

PETER ALBERICE

STORY BY PAUL M. HOWEY



(Photo by Sandra Stambaugh)

In the truest sense, Peter Alberice is a multimedia artist, as he works in acrylics, steel, concrete, glass, and wood. His pieces range in size from a few square feet in area up to entire buildings. He is an architect who discovered only 12 years ago that he had a love—and extraordinary talent—for painting.

"I have wanted to be an architect my entire life," says Peter. In fact, his first project was to design a two-story tree house near his childhood home in Wellesley, Massachusetts. "I think I was in the third grade when we built it," he recalls.

After graduating from Wellesley Senior High School, he went to Virginia Tech University where he earned both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in architecture.

He worked for a couple of architectural firms, including Six Associates Architects in Asheville, before starting Camille-Alberice Architects here with colleague Robert Camille in 1989. "Robert retired to pursue a different business two years ago," says Peter, "and the firm was renamed Alberice Architecture + Design, PA." The firm is located on S. Lexington Avenue in downtown Asheville in an office that doubles as his artist's studio.



"We are a general service architectural firm," explains Peter, "meaning that we design all scales of projects. "Right now, we are working on a sunroom addition to a house, a 200-unit apartment building complex, and several others."

There is, of course, a direct correlation between artwork and designing buildings. But when did he first discover an attraction to the brush and canvas?

"I have always enjoyed drawing, and can remember drawing all the time as a child. When I was very young, my parents had a house that had to have all of the wallpaper replaced. When the wallpaper was removed, they let me draw on the plaster walls before the new wallpaper was installed."

A trip to Italy rekindled his long latent passion for art. When he and his wife, Sandra Stambaugh, returned home, she encouraged him to take up painting. "She has nurtured my interest ever since," says Peter.

The influence of his architectural training plays a significant role in his paintings. "To me, both professions complement each other. Painting gives me the freedom to explore architectural ideas in an abstract way that can potentially be incorporated into an architectural project. There is not a direct translation, but a way to conceptualize space, and have a medium to explore these ideas."

His paintings, he adds, are an exploration of the "duality of architecture being both abstract and integrated with the natural environment." He adds, "My work can be characterized as a continual study of the horizontal and the vertical, of exterior and interior space, and of the land and sky."

He says American architect Louis Kahn's concept of "light having meaning only when it meets a wall" has impacted his paintings.

There is a structured technique to his artwork. "My paintings usually begin as abstract sketches. I then scan the sketch and manipulate it on the computer to a size and proportion that works. At that point, I project the sketch on the canvas or paper. I use this as a basis to start the painting. During the course of creating a painting, I usually make three to four projections on the canvas as a means of layering the painting to give it spatial depth and texture."

He is adamant about the importance of art. "Below the surface, art requires artists to think conceptually and in a nonlinear way which can lead to creative problem-solving in all fields."

Peter Alberice's paintings are in a special exhibition at Blue Spiral 1 Gallery, 38 Biltmore Avenue, through May 25. To see more of the artist's work, visit peteralberice.com.