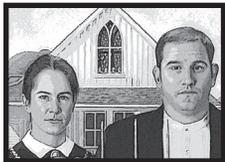


Taking up painting 'one of the best decisions I've ever made'



SAM DALKILIC-MIESTOWSKI

Art adventure

Jim and Pat Koeling have been loyal Steeple Gallery art collectors for a number of years. Several years ago, they introduced me to their son, Andrew Koeling, who is a Ball State University graduate and a forensic scientist.

Andrew's art collector parents wanted to surprise him for Christmas with an art purchase. Little did Andrew Koeling know, his first art acquisition would unleash art addiction for life:

"I was introduced to the Steeple Gallery by my parents. When I was first touring the gallery, I was drawn to this wide, serene scene painted by Roland Kulla, and really didn't want to leave it, but I like to think about art pieces for a while before I might purchase them (to me, I want more than simple aesthetics — I have to connect with the work in some way).

"I told my father later on that I couldn't get that painting out of my head, and when I later went to check to see if it was still available for sale, I was told that it had been sold and I was heartbroken.

"A month or so later, my parents surprised me with the piece at Christmas — to date, it remains my most treasured Christmas gift I have ever received.

"The piece currently hangs in my living room in a place that can be seen from the entire main area of the home, and it is one of the last things I see whenever I leave.

"I have always been a big proponent of art that inspires you to feel a certain way, and the piece immediately identifies with me in a myriad of ways. Whenever I see that piece, it immediately makes me feel peaceful and it reminds me that no matter what happens during the day, however hectic

life might be, the state of mind I choose to carry is just as important as the actions I might take.

"I always find it amazing when art can take a hold of you like that and feel like it becomes a part of you.

"For the past five years, I've worked as a forensic scientist, examining crime scene evidence for potential sources of DNA and developing DNA profiles.

"I love what I do for my career, but it comes with a cost — forensic science is extremely regimented out of necessity. Whenever someone is working within the bounds of laws and regulations, life in many ways becomes tied to a variety of restrictions and mindsets and those constraints can be overbearing.

"In order to allow myself to disconnect outside of work, I decided to pick up a paint brush and allow my mind to just let go of any sort of preconceptions and create. Doing so was probably one of the best decisions I have ever made.

"Now, I am not only someone who appreciates art, but I am someone who can contribute to more than just the factual facets of life — through art, I can make things that can inspire, cause contemplation, or administer to the emotions of an observer.

"Although I am untrained as an artist, I feel that it gives me more freedom to try things that others may have not done. I hope to take my general understanding of aesthetics and usage of space to create something new and I most commonly identify with roots in gestural abstractionism, although I am attempting to update it through the usage of atypical mediums.

"I prefer the art I create to initially be more controlled and only manipulated via external forces or the natural behavior of the medium that I choose to use.

"For example, I utilize a variety of epoxies to create a sense of depth between layers of paint, which causes any painting I make to appear dramatically different depending on the angle it is viewed from and the lighting in the room it is displayed.

"Additionally, paint or ink might flow or bleed as the epoxy dries, causing the work to take on a mind of its own. It is my own way of making something with

a semblance of control and then letting it all go at the same time.

Before I begin any work, I try to encompass a specific feeling or mood and incorporate it into the process. I don't believe in painting particular objects but instead try to encompass specific emotions in an attempt to create a visual representation of how I feel or think at that particular moment.

"In many cases, I have written a poem that helps me stay in a certain mindset while I am painting. When I am finally done, I typically write the poem on the back side of the canvas, almost as it is the answer I am meant to be drawn to when I look at the completed work.

"However, when other people view art I create, I want to know how it makes them feel or think. That is really the beauty of abstractionism — it can mean different things to different people who view it.

"However, when an observer looks at my work and is made to feel the same way I did when creating it, it instantly makes me feel more connected to them — but I don't want observers to think that art has some sort of 'right' or 'wrong' answer. I firmly believe that what really matters when observing any piece of art is how it ultimately makes you feel, how it relates to you, and what it awakens within you that may have been previously overlooked."

Currently Andrew Koeling serves as an officer on the Southport Artistry Committee, an art organization based on the south side of Indianapolis, and has been recently elected as the public relations officer.

He has won several awards for his art and continues to be inspired through all aspects of art, by collecting, painting, exhibiting, and reading about art.

To view more of his works visit sites.google.com/site/andrewkoeling/ you may contact him also knighledge@hotmail.com or contact Andrew Koeling directly at (765) 748-4605.

I asked Andrew what his philosophy of life is. He said: "The best way to predict the future is to create it."



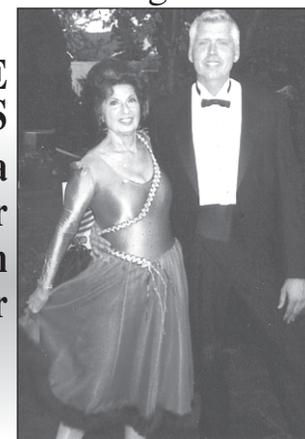
Andrew Koeling with his painting "Future Tense," a 36- by 36-inch acrylic, ink and epoxy on canvas. | PHOTO PROVIDED

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