

Art on the Road: Visiting Artist Studios, Palm Beach Style

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by Sandra Hale Schulman

Private visits to artists' studios always feel incredibly special, entering entire creative worlds, seeing work in progress, past work and also the objects—pictures, books, models—that so often fuel the whole fire.

Recognizing how special such an experience can be, the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County has set up an Art on the Road program for a limited group of its members to take a bus tour to the studios of some of the top tier artists in the county. One tour is offered each month from January through March. All are different, with galleries and museums on the itinerary for some tours instead of studios.

For the March 10 tour, we met at the Council's beautiful headquarters in downtown Lake Worth, a renovated Art Deco building that houses offices as well as art galleries and meeting rooms for various organizations. The Cultural Council was founded in 1978 as a non-profit organization through the vision and leadership of Alexander Dreyfoos, a successful business owner and activist who believed in the value of arts and culture in enhancing the quality of life in all communities.

The day of the tour, the Council had up a great and varied show of local artists, some of whom also happen to be international artists. There's a shop filled with artist-made crafts and an information area filled with brochures and magazines from all the different arts groups in the area, including those devoted to dance, film and music.

After seeing the show and receiving a tote bag packed with helpful information, our group of about 20 art lovers boarded the bus for the ride to the studio of former Brooklyn resident sculptor Alexander Krivoshiew.



Alexander Krivoshiew in his studio. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Alexander Krivoshiew in his studio. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Olympics design sketches in Alexander Krivoshiew's studio.
Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Alexander Krivoshiew with a sculpture in progress. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Alexander Krivoshiew with a table top sculpture series. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.

Born in New York in 1976, Krivoshiew holds a BA with honors degree in sculpture from the School of Visual Arts. He developed his interest in sculpture through studies in Greek mythology, archaeology, and social anthropology, as he lived and apprenticed on the island of Crete, in Greece, for seven years.

After moving back to the U.S., he began working in metals. As he started working larger, he outgrew his cramped Brooklyn studio and relocated to West Palm Beach, where space to make his large-scale metal works is more widely available.

This praise from renowned Long Island sculptor Hans Van de Bovenkamp is included on Krivosheiv's website: "Alexander Krivosheiw is an artist of vision and passion. His ideas are of a mature artist, and the craftsmanship is extraordinary; in both casting and fabrication. I feel as though his career is unfolding on a global level and he is truly an artist to watch."

Primarily working in metals—steel, aluminum and bronze—Krivoshiew has arrived at a gorgeous,

fluid abstract style in his work, turning human, animal and even graphic forms into sleek, swooping, tapered, interactive shapes.

His studio is located in an upscale warehouse bay, with the orderly front office designed as a business and computer design area. There are drawings, sketches and photos covering the walls, tracing the progress of his work. Another glass enclosed display case holds some smaller tabletop sculptures.

Krivoshiew looks like someone sent by central casting. Handsome and well-spoken, he charmed the crowd with a walk-through of his design and production process. The back area is his workshop, replete with large cutting, grinding and polishing machines; tables are laid out with pieces of ks in progress.

One current project is a sculpture of the interlocking rings of the Olympics, commissioned by the International Olympic Committee. Krivoshiew has taken the circular shapes to an extreme, as if they were made of a soluble material that has been dropped in water, the inks in primary colors melting and floating in liquid.

He won the commission through pure serendipity. After he ran an ad in a Florida design magazine, that magazine found its way onto a plane flying to Switzerland. After the plane landed and took off again, the passenger in the particular seat with the magazine tucked into the seatback pocket happened to be a member of the IOC searching for sculptors.

He is also experimenting with human forms and mass production of his work, which requires a whole different design thought process, as the sculpture needs to be made in sections for casting.

"I'm also interested in functional pieces," he said, pointing out the large overhead fan with aluminum propeller shaped blades, and the racy motorcycle he designed with a sleek pod shaped tank and radically designed exhaust tubes.

Krivoshiew will soon unveil a major-league commission, a 20-foot-high version of his bronze sculpture *Moore's Canova* to be unveiled later this year at a luxury residential complex in Taiwan directly across from the Opera House.

www.alexanderssculptures.com

Back on the bus, the next stop was in downtown West Palm Beach to visit the studio of artist/curator Bruce Helander, who is not only an accomplished artist but also one of the great characters of the art world.

As an artist, Helander has concentrated on collage, drawing on his collection of millions of vintage images to create a body of work that is represented in more than 50 museum collections and has appeared in *Jazziz*, *The New Yorker* and *Palm Beach Illustrated* magazines, among others.

He opened a gallery on Worth Avenue in Palm Beach in 1983 and ran it for 13 years. Based on the success of that gallery, he opened another in Soho as well, exhibiting Rauschenberg, de Kooning and other giants of the 20th century art world.

According to Helander's website, as a curator, he has coordinated more than 80 exhibitions of contemporary works and has organized one-man shows for Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, John Chamberlain, Duane Hanson, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, Dale Chihuly and Kenneth Noland, among others.

He studied furniture making for a time while he was at the Rhode Island School of Design and has written extensively, as a columnist and a critic, on contemporary art and furnishings. His book, *Learning to See—An Artist's View on Contemporary Artists from Artschwager to Zakanitch* (Stargroup International, 2008) includes 40 of Helander's favorite reviews.

Helander's two-story, airy studio is filled with his work and all kinds of bric-a-brac, photos, sculpture, and art books. There are inscribed photos from Robert Rauschenberg and a huge new coffee table book, for which he wrote an essay, featuring artist Hunt Slonem's collection of "Bunnies" paintings. He moderated an art talk earlier this year called Dog Day Afternoon about animals in art for the Cultural Council's Lecture Series.



Bruce Helander at his studio entrance. Photo by Sandra Hale

Schulman.



Bruce Helander works from a recent show. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Bruce Helander's studio wall of dog folk art paintings. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Bruce Helander's studio table with inscribed Rauschenberg photo. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.



Bruce Helander with New Yorker prints. Photo by Sandra Hale Schulman.

After so many decades in the thick of things in the art world, the artist, curator and writer is very outspoken and opinionated about art and artists. Noting that almost all great ideas and steps forward get dismissed and rejected at first, he said that Willem de Kooning was his favorite.

He is an avid collector of folk art; among his favorite tchotchkes is his collection of dogs: dog figurines, dogs painted on ashtrays, little dog salt and pepper shakers. He claims to have hundreds of them. "What I love about them is they are the opposite of sophistication," he said. "I collect a lot of folk art and particularly stuff that's so bad it's ideal."

He spoke about how some 60 percent of male artists are dyslexic, a learning disability that he suffered from until the visual arts saved him.

"Creativity was my outlet," he said. "I knew I could do something positive and do it well in that world," he said.

“Ego can help but also hurt,” he added. “I’m lucky to be in a great environment and have a staff that helps me prioritize and get my work done. I’m not in the studio for five seconds every day before we have to have a meeting to figure out what needs to be done first.

“What keeps me going,” he said, “is the great sense of ‘what can I discover today?’ I encourage people to get out and look and read and see the art in everything. It will make you smarter and enrich your life in ways that are immeasurable.”

www.brucehelander.com

What I took away from the two studio visits was, as Helander so succinctly pointed out, to see the art in everything, including the art of how a world class studio/office is run. It takes a fine-tuned, well-oiled machine to get the big work done and done well.

While Helander and Krivoshiew are different artists at different places in their careers, what they share is a distinct way of making over the world in their vision—one with metal sculpture, the other through collage, curating, and writing. In both cases, the means is just as fascinating as the ends.