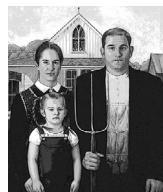


Art Adventure | Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski

Bridges as art

One of the most successful Steeple Gallery artists is Roland Kulla.

His powerful imagery is recognized both locally, regionally, and nationally. He has been featured at the Steeple Gallery since it opened.

But Kulla's journey to an art career was anything but direct.

He spent 10 years in the seminary before making a lateral career move into social work. For more than 30 years he worked as a caseworker, administrator, researcher, teacher and consultant.

During this entire time, however, he constantly was part of artistic pursuits. He was a choral singer for 10 years in the symphony, opera, and musical comedy, and at the same time designed sets and

costumes.

His interest in architecture resulted in award-winning restorations of an 1890 Victorian house and his 1907 apartment in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood. Kulla's home was featured in a five-page colored spread titled "Paradise Regained" in the December 2003 issue of Chicago Home.

In college he used watercolors as his principal medium. In 1989 he switched to oil painting. Since 1996 his primary painting medium is acrylics.

In the mid 1990s a fellow artist asked him why he wasn't exhibiting. The light bulb turned on, and he actively began pursuing an artistic career.

Up until that time he had great difficulty in parting with his creations. By 2002, the shift to painting was full time.



One of the most widely read and respected art books/magazines, *New American Paintings*, showcased Kulla's bridges in Volume 9, Number 4, dated September 2004. Several from the Webster series are featured in the book.

In 2007, Kulla's bridges were also featured in the June issue of *Art Collector* magazine.

Several months ago, Maureen Mullarkey, art critic for the *New York Sun*, wrote "...He is interested solely in the structural dynamism of bridge forms and the functional splendor inherent in their components: trusses,



bolts, girders, railings, and cables. His hard-edged paint handling is austere and rigorous as his subject. Mr. Kulla abstracts structural elements from their context and works on a scale that highlights the monumentality of forms..."

Kulla's fascination with the "built" environment has kept him focused on the engineering ingenuity that created many of Chicago's bridges. Structural elements are abstracted from their context and painted with a hard-edged realism on a scale that highlights the sculptural beauty.

The bridges become a symbolic passage to new and old experiences. Nuts and bolts, both common and mundane elements, transform steel into incredible structures; these same nuts and bolts transform Kulla's paintings into riveting works of art.

To see several of Roland Kulla's paintings visit The Steeple Gallery in St. John.

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