

Life as art



"Serial," a painting by Steve Scheuring of Amity Township, is based on a question from his son, Cole, in background, about the meaning of serial killer. The boy had confused serial with cereal.

COURTESY OF STEVE SCHEURING

A SENSE OF CHILDHOOD WONDER PERMEATES THE PAINTINGS OF STEVE SCHEURING OF AMITY TOWNSHIP.

BY RON DEVLIN
READING EAGLE

SOME YEARS ago, Cole Scheuring asked his father, Steve, to explain the term serial killer he'd heard on television.

Cole thought a serial killer had something to do with cereal, a la breakfast.

Steve explained serial as best he could to a youngster.

For Steve, the father-son exchange was more than a vocabulary lesson.

It was a turning point. "I view it as innocence lost," recalled Steve, 47, an Amity Township artist. "My son was getting older."

As artists are prone to, Steve marked the occasion with a painting.

In it, Cole is in the background, contemplating three varieties of Cap'n Crunch and a Kellogg's OJ's

that are surrounded by toys.

That sense of childhood wonder permeates Steve's paintings, amalgams of images from a distant past.

The lighthouse at Cape May, N.J., a sandwich vendor in New York City and boardwalk scenes from the Jersey shore find a kind of immortality in his paintings.

"I love Yum Yum's Ice Cream in Sea Isle City," he confessed. "And the White House sub

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"A Pile of Soldiers," a painting of toy soldiers by Steve Scheuring of Amity Township. COURTESY OF STEVE SCHEURING

Steve Scheuring's art details a sense of childhood wonder

[From D1 >>>] shop in Atlantic City."

The stuff of ordinary life, in Steve's paintings, is raised to the level of art.

In "Insantaty," emphasis on the "santa" in the middle of the title, stoic nutcrackers, Christmas cookies and the Grinch are aglow in Christmas tree lights.

Christmas cards in the painting are replicas of photos of Steve's children — Cole, Emily and Sarah. A Polaroid near the bottom of the painting is of Steve, his brother Todd and sister Lisa — he's the one blowing up a balloon — in Christmas past.

"I remember my parents taking that photo like it was yesterday," he said. "Many of the items in this painting have strong personal meaning for me — painting this one sparked many fond memories."

In September, "Insantaty" earned a still-life award at the Allied Artists of America 102nd annual exhibition in New York City.

Puzzle art

Shopping at Michael's craft store, Steve accidentally came upon the jigsaw puzzle display.

"Hmm," he thought. "Some of my paintings might make good jigsaws."

He sent queries to four companies that manufacture and market puzzles.

The result: Cobble Hill Puzzle Co. is marketing a jigsaw based on Steve's painting "Crash" in time for the Christmas season. The 500-piece puzzle is available at Cobble Hill's website.

"Crash," a 19-by-47-inch painting of a pileup of Hot Wheels toy race cars, resembles a car lover's dream junkyard more than a traffic accident on the Schuylkill Expressway.

The trained eye of a car enthusiast would immediately spot the No. 43 of legendary NASCAR driver Richard Petty. The chopped 1950 Mercury custom and the '60s vintage Corvette ring nostalgic to aging hot-rodders. And the red Ferrari is bound to get the Formula 1 crowd's juices flowing.

"Crash" is the third in a series of paintings featuring Hot Wheels cars.

"Jam" and "Gridlock" feature more orderly assemblages of model cars. "Gridlock" is a finalist in *The Artist's Magazine's* 32nd annual competition, which is featured in the

magazine's December issue.

Steve composed the basis of the paintings by spreading out Hot Wheels on his dining room table. He juxtaposes colors and places the cars at angles to create an image pleasing to the eye.

"Composing the still life," he said, "is as much a creative thing as the actual painting itself."

Of a magazine and "Conan the Barbarian"

When he was growing up in Greenfields, a development near Reading Regional Airport, Steve's uncle Joe Lorah lent him copies of *MAD* magazine.

In *MAD* and "Conan the Barbarian," illustrated by Frank Frazetta, the budding artist found inspiration that would emerge in art classes at Schuylkill Valley High School, where he graduated in 1986.

Steve pursued art in college, but pretty much gave up painting after graduating from Penn State University with a degree in marketing. He also holds an MBA from Lehigh University.

Pursuing a career in busi-

ness, he's a vice president at Airgas in Berwin, Chester County.

In 2002, after relocating to Amity Township, Steve rekindled his artistic juices.

