

# Jill Soukup

## Celebrating her first solo museum show

When Colorado painter Jill Soukup (pronounced *Soak-up*) first appeared in *Southwest Art* as an Artist to Watch in December 2000, she was just beginning her career in fine art. After graduating from Colorado State University in 1991, she initially spent 11 years as a graphic designer. Today, more than a decade after her first story in the magazine, she has enjoyed much success, including awards and gallery shows. And this month she celebrates the opening of her first solo museum exhibition. On March 26, Colorado's Longmont Museum & Cultural Center presents *Jill Soukup: Industrial and Equine Architecture*; the show continues through May 22.

The exhibit features 30 new paintings and focuses on two themes that run through Soukup's current work. Half of the presentation is devoted to horses, whether wild, tamed, or harnessed. The other portion spotlights urban architecture such as fire escapes, elevated train bridges, and water towers.

Soukup, 41, says her interest in horses goes back to what she calls a "childhood obsession" and continues today with equines she has spotted on southern Colorado ranches. "Now, I'm starting to apply aspects of city scenes to horses," she says of her new works. "As an example, I'm interested in groups of horses and how their legs are criss-crossed. When you look at them, you see intricate shapes and patterns like the ones you might find in the fire escape of a building." The urban scenes are inspired by Colorado cities as well as by more exotic locales, such as the Mediterranean island of Malta.

**How has your style or approach to your art changed since you first appeared in *Southwest Art* in December 2000?** In my earlier days, I would call my approach "scattered explorations." For subject matter there was a huge variety, and there was also a huge variety in how I approached the art principles. I was less focused then. I might paint a horse, then a figure, followed by a nautical or city scene. I was just interested in shapes, so all subject matter interested me. Now I am more focused on city and equine scenes.

**What is your proudest accomplishment in your art career?** Sometime around 2006 and 2007 there was a big shift in my mindset. There was a newfound confidence, freedom, and sense of play. There was just this sense of all my hard work coming together.

**Would you have done anything differently?** I probably would have taken more classes. Classes are a great source of ideas. There's a state of mind in classes where you are learning and playing. I think if I had taken more classes, I would have bought that mentality back to the studio.

**What artists inspire you?** Here in Colorado there are many, and in Denver specifically, many have been a huge inspiration. I'm not going



**Texture Erected, oil, 60 x 36.**

➤ **First appearance in *Southwest Art*: December 2000**

**AWARDS WON SINCE THEN:** Best of show, two-dimensional work, Representing the West, Sangre de Cristo Arts & Conference Center, Pueblo, CO, 2010.

**PRICE CHANGE IN YOUR WORK SINCE THEN:** An 8-by-10-inch piece was \$400; now it sells for \$990.

## success stories

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to name names because I don't want to leave anyone out. In terms of artists outside of Colorado, I have been looking at Arthur Melville and Andrew Wyeth.

**What advice would you give young artists just starting out?**

Learn the tools of the trade, and once you know them, you will be able to say what you want to say clearly.

**What impresses you about other artists' works?** I am most impressed by the artists who are always trying to move forward and always trying to find perfection in whatever they are exploring. The artists that impress me the most are the ones that keep refining their craft. When you look at their work, it is always growing.

**What motto do you live by?** I don't know if it's a motto, but a few words I try to live my life by are *truth* and *integrity*. I try to make choices based on those words. And my other motto is, do the best you can under any circumstance.

**What is the one thing you will never paint?** I would probably never paint something that is motivated by a political view or a strong sentiment. Right now I'm excited about exploring the color chords.

**What are you working on right now?** A very large horse piece. I am also working on pieces for my solo exhibition at Longmont Museum & Cultural Center. There will be about 30 pieces in the show.



**Cornered Perspective, oil, 23 x 29.**

**What galleries represent your work?** Saks Galleries, Denver, CO; Astoria Fine Art, Jackson, WY; Ann Korologos Gallery, Basalt, CO; Eisenhauer Gallery, Edgartown, MA; Timmons Galleries, Rancho Mirage, CA; [www.soukupstudios.com](http://www.soukupstudios.com). —**BONNIE GANGELHOFF**