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Truro artist makes architectural diversion

By Melora B. North

BANNER STAFF

He didn't grow up with oil paint running through his veins, nor did he aspire to become a great artist as a youth in Minneapolis. For Marc Kundmann the evolution from a graphic artist to an accomplished painter did not even begin until he moved to Truro in 1998, where he admits he fell in love with the hypnotic light just like so many artists before him.

"I know it sounds like a cliché," he says. "But when I moved to the Outer Cape I knew I had to paint. I had dabbled in high school and knew I loved painting but I had never had any formal training. I'd sit outside and paint stuff around the house. Painter friends would advise me on paint, brushes, canvases, technique. I'd re-create a picture to learn to paint."

Well, his self-instruction and the tips he learned from his buddies paid off. But they weren't the only ones to help get Kundmann off the ground. He has studied with Jim Peters.

"Studying with Jim was eye-opening, it was liberating, a new freedom," says Kundmann. "I

"I used to paint in oils but fussed and fussed," Kundmann says. "With wax you can't fuss so much, you have to be focused."

took classes at the Provincetown High School annex. He taught me that you can adjust your work — if you paint something and don't like it you can paint over it. He said if you paint something once you can paint it again, the ghost remains. He said to stop worrying about creating life. I don't now, I paint what's in my head," he says, laughing.

Originally Kundmann painted landscapes in oil, then veered off into doing figurative works, finally landing where he is now as the creator of imaginative buildings that bounce out at the viewer with their dense texture and creative colors. And, true to his evolution, he is currently exploring

the world of encaustics, one of the oldest art forms.

"I used to paint in oils but fussed and fussed," he says. "With wax you can't fuss so much, you have to be focused."

"I start with charcoal on birch panels and sometimes use pastels to get the basis of the work," he says. "I often use the wood grain to guide me, then randomly draw lines. When I start seeing the composition I fill in color areas and build up the bones of the painting and fill in the big areas of black. I scratch through on the final work to get back to the black. When I feel the composition is coming together I apply the color wax on top with wide Japanese hake brushes."

Because the wax cools so quickly, Kundmann keeps the colored wax warm in cat and dog food containers resting on a hot griddle.

"I slap on the wax," he says. "Each layer has to be melted and fused with the layer beneath it to blend the colors. Sometimes I use a hot air gun or propane torch. I can scrape and smooth the piece with a palette knife. To add color on top I use oil sticks."

Kundmann's signature pieces, now hanging at the Addison Gallery in Orleans, are his buildings that are frequently reminiscent of local structures, some of which depict cloudy images of landmark Provincetown buildings, most of which have his lighthouse logo imprinted somewhere in the work, often hidden and remote.

"My houses are the vernacular of the Outer Cape's — they are geometric," he says. "There are phone poles, and usually a lighthouse somewhere in there. The light of the painting is sometimes the smallest but it can be the most important." As is color and the connection a viewer makes with the work.

"I'm very concerned about the composition and the emotional quality of color," he says. "The painting has to make some sort of sense. I want each person to bring their own relationship to



PHOTO MELORA B. NORTH

Truro artist Marc Kundmann exhibits at the Addison Gallery in Orleans.



"Almost Isolation," encaustic wax and oil stick on birch panel by Marc Kundmann.

the painting. I hope people become a third or fourth character in the work. I want them to put themselves in it."

A graphic artist for several years, Kundmann fell in love with painting as soon as he got acquainted with the brush 11 years ago. It was the tactile relationship that got his attention and probably won't lose it any time soon.

"I spent so many years in front of the computer. Nothing had any permanence, I couldn't touch it," he says. "I like the idea that you can move things around and make something permanent. It's a relief from sitting at the computer." That in mind, Kundmann designates three days a week to painting in his studio at home near the National Seashore where

he takes great pleasure walking his two mixed breed dogs. During the winter months he has use of a studio at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, where he is the communications coordinator as well as the summer program assistant.

Kundmann has a fine arts degree in graphic design from the University of Illinois, Urbana, Champagne, where he also studied photography. A man with many interests, he enjoys running, body surfing, reading memoirs, hiking and entertaining. When not working or painting he roams about Mexico where he has taken an interest in studying the symbolism of the art. One

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With sweeping strokes and a barren landscape, artist Marc Kundmann brings the viewer into the landscape.

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day he hopes to adopt symbolism into his own work. In the meantime, unconsciously, he may have already done so with his lighthouses.

He can be found also at Willy's Gym a few days a week where he teaches three

spinning classes. Like a rolling stone he just keeps moving and, in the not too far future, he may just roll into another incarnation with his work. Keep your eyes peeled because, as he confides, "I try to keep moving forward. I'm interested in exploring more natural, organic work." mnorth@provincetownbanner.com