

ROYCROFTERS-AT-LARGE ASSOCIATION CHRONICLE

:: OUR MISSION ::

The Roycrofters-At-Large Association was formed over 30 years ago by a group of East Auroran's that included several descendants of the original Roycrofters, including Elbert Hubbard's granddaughter. The Roycrofters-At-Large Association, Inc. has been entrusted with educating, fostering and inspiring through the continual evolution of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

■ WINTER 2017 ■

Julie Leidel's artistic voice is heard loud and clear from Colorado's mountaintops

By Joe Kirchmyer

Julie Leidel is relatively new to the Roycroft family, becoming a Roycroft Renaissance Artisan just last year. Exposed to art at an early age, today she doesn't have to look very far for inspiration, with the natural beauty of Colorado waiting just outside her windows. I recently had an opportunity to catch up with Julie as she busily prepared for the Arts and Crafts Conference at the Grove Park Inn ...

Q: A look at your website indicates a keen interest in the Arts & Crafts Movement. What has becoming a Roycroft Artisan meant to you as an artist so inspired by the Movement?

A: From a young age I knew I was drawn deeply to creating art. I first learned of the Arts & Crafts Movement in 2004 as my husband Brian and I were thinking of remodeling our first home together. He brought home the book "Bungalow Nation," and we both marveled at the style and how every detail had so much beauty. "This is it!" he said. "This is how we should design and decorate our home." I was thrilled at that idea, and as we started to learn more about the Movement, I realized that my love went much deeper than just decorating my own home. I wanted to become a part of this movement.

Now as a Roycroft Renaissance Artisan, I feel like I've come home. I waited to apply for many years because I wanted to be patient with myself and let my creative process and skills grow. I wanted to make sure I had something to offer in return. Being a modern-day Roycrofter makes me feel alive with connection to the past. I'm honored and humbled to be accepted into this historically prestigious artisan group. I feel strongly that Elbert Hubbard would have agreed with the words of Deepak Chopra: "Every creative person's success is based on trust that inspiration



is continuous. The more you create, the more there is to create."

Q: Living in Colorado, you certainly don't have to look far to be inspired by nature. Define that moment when something grabs you and says, "Paint me!"

A: I've lived in Colorado since I was four years old. My parents followed my grandparents out in 1979 from Iowa because of the natural beauty of Colorado and those awe-inspiring Rocky Mountains. I grew up in Loveland, and went to CSU in Fort Collins. Since then, I've also lived in Denver, Golden and now Evergreen where I think we'll be for a very long time.

Evergreen is heaven on earth. The crisp mountain air, forests teeming with wildlife, and stunning views of Longs Peak and the stars at night continue to take our breath away. The work-life balance makes more sense when you just look out every window for inspiration and relaxation.

The vast beauty and variety of the Colorado landscape is a wealth spring of inspiration for me. I joke with my clients that I'll never run out of ideas for paintings, but it's true. From our farmlands and meadows, to our mountain streams and 14,000-foot summits, there's enough beauty in Colorado alone to keep me more than busy for the rest of my life. I started by letting those places choose me in many ways. Every time I was accepted into a juried art show around the state, I made sure I painted something local for that show. My collection of Colorado artwork has grown to over 52 paintings of our cities, ski resorts, mountains, universities and tourist destinations.



Q: Your husband makes custom quarter-sawn oak frames for your artwork. Is he also an artist, or just a great guy who knows his way around a wood shop?

