



**BARBARA ERNST PREY**

*Barbara Ernst Prey*





## **BARBARA ERNST PREY**

She is, quite simply put, the world's pre-eminent watercolorist, persisting over the past four decades in the mastery of her idiom.

Museum Director Charles Riley III



## To the Vanishing Point: Barbara Prey and the Art of Her Time

By Charles A. Riley II, PhD  
Director, Nassau Museum of Art

The delicate balancing act of the contemporary artist who maintains a foot in the tradition requires a particular type of viewer and critical consideration. “I am not looking back but there are traditions I go to,” Barbara Ernst Prey offers, diplomatically. This essay, on the occasion of a wonderfully comprehensive exhibition of her work that includes important new additions, is an attempt, after decades of looking at Prey’s work and writing about her, to situate her in the art historical canon. Just as she is not a “regionalist” (the Long Island roots of her art and upbringing are front and center in this show, but she has as well an important connection to Port Clyde, Maine as well as both Europe and Asia, and one of her most formidable achievements is a phenomenally accurate painting of the International Space Station, miles from earth), Prey is not bound by the fashions of her time. The ideal of historical permanence (or at least longevity) may seem old-fashioned in a time of manic forays into digital “art,” but some of us believe in real art as an enduring benefit to humanity. *Ars longa vita brevis*, Horace’s dictum, is echoed in Keats’s portentous last lines of the ultimate ekphrasis, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

*When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,  
“Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”*

The major new works, including *Horizons*, dramatically attest to her achievement as a watercolorist and a painter in oils, pushing the boundaries of a time-honored medium even as she tests herself in a new one. The genuine challenge of Prey’s work for critics and historians is the question of situating her in the canon (different,

please, from the banal question of where she fits into the art world, driven by novelty and mercantilism). As the deadline for this book neared, the artist paused in her studio to reflect candidly on her wisely steadfast adherence to the aesthetic values which brought her here, to this prominence. She is, quite simply put, the world’s pre-eminent watercolorist, persisting over the past four decades in the mastery of her idiom. I have known her for over half that time and written about her work on many occasions, but never before as the director of a museum, gatekeeper in other words to that historical endurance at issue. I included her in two of the museum’s most ambitious exhibitions. One of the charming coincidences of our collaboration is a fondness for a classic of Chinese aesthetics, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, a profound treatise published in Nanjing in 1679 that is essentially a *gradus ad parnassum* for artists, leading them stroke-by-stroke through all the technical levels, as in a writing text in Chinese calligraphy, from the elementary compositions (trees, rocks, bamboo, orchids among other subjects) to the most elaborate (figures, temple architecture, mountainous landscapes). It proceeds along the same lines as the keyboard exercises of Bach’s *Well Tempered Klavier* or Czerny’s (pupil of Beethoven, teacher of Liszt) *Art of Finger Dexterity*. The progression from basics to technical mastery is the whole point.

Climbing the stairs of Prey’s home to the third-floor aerie where her studio overlooks Oyster Bay, a room of utter focus and order, the volume (acquired in Taiwan during a stint as a visiting professor with a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation) is tucked in a small bookshelf near the top of the stairs. Aside from expounding upon the unexpected pleasures of discovering a cross-cultural influence upon the quintessentially American painter (those American flags!), heirless to Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent, the significance of

the book hit home as I grappled with this question of Prey's status in the canon. Recalling the essentially conservative purpose of the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual*, gathered in reaction to the "foreign" invasion of the court in Beijing by the Manchus who ruled during the Qing dynasty following the fall of the Ming, who were Han people, in the middle of the 17th century, the book returns to the Han ideals of the Tang and Song dynasties, when the literati, such as Wang Wei and Mi Fu were the paradigms of classical Chinese painting and calligraphic style. In terms of the present exhibition, the book is the epitome of *Old School* in its painterly sense. This paragraph, among many others that could be cited with reference to Prey's mastery, balances the adherence to rules (*li*) as the basis for the freedom (*qi*) or spirit. There could be no better introduction to this equilibrium of technique and originality achieved by Prey:

