

November 4, 2018, through March 17, 2019

*Prairie Ocean:*  
*Long Time No Sea*  
works by **Ray Troll** of  
Ketchikan, Alaska, and  
**Chuck Bonner** of  
Scott City, Kansas



### Ray's Statement

Moving to Alaska in 1983 exposed me to the forces of the natural world, changed my life, and transformed my art. Living with deep woods on one side and the deep ocean on the other is magical for me and informs my art like no other influence.

Over the years my curiosities have led me to befriend scientists, writers and musicians. I came to realize that scientific inquiry and artistic inquiry overlap beautifully as both disciplines seek to 'know the world' in complex and elegant ways. The cross currents between art, science, music and literature are the waters in which I prefer to swim.

I lived in Kansas during my formative years from 1968 to 1977 when I graduated from Bethany College with a Bachelor of Arts degree. As they say you can take the boy out of Kansas but never the Kansas out of the boy.

I met Chuck Bonner in the summer of 1992 when I traveled back to Kansas for my 20<sup>th</sup> high school reunion. My high school buddy Jan Eddy had played in a band with Chuck (the legendary Tractors) and he suggested I look him up since I was working on a book about prehistoric life at the time.

As fate would have it, the day I arrived at the Keystone Gallery to go fossil hunting with Chuck was the day that Chuck's dad Marion died. Marion had collected a lifetime's worth of fossils from the ancient seaway that once covered Kansas in the late Cretaceous. He had raised his family to be fossil hunters just like himself. Even though he collected spectacular fossils for well-known scientists like George Sternberg, Marion was a reticent man who referred to himself as "just another vertebrate".

Author Brad Matsen and I wrote about Marion and our experiences with the Bonner clan in our book "Planet Ocean: Dancing to the Fossil Record". We began to sign our names with the acronym JAV in honor of Marion and as a reminder of our humble place in the cosmic scheme of things.

### Ray's Biography

From his tree lined studio, high on a hill above the Tongass Narrows in rain-swept Ketchikan Alaska, Ray Troll draws & paints fishy images that migrate into museums, books and magazines and onto shirts sold around the planet. Basing his quirky images on the latest scientific discoveries, Ray brings a street-smart sensibility to the worlds of ichthyology & paleontology.

Ray moved to Alaska in 1983 to spend a summer helping his sister Kate start a seafood retail store. The fish store is long gone but Ray is not.

Ray earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas in 1977 and an MFA in studio arts from Washington State University in 1981. In 2008 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in fine arts from the University of Alaska Southeast. In 2007 he was given a gold medal for 'distinction in the natural history arts' by the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and in 2006 was given the Alaska Governor's award for the arts. In 2011 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship along with Dr. Kirk Johnson for their new book project 'Cruisin the Fossil Coastline. A month after that Ray was also given the Rasmuson Distinguished Artist Award. In 2014 the Alaska SeaLife Center presented him its Ocean Ambassador award.

Troll's unique blend of art and science culminated in his traveling exhibit, "Dancing to the Fossil Record," a major show that opened at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco in 1995. The huge exhibit included Ray's original drawings, gigantic fossils, fish tanks, murals, an original soundtrack, a dance floor an interactive computer installation and the infamous "Evolvo" art car. In 1997 the exhibit traveled to the Oregon Coast

Aquarium in Newport and in 1998 it hit the streets of Philadelphia at the Academy of Natural Sciences. The tour ended in 1999 at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. By that time it had grown to 14,000 square feet.

Ray followed that tour a few years later with "Sharkabet, a Sea of Sharks from A to Z". Venues included the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, the Alaska State Museum and the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana.

Ray went on to act as the art director for the Miami Museum of Science's "Amazon Voyage" traveling exhibit and now has another touring show based on his book *Cruisin' the Fossil Freeway* with Dr. Kirk Johnson. He has illustrated and co-authored eleven books over the course of his career.

He and his wife Michelle run the Soho Coho gallery in Ketchikan situated in an historic house of ill-repute located on a salmon spawning stream.

He has appeared on the Discovery Channel, lectured at Cornell, Harvard and Yale, shown work at the Smithsonian and has even had two fish named after him: a New Zealand species of ratfish called *Hydrolagus trolli* and a prehistoric genus of Italian herring called *Trollichthys*.

## Chuck's Statement

Wide open spaces and variety of colors are important aspects of my life as an artist living in western Kansas. Being an avid fossil collector puts me in scenic natural environments from which I draw inspiration. This does not limit me to only producing artwork of recognizable objects. Abstract ideas and imagery are also important elements of my artistic style. "Artist as Lifestyle" is a creed that I try to follow in my daily life. Whether painting mural commissions, giving talks in our fossil museum and art gallery, performing music or making change in our gift shop, I try to add a little artist touch to everything I do.

Ray Troll and I met in 1992 when he was doing research for a book called "Planet Ocean," written by Brad Matsen and illustrated by Ray. A travelling exhibition featuring artwork and themes from the book toured throughout the country and I provided Kansas fossils for the show. Ray and I have kept in contact over the years and our joint show "Prairie Ocean: Long Time No Sea" revisits Kansas and its paleontological past.

## Chuck's Biography

Chuck Bonner was born in Scott City, Kansas in 1950 and grew up in the western Kansas town of Leoti. His formative years were spent in an artistic and scientific background, his father was a fossil collector and his mother an artist. Chuck attended Fort Hays State University where he received an A. B. in art and an M. A. in painting.

While at the University, Bonner worked at the Sternberg Memorial Museum where he prepared exhibits, painted scientific restorations and portraits, and prepared fossils for exhibit. This experience has helped him with his latest venture, Keystone Gallery, which he and his wife, Barbara Shelton, opened in the fall of 1991. The gallery is a combination of art gallery, fossil museum and gift shop. To enhance the museum fossil collection, Chuck has painted a 24' by 6' mural of prehistoric life in the Kansas Cretaceous sea.

Bonner has completed many other public works of art, including murals for Fort Hays State University and the Ellis County Historical Museum—both in Hays, Kansas. He also painted a Kansas prehistoric sea mural for El Quartejejo Museum in Scott City, Kansas.

In 2007, Chuck was commissioned to paint two prehistoric scenes and a tribute painting to his father Marion for the Museum of the Great Plains in Leoti, Kansas. The next year he completed four murals of paleontological and archaeological themes totaling two hundred square feet for the Stanton County Museum in Johnson, Kansas.

Chuck enjoys the challenge of commission work whether for public organizations such as museums or for individuals. He continues to produce various styles of artwork and sells to collectors throughout the world.

*"Diversity is the key to my artwork, business and life. My approach to making art follows the ebb and flow of my lifestyle. I tend to get more painting done in the winter because my outdoor activities are limited. My paintings tend to develop at their own pace, just waiting for me to say they are completed. Whatever direction my artwork takes, I feel my lifestyle directly contributes to its freedom and natural progression."*



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Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.