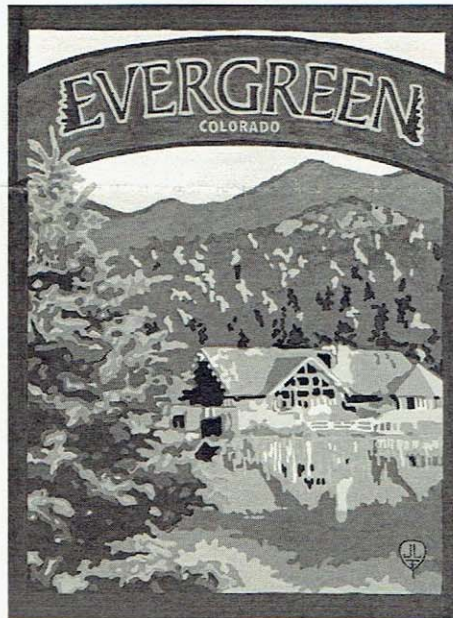
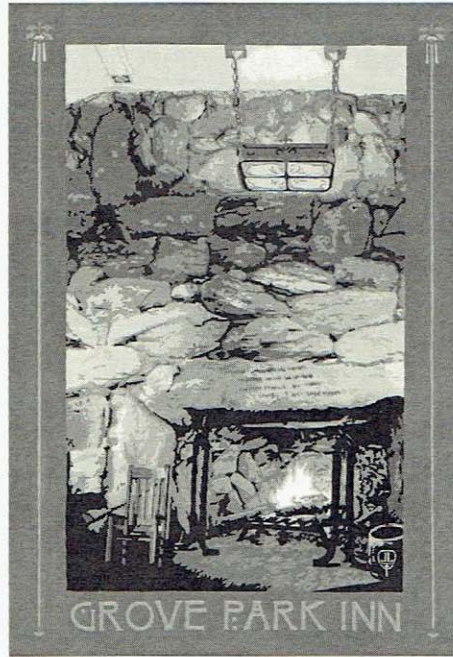
A: I have to tell you, that my husband Brian Leidel is not only my framer, but he's my business partner, my own personal cheering section, my muse, my rock and the love of my life. His full-time job is as an IT developer. When we first started dating, he always told me he didn't have a creative bone in his body. We'll be celebrating 15 years of marriage this July, and over those years I've seen his creativity grow and yes, I would call him an artist, even though he would blush and shy away from that distinction. He became our landscape architect, lovingly creating and sculpting our two previous yards from scratch, from his initial vision to placing every stone, bridge, flower and branch.

Brian became interested in woodworking in 2009 when he realized I had a need for great frames, and he asked my dad for a few lessons in his wood shop. Brian's an incredible self-starter, and he coupled that with his own research on woodworking. Before long, he was remodeling our house with quarter-sawn oak trim everywhere, and he even built us a beautiful Arts & Crafts fireplace with built-in window seating, lighting and book cabinets. Brian's an unstoppable force of love and creativity and I'm so lucky to have him as my partner in this life.

Q: Life as an artist can be challenging. Ever miss the days of working as a graphic designer and collecting a weekly paycheck?

A: I went to Colorado State University and began working as a graphic designer in 1998. I knew quickly that my first job designing newsletters and ads was a steppingstone to something bigger, but I enjoyed the small creative choices I was allowed back in the day. I worked in the e-learning industry for many years, and became a user interface designer, and this challenged me in new ways. I loved designing on behalf of an end user, and there was loads of creativity in this design world. I loved collaborating with other teams to create something bigger than what I could create on my own.

I've been an entrepreneur since 2005, so working from home and working as my own boss has been a big part of my life for the last 12 years. Much of my graphic design life was as an independent contractor. I've always had a mind for business and I realized that the comfortability of a monthly paycheck didn't have as much excitement as fiercely going after my own dreams. I



switched careers to my fine art business over a few years and went full-time as an artist in 2011. An artist's life can be challenging, but I love all the different hats you get to wear. I enjoy the variety it brings. I think these years of being in business for myself helped me discover what I was passionate for, and also gave me the tools I needed to make a living as an artist.

Q: You'll be among the many talented artists converging on Grove Park in mid-February. What's the typical reaction of someone experiencing your art for the very first time?

A: The Arts and Crafts Conference at the Grove Park Inn is a spiritual experience for me in many ways. Being together with so many talented artisans, historians, collectors and enthusiasts fills me with awe and inspiration that lasts the whole year through. This will be my fourth year exhibiting, and I love to see people looking closely at my artwork to figure out the mediums I use and my process. I love it when people ask if these are actually "paintings" because some feel more like leatherwork, metalwork, printmaking or stained glass. The mediums and textures of the Arts & Crafts Movement — wood, mica, pigment, glass, metal, clay, leather and textile — have all played a role in shaping my artwork and how I see the world through it. Much of my work reflects inspirations from these materials and the rich colors and textures from the Movement inspire me and enrich my artistic expression.

Q: You and your husband have two children. Will either — or both — be following in mom's footsteps?

A: Yes, my husband Brian and I have two young children, Abby (8) and Brady (4). They both are exposed to art, and the creation of art, on a regular basis. I was too as a child, since my mom painted a lot for fun. I believe that anytime we can expose our children to new things, it's widening their world view. Both Abby and Brady love to draw and paint. I want to keep exposing them to many new things so that they realize just how many ways there really are to find their passion as they grow. By making the art of discovery available, I want to foster their inner belief that they can do anything in this life. If they turn out to have a passion for the arts, that's a wonderful bonus. Currently, Abby wants to be a singer and author, and Brady wants to be a firefighter and a Stormtrooper, so it'll be fun to see how their dreams grow over the years.

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