*Some who believe themselves independent claim that they follow no rules. Actually, the stage at which one is most free in brushwork is the time when, in attempting to surpass the ancients, one is most keenly aware of their presence and methods. Often those without method will find in taking up the brush that all ten fingers freeze into a knot and for a whole day not a drop of ink is dropped...It may be observed that the ancients worked without rules only because they first paid careful attention to technique. One cannot work daringly without taking great pains.*

Nowhere is this blend of technical mastery and fresh originality more evident than in the signature watercolors of boats, particularly in her use of blues. The almost hallucinatory tracks of paler blue zig-zagging over the depths, like currents that follow their own hidden physics through the Sound or the Atlantic, gently try to unmoor the tethered dory, secured by three slack lines to unseen buoys. The title is *Vanishing Point*, as loaded a term in art history as you can choose and a great starting point for a consideration of a masterful painter who is at the same time so securely identified with many of the places she has famously painted, from Port Clyde to

Quogue, from Taiwan to Manhasset Bay, arguably at this moment the show-stopping star of Mass MOCA, and at the same time so widely dispersed as her art not only travels the world (it is in more United States embassies than that of any other living woman artist) but is even "out of this world," as the renowned NASA projects show. When I pressed Prey for answers on composition, with regard to the placement of the boats in such works as *Old School* or *Vanishing Point*, she had a quietly firm response: "It's your gut." From an initial decision firmly anchored in experience, the work progresses: "You keep on going until it comes together, but by now it's second nature for me."

Mastery is a blessing, especially when it comes to a medium as unforgiving as watercolor. In Prey's dining room, propped by one of her paintings of a dory, are two keys to that substantial sense of having one's bearings. In a glass case, a scale model of a dory guarantees a constant point of reference for accuracy to a level of detail that satisfies her and the shipwright. "I double-check my dories," was one of the best quotes I have ever gleaned from a studio visit. When my museum showed her painting of the international space station, we were tempted to hang the scale model that she still has in her studio for that meticulous and delightful work. Nearby is an illuminated leaf from an early Renaissance missal, the freshness of its vivid colors preserved for nearly five centuries by remaining within the closed volume. The high intensity of Prey's blues, notably, has become a hallmark of her style – when NASA commissioned her not once but four times, more than any other woman in their art program, it was on the strength of those fluvial blues. Among the many pointers she offered to me for this essay was her delight in church glass as well as Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, the two purest iterations of Western chromatism, generally achieved from mineral pigments (azurite, or lapis lazuli, ground from chunks mined in Afghanistan for paint, cobalt for stained glass). I confess I share this delight in the incunabula, recalling many valuable afternoons at the Morgan Library gathering the retinal memories of blues, reds and gold from the *Farnese*

*Hours*, the *Tres Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry, and especially an exhibition of the Breslauer collection in 1992 which included two small masterworks by Simon Bening, made in the 1530s and 1540s, one the arrest of Christ in the garden and the other the rest on the flight into Egypt. In the former, the rich blues and reds of the drapery commanded the foreground while a spectacular torch held high over the heads of the mob read at first like a distant pyre against the blue mountainside – sparks floating through is winding train of smoke. The parallel with one of my favorite paintings in this show, her watercolor of a distant bonfire, is too delicious to resist. Perhaps because I never laugh harder than I do by a bonfire on the beach with my hockey team, there is something so completely enthralling about Prey's subtle streak of fire across the massed shadows of the coastal outcropping (here on the shore of Long Island Sound in Prey's case, out on Peconic Bay with Nassau Point behind us for our favorite spot). Playing two wickedly difficult light sources against one another, related in terms of palette, she pulls together the mimetic accuracy of what a distant bonfire looks like at that hour with the message about the place of the people in that rapidly expanding twilight scene.

