

## Profile: Helene Steene



"Networking is unbelievably important," said Helene Steene on a beautiful fall day as I visited her in her studio at the Lexington Art League. On the second floor of the historic Loudoun House overlooking Castlewood Park, she discussed what it is like to be a professional visual artist in Lexington and shared some very practical advice: "Be good, know what you're doing and help each other."

Steene continued by explaining how important it is, as an individual artist, to seek out other artists and organizations to collaborate on projects and help educate the community on the many arts events there are to experience in Lexington. She strongly suggests working with non-art entities that might be able to help artists or arts groups find creative ways to market themselves and the rich arts and cultural community in the Bluegrass.

"It's all about the marketing part," she continued. "Getting written up (in publications), getting a seal of approval. All art forms must work together...must network to create...must work with other (non-art) entities to get the word out."

Originally from Sweden, Helene journeyed to the United States in 1976 after having lived in England, Germany, Spain and Greece, where she still spends her summers on the island of Paros, finding much inspiration. She studied art at George Washington University in Washington, DC and, in 2004, received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Kentucky.

Her works have won numerous awards and have been shown in more than 200 exhibitions around the world, most recently in Chicago's East Pilsen neighborhood, Chicago's Art District, at the Logsdon1909 Gallery and Studio in November. Her pieces can be found in both private and public collections in the U.S. and Europe.

"Whether my work is abstract, nonobjective or figurative, there is always a search for something that signifies a subtle inner beauty, depth and simplicity even when the forms are complex. I am intrigued by the tension between people, forms, lines and colors that ultimately can resolve in harmony."

Currently, she is working on a series of mixed media paintings which are created with textures and layers using sand, metal, acrylic, oil and marble dust. One of Helene's pieces—a mixed media collage on paper titled *White Fresco, Paros II*—has been chosen as the official, limited edition print for the 2009 Campaign for the Arts.

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## Networking to CREATE

By Melissa R. Wilkeson

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"If my work can slow someone down to contemplate something within her or himself...if it can add a moment of focus on their inner peace in this absurd world...then I have reached the viewer."

Steene is a true believer in giving back to the community. She currently follows through on this belief by helping art students. Since May 1, 2008, she has been helping to inspire young female art students at the University of Kentucky by donating 10% from any artwork she sells through May 1, 2009, to student scholarships.

Taking what she calls her leap of faith, when she decided to focus completely on her art as her main source of income, Helene Steene has journeyed almost as far as she did when she left her homeland to travel the world, finally settling here in the heart of the Bluegrass. Focusing on her art and on being a supportive and responsible member of our community, she takes her position as a professional artist in Lexington seriously. Every day she lives her belief that the well-being of any community is based in the fact that all of its members must help and inspire each other.



## 2009 Campaign Limited Edition Print

Each year LexArts recognizes major individual contributors to the Campaign for the Arts by commissioning an original print created by a central Kentucky artist who is a member of our Artist Registry. The selected print, signed and numbered, is sent to each individual contributor of \$250 or more in appreciation of his or her generosity and support of the arts.

The 2009 Campaign print is a detail of an artwork by Lexington artist, Helene Steene. Helene's piece is titled *White Fresco, Paros II*. It is a piece completed in 2008 and is mixed media collage on paper. A second detail will be used in Campaign posters.

At the conclusion of the Campaign, the original artwork will be auctioned off with proceeds being evenly divided between LexArts and Steene. Between now and then the painting will be on display at various downtown locations and LexArt events.



Poster detail, *White Fresco, Paros II*