

G A L L E R I E S

Solo Soukup show at Eisenhauer worth the wait

Elizabeth Eisenhauer has been anxious to host another solo show with Ms. Soukup but has had to wait.

By Gwyn McAllister

Elizabeth Eisenhauer, owner of Edgartown's Eisenhauer Gallery, has been waiting three years to host a full-scale solo show of the work of Jill Soukup. Ms. Eisenhauer has represented the popular Colorado-based artist for 13 years, but not since 2001 has Ms. Soukup been able to provide her with a full show's worth of work. The artist has become very much in demand by galleries around the country. Currently she is booked for solo shows through 2015.

"I was anxious to have a complete body of work," says Ms. Eisenhauer, who notes

that she doesn't often host solo shows. "She promised this show to me three years ago to satisfy my eagerness. I was selling everything she was sending me, so I've been waiting patiently."

The current show, which opens with a reception on Saturday, May 25, was worth the wait. Ms. Soukup's spectacular oil paintings — many of them on a very large scale — make a real impact as a full show taking up the entire right half of the downtown gallery. And, because the paintings primarily focus on two different themes, the show has the diversity to stand on its own.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ELIZABETH EISENHAUER

"Purple Procession," an oil on panel, by Jill Soukup.

Although these two themes — horses and city exteriors — may seem incongruous, the artist's style is consistent throughout. She uses a very painterly approach that makes it impossible to fully

appreciate the work as reproduced digitally. She displays a remarkable talent for using light and shadow to full effect and the ability to truly capture the power of her subjects. The urban studies, in which she captures

single buildings or sets of exteriors, are especially stunning examples of chiaroscuro technique.

The work on display represents almost a yin and yang of the artist's passions. Although she lives in an area known for its mountains and spacious plains, she loves urban settings and often visits cities. Ms. Soukup grew up in Colorado where she developed a passion for horses early on. "The horses go back to a childhood obsession that I've never completely outgrown," she says.

Once a year the artist travels to the 100,000-acre Zapata Ranch in Mosca, Colo., home to herds of bison, cattle, and horses. She spends time there drawing and photographing horses

for future paintings.

A couple of the paintings in the Eisenhauer show are monumental depictions of groups of muscled horses thundering across an open field. These are dramatic depictions of power, grace, and independence by an artist who clearly appreciates equine beauty.

The architectural paintings focus on facades and details such as windows, fire escapes, and pipes. They show a fascination with complex lines, subtlety of color, and juxtaposition. While these works are industrial by nature, the expert use of light and shadow breathes life and a surprising freshness into the scenes.

The buildings represent cities from San Francisco to Barcelona. However,

Ms. Soukup says that her favorite city to paint is New York and, while she has captured NYC landmarks like bridges and cathedrals, most of the buildings in her paintings are isolated from a distinctive skyline and could be in just about any urban area.

"I usually focus on the more intimate parts of a building rather than a broader landscape," Ms. Soukup says. "I'm drawn to fire escapes and water towers — the intricate parts to them and the way that the criss-crossing breaks them down into smaller shapes."

Ms. Soukup's interest in architecture began during college when, while taking a photography class, she found herself attracted to buildings as subjects. "I'm

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"Patches," a 32" by 52" oil on canvas, on display at Eisenhauer Gallery through June 8.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIZABETH EISENHAUER

“Boat on a Pedestal.”

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interested in the angular, edgy quality of them,” she says.

However, while the lines of her two favorite subjects may differ greatly, she sees a connection.

“The subjects influence each other,” she says. Speaking of the horses, she says, “The texture of the coat I find fascinating. The way I apply it on the horse finds its way into an architecture piece. On the flip side, the intricate, complex structure of a city scene started to find its way into the horses with multiple horses and more complex constructions.”

There are also a few nautical scenes — boats and buoys — in the show, including a couple that feature scenes from Ms. Soukup’s previous visit to the Vineyard. “I look at the boats the way I look at buildings,” she says. “They’re more edgy. I categorize

more as the mechanical.”

Ms. Eisenhauer discovered the artist’s work through a 2000 feature in Southwest Arts Magazine on artists to watch. “I flew out to Denver and met her,” Ms. Eisenhauer recalls. “I thought she was really dedicated to her craft, really professional. She made me feel important that she had chosen me to represent her.”

In 2001, Ms. Eisenhauer invited the artist to stay at her home and featured her in a one-woman show. She has continued to show her work, mostly smaller pieces, ever since.

Since, Ms. Soukup has made a name for herself, especially in the western and southwestern states, and she has won numerous awards. Her work has been featured in a number of magazines and included in art books.

For many years Ms. Eisenhauer has been

anxious to host another solo show with Ms. Soukup but has had to wait until the artist, who has been balancing the demands of an increasingly successful career and new motherhood, could provide enough work.

“They never forgot her,” says Ms. Eisenhauer, speaking of her customers. “People kept calling up and asking for her work. We needed to satisfy their hunger.” **MVT**

Artist’s Reception: An Evening with Jill Soukup, Saturday, May 25, 6–8 pm. Refreshments, and music by Johnny Hoy in the courtyard. Show runs through June 8. 508-627-7003; eisenhauergallery.com.