

Art

IFCC Gallery presents art by Eastern Europeans



CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (IFCC) Gallery, located at 5340 N. Interstate is presenting two exhibitions by Eva and Rishard Stepkowski and Steve Scardina throughout the month of September. The exhibit by the Stepkowskis' is called "Pultusk in Oregon" and Steve Scardina's is entitled "Vistas."

Eva and Rishard Stepkowski are Polish-born painters now living and working in Portland. Though the couple both share a disciplined, formal art background, they have each developed their own highly personal styles. Eva Stepkowski's romantic expressionism takes root in works such as "The Camellia" (oil on canvas, 31" x 47") which reflects the inspiration of Oregon's natural beauty.

"I would like for my paintings, no matter what their subject, to communicate a feeling of the ever-present beauty and mystery of the world around me," states Eva Stepkowski. She holds an MFA in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. In 1999 her work was shown in Norm Thompson's 50th Anniversary Northwest Art invitational.

Rishard Stepkowski's goal is to create a "unique atmosphere" for his oil paintings. His figurative and landscape subjects are portrayed by using colors sparingly with basic contrasts in order to evoke a moody, somber quality. "I want things which come out of my imagination to become real and tangible in my paintings," states the artist.

Though Rishard Stepkowski did not paint for

several years following his involvement in the Solidarity Movement in Poland, since moving to Portland his old love of the art has been revived. He has worked successfully in a variety of mediums including ceramics, furniture making, and interior design. Both Rishard and Eva have exhibited extensively throughout Poland during the 1970's and 80's.

Photographer Steve Scardina is drawn to the cities of Eastern Europe: Prague, Budapest, Krakow, and others. His distinct black and white photography evokes a sense of "timeless history" through the richness of architectural details and vistas.

Much of Scardina's inspiration is derived from pictorial photographers Alvin Langdon Coburn and Clarence Hudson White's poetic shapings of shadow and light.

According to Scardina, "In my explorations, I search for ways to capture the depth of a situation." He continues, "I find ways to create images that serve as an invitation to the viewer by shooting down corridors or through archways to focus on what is beyond, to create a sense of moving from one place to another. The many bridges that appear in my work are yet another symbol of the connectedness of two places, and our ability to move from one world to another."

A native of Chicago, Scardina spent many years working there and in Seattle as a photographer. For the past five years, he has been working as an artist and commercial photographer in Portland. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of

Chicago and the American Academy of Art in Chicago. Past exhibitions of his work have been held at the Brian Marki Gallery, the Buckley Center Gallery at the University of Portland, and the Benham Gallery in Seattle.

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center is a community-based performing and visual arts center with an emphasis on multicultural issues and perspectives. The organization is committed to creating an environment in which people of every ethnic/cultural background come together as artists and audience to explore, preserve and celebrate their diversity. For more information, call 503/823-4322.

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