Some contemporary artists are so taken with the latest thing that any intimation of the distant past seems risible. Others are more receptive to the comparison, such as Balthus (the fascination with Fra Angelico), Picasso (Velazquez), Francis Bacon (El Greco), just as T.S. Eliot loved the Metaphysical poets and Benjamin Britten took his cue from Purcell. That fiercely burning flame in Bening, with the intense heat of its oranges and reds, like the incandescence of the bonfire at twilight, is both a mimetic response to the reflected sunset she saw (think of Bonnard, stepping on the gas of his lemon yellows to keep up with the sunlight of Provence) and the theoretical right answer to the hue, value and chroma of the adjacent blues, with which the gold trills, two bright notes pulsing in a chromatic equilibrium. As any color chart attests, these complementaries belong together- Van Gogh kept them close, as did Vermeer, and closer in history to Prey, Ellsworth Kelly.

This leads to an anomaly that, hopefully, in turn invites closer looking at the spectacular play of gold and cobalt blue in such works as *Variations of Color* (the view from the Quogue dock) or *Bonfire*: What if these passages, framed in isolation (spread your fingers before them to crop a detail where gold and blue alternate) were read as abstract? Sinuous fingers of gold lace themselves with slivers of blue in a rhythmic weave of color and form that, in a painting by Clifford Still (jagged lightning bolts of yellow splitting the dark night), Sam Francis (bright blooms of gold and blue on a white field) or Joan Mitchell (lush lemon yellow streaks over riverine passages of blue) would be deemed Abstract Expressionist. Beloved for her fidelity to nature and architecture, a preeminent realist by reputation, Prey all of a sudden appeals as well to the eye trained to enjoy gesture, color, atmosphere on its own, pure heraldry of the paint and the mark. As she comments on *Bonfire*, "If you pushed the orange any further it wouldn't work."

Perhaps my impulse to consider this dimension of a Prey painting (which she encouraged incidentally, pulling that old studio maneuver of turning a work upside down for a moment) stems in part from my intent to construct a matrilineal genealogy for her historically. Starting within the realist category, the clear descent from Mary Cassatt, Rosa Bonheur (to grasp her importance, visit the Musee d'Orsay) Georgia O'Keeffe and others seems limiting, more Edith Wharton than Susan Sontag. Open the frame to include abstraction and a different matrilineal prospect follows – Mitchell, Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Jane Wilson, Mary Abbott and perhaps closest in terms of sheer aesthetics, Helen Frankenthaler. The Ninth Street Women are enjoying a moment (my own museum played its role), offering Prey a group context one generation removed who accomplished by virtue of their own pluck and talent the forging of a style both painterly and powerful that locks down its claim to posterity. The only two women painters appointed to the National Council on the Arts are Prey and Frankenthaler. Both of them embody a cardinal principle of aesthetics: Originality married to technique earns this ranking. Much as Frankenthaler attained and then perfected a process of creating large-scale celebrations of

uncanny immediacy by manipulating highly diluted clouds of pure color (Howard Nemerov's recent book offers rhapsodic interpretations of her life and work). Prey in the works on view, notably *Old School III* and *Solo*, spreads epic washes in broad swaths that undulate in mimic motion with the swells of the tide and currents. The comparison lends another insight: Just as Frankenthaler was in greater control of her stains than some of her critics asserted, Prey is looser in her fields of blue than her reputation suggests. Both artists demanded of themselves, and of us in turn, a major result. "The more you look the more you see," the artist promises, a cardinal rule when it comes to enjoying the work over time.

What I seem to relish most about *Sail Storage*, a classic example of drapery studies with its panoply of whites and greys, is the subtle suggestion of *disorder* in the loft with its casually dropped blue duffel on the floor (maybe it was too many times out on the water with ex-Navy sticklers for whom "ship-shape" meant perfect order). Prey's interiors invoke the human presences, the tired kids who lugged the gear inside in this case, or the worshippers and weavers in her extraordinarily timeless Shaker village series. The serial numbers on the sales, and the small sign, "Leave First Mark to Port," have a casual imprecision that makes the hand-lettered message so much more poetic (and I could not help relating her orthography to the numbers and cut-off words in Jasper Johns, the scripts of Miro or a Braque still life). Prey is so closely attuned to the life of an interior such as this that, as in the perfectly titled *Sanctum*, you feel you know the mariners from their gear (and, for those who thought it's all blue all the time with Prey, have a good go at that vibrant red!). When so many artists are either unsure or scared of color, that most deceptive tool in the toolbox, Prey exudes a hard-won confidence in such bold works as *Siesta*, which pushes the palette even further. The banana yellow and cardinal red hulls of the kayaks, upstaging the blue bay waters behind, invoke a nostalgia for summer days gone by. I found myself drawn to a detail at its center, a galvanized steel bollard around which the kayaks are piled. Its pewter tones, by contrast with those bright expanses of pure color, are in a whole