"I had all these walls to fill," he said of the family's spacious suburban home.

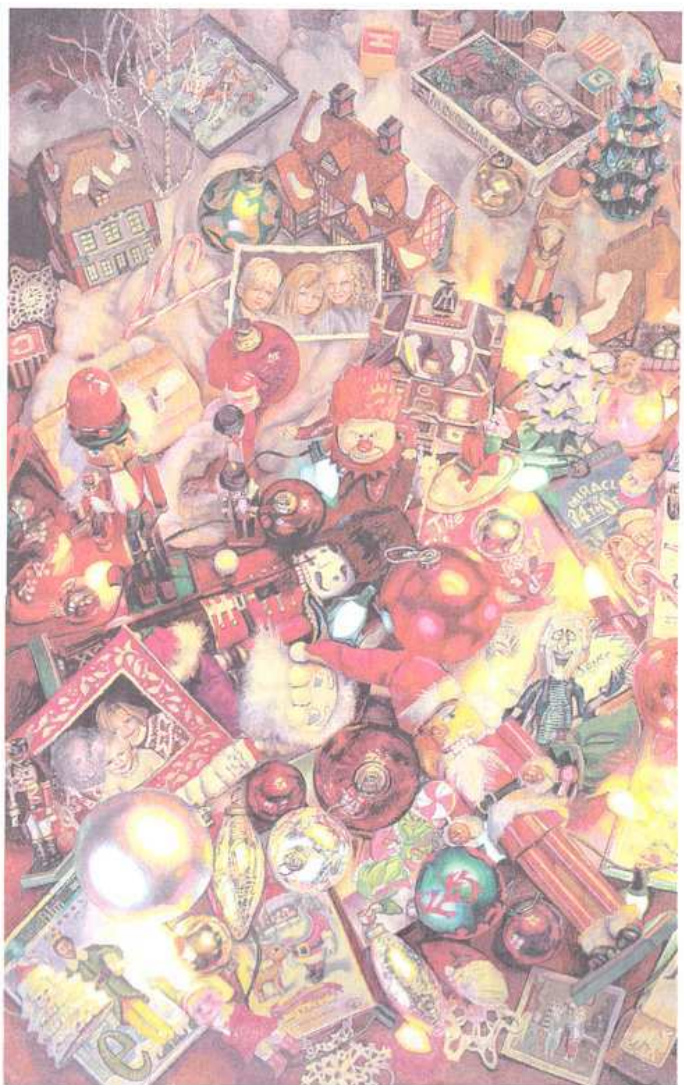
Well, a 2003 trip to Paris might have had a little to do with it as well.

Working from a "studio" in the corner of his garage, Steve's more than filled the walls. Increasingly, his work has garnered attention in regional and national art circles.

"Crash," for example, was positioned next to a Monet in an exhibition at the Allentown Art Museum. "Chinatown, NYC" has been named a finalist in the Landscape category at *The Artist's Magazine* competition.

Steve's attraction to Frazetta, whose interpretation of Conan redefined the sword and sorcery genre, surfaced in a recent painting entitled "A Pile of Soldiers."

"I've included comic books with covers painted by Frank Frazetta, my childhood idol and early art inspiration," Steve



"Insantaty," emphasis on the "santa" in the middle of the title, by Steve Scheuring, earned a still-life award in the Allied Artists of America 102nd annual exhibition in New York City. COURTESY OF STEVE SCHEURING

said. "In fact, the cover of a grimacing soldier shooting a gun while holding a wounded comrade is a Frank Frazetta painting I copied when I was in high school."

Painting soldiers brought back memories of Uncle Joe's *MAD* magazines and hours spent copying Frazetta drawings as an 11-year-old in the family rec room. So intense was his concentration, his mom would often say, "The

house could be burning and you wouldn't even know it."

In "Piles of Soldiers," Steve couldn't resist posing little green army men like the ones he and his brother played with as kids.

"I hope," he said, "people will experience similar nostalgic feelings to what I had when viewing this painting."

Ode to a familiar place

Question: What do Read-

ing High football great Lenny Moore, renowned Kutztown artist Keith Haring and novelist John Updike have in common with "dippy" eggs, scrapie and Old Reading Beer?

Answer: They're all in a new painting by Steve Scheuring.

He calls it, simply, "Berks County."

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Steve Scheuring with "Crash," a painting of his that will be turned into a puzzle.