

Charles Gilbert Kapsner



Biography



“Remember nature is your teacher, I am your guide”, was a prevailing theme in the studio of Nerina Simi (1890 – 1987) in Florence, Italy, where Charles Kapsner’s greatest learning as a painter occurred. His artistic roots are planted in the 15th Century, yet he remains a contemporary painter whose compositions fuse old and new. He works to ensure that both *art and artist* are accessible, and that the images serve as educational tools.

Perfecting the drawing is critical before ever picking up a brush, a lesson ingrained in him from his time with Simi. Largely a studio painter, Kapsner prefers the “Vanitas” style of still life painting in which the various objects depicted symbolize the brevity and vanity of human existence. His repertoire includes drawings, florals, portraits, figurative pieces, nudes, and dancers, painted primarily from life. He is also known for his work on several frescoes in the US and Italy.

Interwoven through several decades and in between his studio time are two community-based art projects: the Little Falls Fresco Project, two large frescoes (9 X 26 ft. and 18 X 41 ft.) in the local elementary school that portray scenes of significance to Central Minnesota; and the Veterans Education Historic Monument, commissioned in 2009, which Kapsner shares is perhaps the most impactful of his career.

The Monument is series of five 8’ X 10’ oil paintings installed in the Committal Hall at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery. Each painting depicts the stories of the men and women of each of the five U.S military branches. Four paintings are complete; Kapsner is immersed in the final painting, planned for installation in late 2019.

These projects, all located within 10 miles of his central Minnesota hometown and reliant on funds raised from a variety of local sources, provide Kapsner with what he shares as “community ownership in the art in a meaningful and important way”. He recalls the words from his high school graduation speaker who urged the class to give back to the community, and Kapsner views these public works of art as his contribution to the place he will always call home.

Recent exhibitions include the 2014 “Nerina Simi e i suoi allievi” in Stazzema, Italy, a temporary exhibit of paintings and drawings by 34 of Nerina Simi’s former students, the OPA Juried Salons in 2016, ’17 and ’18, and the 85th Annual Hudson Valley Art Association exhibition.

Kapsner is the recipient of the Career Achievement Award from the Florence Biennale, Master Artist from the Five Wings Arts Council in Minnesota, and a Public Service Commendation from the United States Coast Guard.

He calls Little Falls, MN home, and travels frequently between Minnesota, North Carolina and Italy.