other section of the palette. It was my chance to relate Prey and her greys to artists I admire for their range of greys, such as Anselm Kiefer, Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly and Corot. "It's a question of how to make everything out of grey." This is our opportunity, as well, to note Prey's departure into oil painting, a bridge that not every artist feels comfortable in crossing especially in public.

For Prey at present, the magisterial work upon which her name is hung has to be the internationally acclaimed Mass MOCA commission, at nine-by-sixteen feet in size considered the world's largest watercolor. Capturing a full acre of interior space (400 columns), it is a show-stopper that shares a cavernous Contemporary museum space with the works of Louise Bourgeois, Laurie Anderson and Jenny Holzer, as well as Kiefer, whom Prey in this work can also be fruitfully compared for her range of greys.

Like so much of Prey's work, it reminds us literally and figuratively of where we stand. The super effect of this unforgettable tour de force is due in part to the single-point perspective that leads, via a crescendo of geometric permutations, to an illuminated stairwell that seems miles away but uses the great Giotto trick of a window onto the next spatial realm to suggest an even further distance. Like sending her subject to space, it is an artist testing the limits of cognition and the medium. As a parable in paint, it reminds me of a favorite essay published in the *New York Times* in 1981 that wove Ibsen, Mann, Constable and Winslow Homer into an argument for the paideutic role of art as philosophy. Few among my readers today will recall the gentle authority of John Russell, for more than five decades a voice of reason at the Times (both London and New York, whose "Art Tells Us Where We Are" begins: "It is fundamental to the white magic of art that it does away with the nightmare of disorientation.")

**Charles A. Riley II**, PhD is the director of the Nassau Museum of Art and the author of 38 books as well as several previous essays on the art of Barbara Ernst Prey. He has curated exhibitions in Taiwan, Berlin, Amsterdam and New York and covered the arts for several major international publications.





*Standing Together*, 2022, Watercolor on paper 22 x 28 inches





*The Point*, 2022, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches





*Peapod and Dorothy*, 2012, Watercolor on paper, 32 x 40 inches  
following page: *Where Earth Meets Sky II* detail, 2022, Watercolor on paper, 40 x 60 inches











Marsh Grass, 2015, Watercolor on paper, 30 x 40 inches











*Brother and Sister*, 2022, Watercolor on paper, 13 x 19 inches









*Handcrafted*, 2016, Watercolor on paper, 21 x 29 inches  
following page: *Cliff Dwellers* detail, 2020, Watercolor on paper, 22 x 40 inches









Barbara Ernst Prey





MASS MoCA just unveiled Building 6, a massive addition of 130,000 square feet of exhibition space, and to inaugurate the new wing, more than a dozen exhibitions by a powerful array of blue chip artists are on display, one of which is something of a meta-show. Barbara Ernst Prey's *Building 6 Portrait: Interior* consists of a singular work—a giant, framed, 8 x 15 feet watercolor painting depicting the pre-renovation version of the same space the piece is housed in.

—Andrew Nunes via VICE Creators







*Barbara Ernst Prey*

## CHRONOLOGY

1957

Born, New York City. Mother Peggy Ernst artist and head of Design Department at Pratt Art Institute.

