

Steve Kenny Interview – Historic Kenwood Artist Enclave

By Brian Lynch

This is another in a series of interviews with Historic Kenwood artists as part of highlighting our “Neighborhood of the Arts” and our soon to be Artist Enclave.

When did you start painting?

I was constantly drawing as a child, but didn’t start working seriously with brushes and paint until my last year in high school.



Why did you start?

There are no other artists in my family, but I grew up believing that hands and minds are very powerful tools. I was encouraged when I showed artistic talent as a child and it never occurred to me that I couldn’t master the techniques required to be an artist. Also, there has always been an unstoppable desire to express myself through drawing and painting. Without that I may have chosen some other manual occupation.



How has your work developed through the years?

I have always had a facility for realism but that in itself was never completely satisfying. I could never simply copy what I saw and leave it at that. Over the years there has been a growing desire to embellish reality with elements from my imagination --- to create my own reality.

What would you call your style?

Neo-surrealism, magic realism, and imaginary realism are some of the popular terms in use today for what I do. I'm happy to let others label my style. When people ask me to describe my paintings, I hand them my card which has a painting printed on the back. That's as good as a thousand words and satisfies their curiosity much better than I can verbally.



What is your "method"?

I assemble compositions for my paintings on the computer using scanned sketches. That way I can easily arrange the various elements. Once that's complete, I project the final sketch onto my canvas and start adding color. I've always worked in oil. The feel of the paint, intensity of color, and technical tradition all combine to make it an irresistible medium.



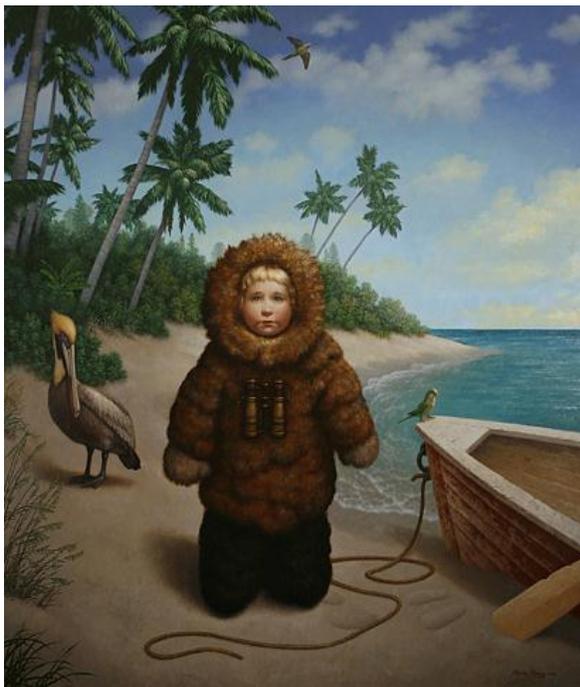
Did you ever feel like giving up?

Never. Painting is (and always has been) a way of life for me. I'll never stop. It is an amazing psychological and spiritual journey that presents constant challenges and discoveries. There certainly are highs and lows, but experience has shown me that the lows are always temporary and an opportunity to learn. There's a constant ebb and flow that mirrors the reality of living.



What's the best thing about being an artist?

The best thing is having the freedom and ability to create something new and beautiful each day.



What's the worst thing about being an artist?

I don't know if there is a "worst" aspect to being an artist. But with artistic freedom comes a lot of responsibility. I feel a debt to all the great artists of the past. The public deserves the very best that I can produce. The hardest part is to be honest with myself and true to my ideals. I struggle to bring all that I can to my work and make meaningful creative contributions. As long as that happens, my work flows smoothly and I get the most satisfaction from it.



How do you feel when people interpret your artwork differently?

I welcome viewers to bring their own interpretations to my paintings. I learned very early that it's fruitless to expect everyone to understand what I'm expressing. The truth is that I often don't know exactly what my paintings mean. That's the essence of surrealism. To a great degree I allow my unconscious to inspire and guide me. Hearing other people's interpretations can broaden my understanding of my own process.



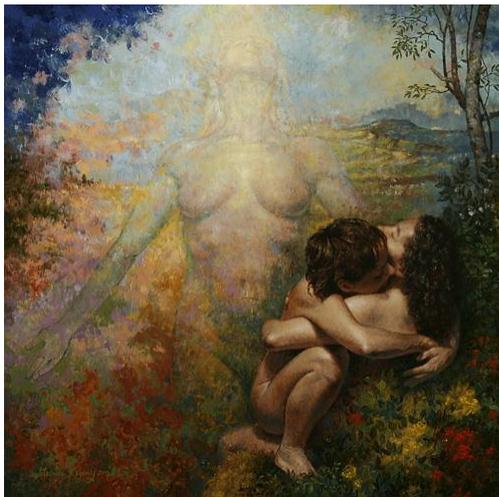
Who is your favorite artist?

There are so many! A short list would include Rembrandt, Vermeer, Gustav Moreau, Antonio Lopez Garcia, William Blake, Goya, Dali, Francis Bacon, Bosch, etc, etc.



What advice do you have for aspiring artists?

Always study art history --- there is an endless amount of inspiration to explore. Keep abreast of what's happening in contemporary art. Reach out to fellow artists and compare notes. Take every opportunity to visit galleries and museums to see art in person. Follow your muse and create art according to what your heart dictates.



What else would you like to say?

I'm truly blessed to be able to make my living through my art and I hope I can continue to the day I die.

For more information about Steven Kenny, please visit his website at: www.stevenkenny.com