

Inspired by his cousin, Cutrone creates with paint

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STAFF WRITER

PARSIPPANY LIFE

By Renata Magalhães

Passion for life, nature's beauty and escape from the sometimes rough realities of life inspire Denville-based artist Marco Cutrone.

Currently included in a group exhibit at the Morristown Memorial Hospital Carol G. Simon Cancer Center's Healing Arts Program, appropriately titled "Inspirations," Cutrone shows — in great detail — what makes him tick.

He describes some of his paintings and pencil sketches as "things that make you appreciate life" and he hopes they will make others who attend the exhibit do the same.

Cutrone's colorful flower oil paintings are somewhat reminiscent of the great Georgia O'Keeffe and some of French realist, still-life painter François Bonvin, his intimate portraits, to the likes of French realist Gustave Courbet — but none of which he credits as influential.

Growing up, Cutrone said he first took interest in art through cartoons, oddly enough.

"Obviously the figures were cartoony," he said. "But I noticed the realism in the background. As a child that was convincing, the shadows, the candlelight ... I thought it was very well done."

Cutrone's interest in the art world was further stimulated as a young child as he visited his father's upholstery business in Hopatcong and met business partner Nick Speciale, an artist in his own right. Speciale's figure drawing, Cutrone said, caught his attention.



PHOTOS BY GEORGE LEROY HUNTER

From the left, artist and actor Federico Castelluccio and his cousin, and fellow artist, Marco Cutrone, both of Denville, standing next to paintings done by Cutrone currently on display at the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center located inside Morristown Memorial Hospital's lobby art gallery. Castelluccio is best known for his role as Furio Giunta on the television series 'The Sopranos.'

But a greater force pushing Cutrone into the arts was his cousin, Federico Castelluccio, with whom he studied for some time.

"My cousin's side of the family has always been the artists," he remarked when asked about other potential familial artistic guidance.

As a student at Morris Knolls, Cutrone said he took "every art class available." He was also part of the Gifted and Talent Club, but "that was a school thing" he said, noting that he didn't necessarily feel his work was worthy of being entered into art competitions or exhibitions.



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After high school, Cutrone attended the New York School of Visual Arts where he says he really started to hone his talent. But the whole time Cutrone's cousin was there to support him.

"I wish everyone had that support [in their] life," he said with regards to Castelluccio.

Castelluccio, himself is quite an accomplished painter, would go on to become better known as an actor playing the character of Furio Giunta on the HBO series "The Sopranos."

As for Cutrone, he worked in what he described as the "fast-paced music industry" doing music promotion.

"It was amazing," he said. "Meeting people like Bowie, McCartney, Liza Minnelli ... bosses made us feel like we were curing cancer. I certainly miss [certain] aspects of the music industry."

But art has always remained the one constant passion between the two cousins, who still exhibit together or attend each other's exhibits whenever possible. Castelluccio, Cutrone said, is still someone he goes to for advice.

When preparing for a show, Cutrone can go for 15 to 16 hours working on a piece. Otherwise, it depends on what he feels like doing or what has made him pick up a canvas or piece of paper.

His favorite medium is the basic pencil because, according to Cutrone, he loves the color, contrast and composition pencil enables you to create.

"[Some] people complain about how expensive oil paint can be, and that's true, but it shouldn't stop you," he said.

Cutrone hopes the art pieces will take on a life of their own, allowing the life he's captured as a still frame to live on in other people's lives, filling it with a bit of color.

"I hope to do this the rest of my life and be in museums ... to have some museum credits," he said. "I want see them in good homes."

Some of his most recent commissioned works have travelled as far as Moscow and England, he said referring to the portrait he did of the writer Tolstoy.

"I think some people appreciate the custom aspect of it," he said. "It's boring to reproduce [a piece]." Although he has been forced to recreate pieces when exhibits called for replacements.

"I like black and white portraits. It's a nice way to immortalize someone," he said.

Taking part of this current exhibit, he said, was also an easy decision because of its connection to the cancer center and the opportunity to return some of the inspiration that has been given to him.

"It's important to lift the spirits of the patients," he said, noting the importance of supporting organization like the Kaleidoscope of Hope Foundation, which brings awareness to ovarian cancer.

"People have been very supportive [of me]," he said, once again reiterating how important his cousin has been in his life as an artist. "It's been a rough couple of years and this [allowed me] to create something that makes you appreciate what life has to offer."

Cutrone's work along with the six other artists will be on exhibit at the Cancer Center, 100 Madison Ave. in Morristown, until Jan. 14, 2011. He is also featured as part of a group exhibit "Visions of Denville."

Meet the artists at the opening reception on Friday, Nov. 5, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Denville Municipal Building, 1 St. Mary's Place. The exhibit will be up until Nov. 19. Hours are Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit www.lakelandarts.net/visions_of_denville.

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