1974

Awarded a summer scholarship to the San Francisco Art Institute, CA  
Begins to paint watercolors

1975

Lives and paints in Bötersen, Germany  
Attends Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
Governor Hugh Carey of New York purchases oil painting

1977

Junior Year abroad, University of Munich, Germany

1975-1979

Graduates from Williams College with honors in Art History, mentored by Lane Faison. Graduate courses Clark Art Institute



1979

Metropolitan Museum of Art Summer Internship, New York, NY  
Fulbright Scholarship University of Würzburg, Germany Baroque Art and Architecture nominated by Williams College  
Travels and paints in Europe

1980

Travels and paints in Africa  
Personal Assistant Prince Albrecht Castell-Castell, Germany (until 1981)

1981

Castell Bank Exhibition, Germany  
Begins illustrations for the New Yorker, New York Times, Gourmet and Good Housekeeping Magazines among others  
Works in the Modern Painting Department at Sotheby's in New York, NY

1986

Masters Degree, Harvard University  
Teaching Assistant, Harvard University  
Marries Jeff Prey

1986-1987

Henry Luce Foundation Grant, Luce Scholar, Visiting Lecturer Western Christian Art, Tainan, Taiwan. Awarded annually to 18 future leaders  
Travels and paints in Asia

Exhibitions in Taipei, Taiwan

Starts to paint large-scale on site watercolors  
Studies Chinese painting with Master Chinese painter

1987

Returns to U.S. lives and works in Greenwich, CT  
First sold out New York City exhibition

1988

Moves to Prosperity, PA (until 1996)

1996

Moves to Oyster Bay, NY

2001

9/11 series

2002

First of four NASA commissioned paintings, *The International Space Station*. NASA commissions contemporary American artists to document space history



2003

Second NASA commissioned painting, *The Columbia Tribute* unveiled at the Columbia Anniversary Dinner, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington DC



Commissioned by United States President and Mrs. George Bush to paint the official White House Christmas Card

2004

Awarded the New York State Senate's "Women of Distinction Award" joining awardees Eleanor Roosevelt and Susan B. Anthony

Third NASA commissioned painting, *Shuttle Discovery Return to Flight*



Painting *The Diplomatic Reception Room, The White House* (2003) enters The White House permanent collection. One of two living female artists in the White House permanent collection

2006

Travels and paints in England

2007

Fourth NASA commissioned painting, the x-43. Travels to Edwards Airforce Base to paint the fastest aircraft in the world.

Travels and paints in Greece, Italy and Croatia

2008

An American View: Barbara Ernst Prey Exhibition, The Mona Bismarck Foundation Paris, France

Painting *Family Portrait* (2004) enters the permanent collection of The Brooklyn Museum

Painting *Wayfarers* (2002) enters the permanent collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum

2008-present

Appointed by the President and approved by the Senate to the National Council on the Arts, the advisory board to the National Endowment for the Arts. Members are appointed for their distinguished service or achievement in the arts.

2009

Travels and paints in France

2010

Honoree, The Raynham Hall Museum Gala

2011

Honoree, The Heckscher Museum of Art Gala  
Travels and paints in Switzerland and Italy

2012

Travels and paints in the Czech Republic and Germany

2013-present

Adjunct Faculty, Williams College, Williamstown, MA

2013

Painting *Hydrangeas* enters Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX  
Travels and paints in Turks & Caicos and Switzerland

2014

Travels and paints in Switzerland, Peru and Israel  
Returns to oil painting, continues watercolors and drawing

2015

Travels and paints in France and Germany  
Appointed to first ever Colonial Williamsburg Art Museums Board

2016

Commissioned by MASS MoCA to paint the world's largest watercolor for the opening of their new Building 6

Travels and paints in England, Ireland and Switzerland

2017

Unveiling of *MASS MoCA Building 6*, 8 feet by 15 feet, commissioned by the museum  
Travels and paints in Scotland and France

2018

Painting *Fibonacci's Workshop* enters the National Gallery of Art  
Travels and paints in Switzerland and France



2019

Travels and paints in Italy, Martinique, Greece

2020

*Gallantly Streaming* on exhibit at the United States Mission to the United Nations

