

# Adventurous approach takes art professor to painter's paradise

Wherever he goes, **Neill Slaughter** always takes along his sketchbook, art supplies, and camera. The noted painter and professor of art at Southampton College of Long Island University says that his approach to art and teaching has been shaped by what he describes as "my life as an explorer."



"I tell my students to travel as much as they possibly can," he says, "because it will broaden your cultural and aesthetic horizons."

His extensive travels have inspired and influenced what he paints, much of which involves social commentary. His artwork often includes images of poverty and waste alongside those of excessive consumerism. In "Graveyard," three elephants marching through a shallow pond are threatened by an encroaching junkyard. Another painting, "Conspicuous Consumption," juxtaposes a hippopotamus with a Cadillac. In "Waterhole," American sunbathers in designer swimsuits are contrasted with impoverished, nude African villagers sharing a waterhole with animals.

In a Manhattan apartment,

where Slaughter spends some weekends, he recounted his adventures at the Edinburgh Arts Festival, where he was artist-in-residence at a mountain villa in Italy, and in India, where he traveled on a Fulbright grant.

"One year I taught art history and studio courses at Alnwick Castle in England, which was used in the

Harry Potter films and is surrounded by thousand-year-old crenellated stone walls," says Slaughter, MFA'78. "I have found, however, that the most exotic painter's paradise, which is far from fantasy, is India."

Slaughter, 52, grew up in Atlanta. His father taught civil engineering at Georgia Tech, and his artist grandmother, with a degree from Cornell University, encouraged him to take drawing lessons. On a camping trip during the summer between his freshman and sophomore years at the University of Georgia, Slaughter witnessed the death of a friend in a waterfall accident. Slaughter almost died trying to save him.

"This tragedy changed my life," he says. "I took time off to mourn and figure out what I wanted to do with my life. I spent the next several months traveling

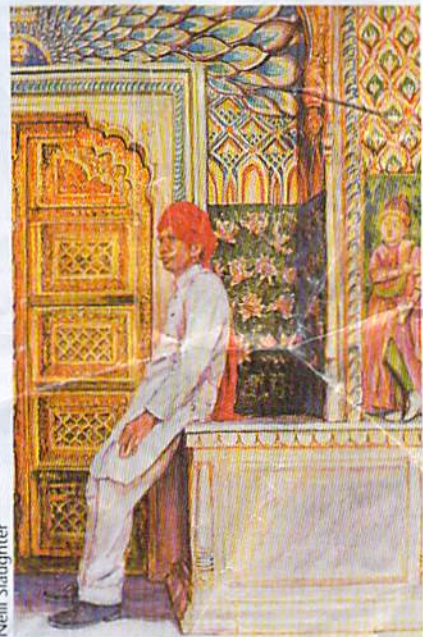
**ARTFUL INSIGHT** — Neill Slaughter's "Images of India" series celebrated 50 years of India's republic.

throughout Europe, touring museums. When I returned, I was ready to focus on art."

After completing his bachelor's degree, he pursued his master's at IU, studying with professors Robert Barnes and **James McGarrell**, BA'53. As figurative artists, both professors reinforced his love of narrative figurative painting.

Before moving to Southampton in 1993, Slaughter taught at universities in Philadelphia, Southern California, Minnesota, and England. In California, he developed a series of paintings dealing with "the car-crazy culture and highway madness that dominates people's lives." Amati, a division of Mazda, used Slaughter's work to kick off an exhibition series in its new corporate headquarters in Irvine, Calif., and later the work was exhibited in Los Angeles.

After 25 years of teaching, Slaughter is particularly proud of receiving this year's Newton Award for Excellence in Teaching



Neill Slaughter

at Southampton College. The award reflects his teaching philosophy: to nurture and inspire, as well as to provide historic and aesthetic insight. He says these are the same qualities that Barnes and McGarrell instilled in him. One student wrote: "I admire Neill's tireless patience, dedication, and energy. I don't recall him ever missing a day of class — not even once."

— **Bill Glovin**

*Glovin is senior editor at Rutgers Magazine. He lives in Nutley, N.J.*