

Walking through Cedarburg

Reflections on painting by Tom Kubala

Like most of us, I began painting soon after learning to walk. Unlike many, drawing and painting has been my constant companion since. Currently, I paint weekly with a group of friends known only to themselves as the Dumpster School. My subjects range from local architecture and landscapes to still life objects. Watercolor has been my medium of choice primarily because of its simplicity and portability—painting outside is a particular pleasure.

Watercolor is a fascinating medium; it has a mind of its own. I find my major task in painting is getting out of the way, both spiritually and physically. I need to remove myself spiritually, so that I can see the painting as it unfolds – without the filter of a concept or an abstract notion. I need to be cautious physically, so that I do not interfere with the paint's own mixing – directly on the paper. I believe that a painting is a painting, that it must stand on its own as a collection of colored blotches on white paper, a collection that has the ability, if organized properly, to bring life to the world where none existed before. Subject matter is only a starting point for my paintings, an organizing framework for color and value. The pigment part is a world unto itself, one where the life of the artist's imagination and power of interpretation play a major role.



I've been walking around Cedarburg for over 40 years now. Nearly a daily habit, walking has deepened my understanding of the structure of the town: its changes through the year, its flora and fauna, its built realm and the creek that runs through it. Forty years of observation has allowed me to see trees grow, decay, and disappear, watch buildings evolve through the revolving door of ownership, and notice the differences from year to year of the same day. My collection of local images is a small glimpse of what I have been truly fortunate to see. Being an introvert by nature, I have not included many people, but the physical environment, both natural and man-built, reveals the mark of continuous human presence.



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