2021

Works on Quarantine Series  
Travels and paints in Italy  
Returns to exhibit out east in the Hamptons (Quogue Gallery \ Art Fairs)

2022

Travels and paints in Montana, Idaho, Colorado and the Dominican Republic



## BARBARA ERNST PREY

Born 1957, New York City, NY

Lives and works in Oyster Bay, NY, Williamstown, MA, and Tenants Harbor, ME

### Education

1979 B.A., Williams College, Williamstown, MA

1986 M.Div., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

### Affiliations, Awards & Fellowships

2022 Presidential Appointed Member, National Council on the Arts (since 2008)

2022 Adjunct Faculty, Williams College, Williamstown, MA (since 2013)

2011 Honoree, Heckscher Museum Gala

2010 Honoree, Raynham Hall Museum Gala

2004 New York State Senate Women of Distinction Award

1986 Henry Luce Foundation Grant, Asia

1979 Fulbright Scholarship, Germany

1974 Grant Recipient, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

### Selected Exhibitions:

2022 *Impressionism: A World View*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY

MASS MoCA, Building 6, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2017-present)

The White House, Washington, D.C. (2003-present)

Kennedy Space Center, NASA Commission, Titusville, FL (2003-present)

Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX (2013-present)

Bush Presidential Library, Office of the First Lady, College Station, TX (2013-present)

National Endowment for the Arts, Office of the Chairman, Washington, D.C. (2011- present)

U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY (2017-present)

United States Art in Embassies Program, Bridgetown, Barbados, WI (2016-present)

2021 *Vanishing Point*, Quogue Gallery, Quogue, NY

2020 *Blue*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY

2019 *Energy: The Power of Art*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY

*Borrowed Light: Barbara Ernst Prey*, Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, MA

2018 *NASA 60<sup>th</sup> Art Exhibit*, Space Center, Houston, TX

*True Colors*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY

*Earth, Sea, Sky*, Wendell Gilley Museum, Southwest Harbor, ME

United States Art in Embassies Program, Baku, Azerbaijan (2015-2018)

2017 United Nations, New York, NY (2015-2017)

*Out Painting*, Old Westbury Gardens, Old Westbury, NY

2016 *OUT OF THIS WORLD. The Art and Artists of NASA*,

Vero Beach Museum, Vero Beach, FL

*ON SITE: Barbara Ernst Prey's Travelogues*, Barbara Prey Projects, Port Clyde, ME

*In Search of America*, Barbara Prey Projects, Port Clyde, ME

United States Art in Embassies Program, Hong Kong (2014-2016)

2015 *Re/Viewing the American Landscape*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

2014 *Barbara Prey: American Contemporary*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

2013 *East Meets West*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

United States Art in Embassies Program, Bamako, Mali (2010-2013)

2012 *NASA|Art: 50 Years of Exploration*, Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition (travels to twelve museums) (2008-2012)

*Nocturne IV*, Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY

*America's Artist: Forty Years of Painting*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

2011 *Open Spaces*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

2010 *Soliloquy: Meditations on the Environment*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME

