

Part 21 Horology *in* Art

By Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

At the Roger Smith Food Tech Conference from April 3-5, 2014, in New York City, I presented a talk entitled “Clockwork in the Kitchen.” I discussed the arrival and importance of timekeepers and related geared machines in culinary history from eighteenth-century roasting jacks to twenty-first-century digital timers. I am sorry that I did not yet know of realist artist Eric Green when I assembled the images that accompanied my lecture.

Born in 1956, Green has painted since his teen years, and his work is in museums and private collections. *Maiden* is one of ten recent

“Time Dyptychs” drawings of the inside of the Victorian home in Belfast, ME, where Green lives and works. While some of his other artwork pairs also include clocks, which the artist has collected and restored, these kitchen scenes are my favorites.

His dyptych project consumed 19 months, with no days off. Each artwork is laboriously rendered in grisaille or graphite underdrawing with colored pencil overlays that cannot be erased, so each stroke must be exactly right. His “Dyptych” format, familiar from older Japanese prints, has time as the underlying theme. They each represent, at two different times and with slight variations, rooms he has restored and decorated. He hopes this will prompt us not only to consider our surroundings and our relationship with them over our life spans, but also to sharpen our “enlightened observations” and “conscious gaze.”

Maiden also provides a first opportunity in these articles to address plug-in electric clocks. These certainly are an important part of horology’s story in the twentieth century, although now superseded by battery-powered quartz clocks. Thanks to photographs and descriptions from the artist, I was able to identify the round one above the stove as a Telechron Minitmaster. According to page



Maiden by Eric Green. COURTESY OF DOWLING WALSH GALLERY.

97 of Jim Linz’s book *Electrifying Time*, 232,511 of this model 2H17, list price \$7.95, were sold during its production years 1946-1951. The adjacent octagonal model appears to be a version of the 1929 “Larina” shown on page 110 of Tran Duy Ly’s New Haven book. The stove, with a clock/timer in its control panel, is a 1950 Westinghouse top-of-the-line Commander model, which Green also has restored to peak performance.

Like many of the paintings I have featured in these articles, Green’s artwork addresses human mortality and uses clocks as one of its visual symbols. The time shown on the clocks is unimportant; the time we have left to live is the point.

About the Author

Bob Frishman has repaired, restored, collected, sold, and researched antique timekeepers since 1980. His business, Bell-Time Clocks, is based in Andover, MA. He lectures regularly about the history, science, and culture of mechanical timekeeping and has authored many articles for the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*. He can be reached via www.bell-time.com. He recently received an NAWCC Fellow award and is chair of the Ward Francillon Time Symposium Committee.