

# Jeffrey Neumann

Art Exchange Gallery

60 East San Francisco Street, Santa Fe

## We value what vanishes.

Odd, obsolete objects from bygone yesterdays found on the curbside or packed up in the attic fetch the big bucks on eBay. High school humiliations take on the twinge of nostalgia, but only well after graduation. The great age of landscape painting that kick-started Romanticism came about at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution as factories began the besmirching of pristine fields, meadows, and skies that for centuries had gone largely unacknowledged artistically.



*The Drifter*, oil on canvas, 48" x 72", 1994

In his paintings and prints, Jeffrey Neumann records an architectural vernacular that falls into the Americana category of the 1950s and '60s. His subjects are mostly hotels, motels, diners, cafes, and idiosyncratic fast-food joints of the Western United States – devoid of human presence. Automobiles often appear, parked, placid, and decidedly unpeopled. Neumann's presentation is straightforward and precise without being overly fussy, and – at his best – he achieves some of the eerie stillness of the great American painter Edward Hopper, though Neumann's vision tends towards more rendered details. His nocturnes succeed because the flat, black night encourages greater abstraction and acts as ground for the bright boldness of neon and backlit signage.

Lota-Burger pushes these virtues the furthest and resonates with the weird abandoned energy of 3 a.m. road trippin'. The sensation of silence is thick. Forward motion has stopped. The engine is finally quiet. The blare of the radio ceases abruptly. The place is all lit up, but nobody's home. We've all been there, and Jeffrey Neumann's Lota-Burger grasps the mood perfectly. I want a green-chile cheeseburger with fries and a vanilla shake if they're still open. Neumann similarly captures *The Drifter*, complete with cocktail lounge, and the show wouldn't be complete without the Stop and Eat sign that greets you as you roll into Española.

In this new century (and hasn't it been fabulous so far) of big box retail and corporate conformity from coast to coast, Neumann performs the valuable service of recording the funky, elegant architectural remnants of a world that is careening madly towards oblivion, fast going, going, gone.

BY JON CARVER

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