- 2009 United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy Paris, France (2005-2009)  
United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy Madrid, Spain (2005-2009)  
*25 Years Exhibiting in Maine*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 2008 *An American View: Barbara Ernst Prey*, Mona Bismarck Foundation, Paris, France  
*Meditations on the Environment*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 2007 *Picturing Long Island*, The Heckscher Museum, Huntington, NY  
*Works on Water*, Water Street Gallery, Seamen's Church Institute, New York, NY (2006–2007)  
*From Port Clyde to Paris*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME  
United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy Vilnius, Lithuania (2007 – 2009)
- 2006 *From Seacoast to Outer Space*, The Williams Club, New York, NY  
United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia (2003–2006)  
United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy, Minsk, Belarus (2003-2006)  
United States Art in Embassies Program, U.S. Embassy Oslo, Norway (2002–2006)  
Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY (1999-2006)  
*30 Years of Painting Maine*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME  
National Arts Club, New York, NY (2003–2006)
- 2005 *Works on Water*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 2004 *Observations*, Harrison Gallery, Williamstown, MA  
*Conversations*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 2003 *An American Portrait*, Arts Club of Washington D.C.  
United States Art in Embassy Program, U.S. Embassy Prague (2002–2003)  
*The Valley Viewed: 150 Years of Artists Exploring Williamstown*, Harrison Gallery, Williamstown, MA  
*Painting Reviewed*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 2002 *Obsession*, Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY  
*American Art in Miniature*, Gilcrease Museum, OK (1998–2002)  
*Patriot*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- A Trace in the Mind: An Artists Response to 9/11*, Hutchins Gallery, C.W. Post College, Brookville, NY
- 2001 *Lightscares*, Jensen Fine Arts, New York, NY  
*Recent Watercolors*, Blue Water Fine Arts, Port Clyde, ME
- 1999 *Recent Watercolors*, Jensen Fine Arts, New York, NY  
Heckscher Museum, Huntington, NY
- 1998 *Express Yourself*, Portland Museum of Art, ME
- 1997 Museum of the Southwest, Midland, TX  
*Recent Acquisitions*, Farnsworth Museum of Art, Rockland, ME
- 1996 *Best in Show*, The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, PA
- 1995 The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
- 1993 Blair Art Museum, Hollidaysburg, PA  
Johnstown Art Museum, Johnstown, PA
- 1989 *Women's Art*, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA
- 1988 Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY
- 1986 Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- Selected Public Collections  
National Gallery of Art  
The White House  
The Brooklyn Museum  
The Smithsonian American Art Museum  
The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA)  
The Hall Art Foundation  
Mellon Hall, Harvard Business School  
The Henry Luce Foundation  
The Hood Museum, Dartmouth College  
The Farnsworth Art Museum  
Kennedy Space Center  
NASA Headquarters  
The National Endowment for the Arts  
The Taiwan Museum of Art  
The New-York Historical Society Museum  
Williams College  
The Williams College Museum of Art

#### Selected Private Collections

Mr. Herbert Allen  
Orlando Bloom  
Mr. and Mrs. Russell Byers, Jr  
Mr. Sam Bronfman  
President and Mrs. George W. Bush  
Princess Albrecht Castell  
Ambassador and Dr. Struan Coleman  
Mr. Chris Davis  
Mr. and Mrs. Boomer Esiason  
Mr. and Mrs. Allan Fulkerson  
Senator and Mrs. Judd Gregg  
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hanks  
Dr. Franklin Kelly  
Prince and Princess Johannes Lobkowitz  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard P. Mellon  
Mr. Peter O'Neill  
Ambassador and Mrs. John Ong  
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Phipps, Jr.  
Ambassador and Mrs. Mitchell Reiss  
Prince and Princess Michael Salm  
Ambassador and Mrs. Craig Stapleton  
Dr. and Mrs. James Watson  
Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Webb

#### Selected Commissions

MASS MoCA Commission – 2017  
NASA Commission – 2004 Discovery Shuttle Return to Flight  
NASA Commission – 2007 The x-43  
NASA Commission – 2004 Columbia Tribute  
White House Christmas Card, 2003  
NASA Commission – 2003 International Space Station

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Barbara's painting will be monumental by any standard, but for a watercolor on paper – perhaps the most unforgiving combination of any painterly media – the undertaking is truly breathtaking.

MASS MoCA on Barbara Prey's commission  
for the Museum

Her attention to details recalls Vermeer...it's a painter's job to notice, and to draw out the nuance and light in what the rest of us ignore. Prey has that eye and hand...what she makes touches the divine and has staying power.

The Boston Globe

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cover: *Trapeze Dance* detail, 2022, Watercolor on paper,  
30 x 41½ inches



Barbara Prey's paintings are in the collections of The National Gallery of Art, The Brooklyn Museum, The Smithsonian American Art Museum and The White House, where she is one of two living female American artists represented. Commissioned by NASA four times, she was recently commissioned by MASS MoCA to paint the largest watercolor in the world. She is a Presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts, advisory board to the National Endowment for the Arts.