 30 x 30"

THAT GOOD NIGHT (The White Horse Tavern)
Acrylic on canvas 40 x 30"
At the old Derby Bar I sat that night, before the maddening crowds descended. My notepad, my book, I sat poised to write, when I beheld a beauty most splendid.

Across the bar she met my gaze, halo’d by candles’ glow
And I lifted my highball with sultry intent, as the straw slid straight up my nose.

— Ted “Dr. Cocktail” Haigh
CONSTANTE RIBALAGUA
Hemingway's favorite barman
(created this 1940's style caricature as a gift for his son in 2018)

PAPA HEMINGWAY with his cat, "Hairy" Truman
30 x 40 " acrylic on canvas, SOLD

LA FLORIDITA, Havana, Cuba
Jill DeGroff is a “Saloon Artist” who plies her craft at bars and cafes, painting all species of cocktailians as well as writers, musicians and denizens of the night. Her portraits of luminaries in the bar industry have earned her a reputation as the quintessential artist of the Craft Cocktail Era. Owning an original Jill DeGroff caricature has become a must among the cocktail cognoscenti. Jill has drawn over 1,000 and has collected stories from most of them.

Jill worked as a graphic designer for many years before co-founding the Museum of the American Cocktail in New Orleans in 2004, serving as managing director for the next several years. She has published two editions of Lush Life; Portraits from the Bar, an anthology of colorful characters from bars around the world. The book received glowing reviews in Time Out NY, Village Voice, the New Yorker, New York Times, Epicurious, and Serious Eats.

Jill’s work has been exhibited at the North Shore Art League, Wine & Spirits festivals, and at bars including Danny Meyer’s Porchlight, Sunny’s Red Hook, and Cornelia Street Cafe. This past June of 2021, two of Jill’s Iconic NY pieces sold at auction at Swann Galleries. Currently her work can be viewed at Stage Left in New Brunswick, NJ. and available for purchase at: https://www.stageleftwineshop.com/accessories/Artwork

A native New Yorker, Jill now lives in Stonington, CT with her husband Dale DeGroff, a James Beard award-winning mixologist and author whom she credits for her amazing journey.

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You don’t choose the road less traveled; it chooses you - and it comes with a price! But when you listen to your heart and follow your true path it’s a life well lived!”
—Jill DeGroff