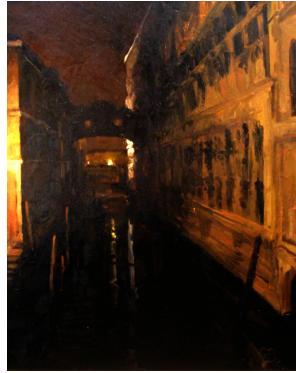


Gallery MAR exhibits two renegade oil painters

Tatom and Bodine waited to pick up the brush

Scott Iwasaki, Of the Park Record

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Artists George Bodine and Kirk Tatom followed a long and winding road to becoming oil painters in the late 1990s.

Bodine was an oil field worker, a police officer, a miner, a cab driver and airline pilot, Tatom was a carver and sculptor.

Both had their epiphanies by being at the right place at the right time.

Tatom was delivering his sculptures to a gallery in Scottsdale, Ariz., when he wandered across the streets to another gallery to see what they had to offer.

"I saw the paintings of (Utah-based landscape artist) Michael Workman and it struck me as, 'Wow, if I could paint like that, I would,'" Tatom told The Park Record during an interview from his home in Los Osos, Calif. "I had never given any thought to painting landscapes prior to that."

Although Tatom switched artistic disciplines mid-career, he followed the more traditional route by attending the University of Utah from 1968 to 1972 to begin his training. After years of citing stones and bronze, he welcomed a lighter, less physical change.

"Carving stone is not unlike being a coalminer," he said. "I had so much safety equipment on, I looked like Darth Vader. It's not like what most people picture the artist holding the little chisel and smacking it with a hammer. You don't get anything done that way. I was working with big tools, and it was noisy and dirty. So I was glad to lay down all of that and put it away."

Tatom honed his oil-painting skills in the evenings, he said.

"I only had a small body of work that was OK and was going to get it framed," he said. "While I was at the framers, a gallery owner spotted my work and asked me to 'show' with him. From there it took off. I put down the chisel and held fast to the paintbrush."

Tatom likes oils because there is room to correct mistakes, he said.

"Oil doesn't lock itself in place like acrylic does," he said. "Early on I would paint one layer and let that dry and then come back to it and paint over it. So that way I had half a chance to wipe it off if I didn't do something right. I just kept layering things up and worked eight to 10 paintings at a time."

Bodine, on the other hand, has loved art from an early age, but it wasn't until 1998 that he decided to pursue it for a living.

"I was in Idaho and ran into a cowboy artist who was giving a live demonstration," Bodine said during a separate phone interview from his home in Northern Kentucky. "He used graphite pencil and I was fascinated by what he was doing. I started talking to him and the next thing I knew he was showing me his work at his home.

"At that moment I realized there was a chance to do art and be successful."

Unlike Tatom, Bodine is a self-taught painter. He has never had an art class in his life, but once he decided to paint, he spent three years reading anything he could about art.

"I read about everything from making pigments, to prepping canvases to design theory," he said. "I also visited every art museum I could. In those three years, I probably visited more than 30 to 40 major museums across the country."

Bodine's museum ritual included walk around and paying attention to the type of art that awed him.

"I could walk through an entire section of art would just keep walking because nothing spoke to me," he said. "But there were some sections that I could not get out of. And, at times, I would stand in front of one painting for 30 to 45 minutes."

Both artists are looking forward to their showings during the "Here and Abroad" exhibit at Gallery MAR, beginning Dec. 18.

"I have known Maren from when she was just starting her gallery," Tatom said. "I first met her at the Selby Fleetwood Gallery in Santa Fe, N.M, when she was on her first scouting trip. She's a wonderful person and knows what she's doing."

Bodine concurs.

"I had talked to her numerous times when she was working as a manager at another gallery," he said. "She really understands art, and when I found out she was opening her own gallery, I approached her. I was happy she thought my work had a place in her gallery."

"Travel and Abroad," an exhibit which will feature oil paintings from George Bodine and Kirk Tatom, will open Saturday, Dec. 18, at the Gallery MAR, 580 Main Street, with a reception for the artists at 6 p.m. The exhibit will be displayed until Jan. 15, 2011.