



ITEM PHOTO BY SPENSER HASAK Lynn artist Jeff Fioravanti's show, "The Vision Place of Souls," is opening on Wednesday at Lynn Museum.

By BILL BROTHERTON

LYNN — Jeff Fioravanti's love of history and art began early in life.

"I remember getting up early on Saturday mornings, grabbing a bowl of cereal and watching 'The World at War' and 'Victory at Sea' on TV. For me, the spirit of America came alive through those shows," said Fioravanti, a longtime Lynn resident who grew up in Saugus. "I also loved the American Heritage Encyclopedia books. My mother bought them at the A&P, where Robie's store is now on Route 1. I read them from cover to cover."

He also recalled as a boy spending hours at the dining room table, armed with “thousands of crayons,” drawing, coloring and creating.

Family trips were to such places as Fort Ticonderoga, Cooperstown and the battlefields of Gettysburg, a treat for him and his brothers “but probably not for my poor mother,” he added, with a smile.

“There are three constants in my life: Sports, art and history,” said Fioravanti, a member of the Saugus High School Athletic Hall of Fame (and class of 1976). “As a hockey player, I left a few teeth on the ice at the old Lynn Arena,” he said. But it’s art and history that have always tugged at his heart.

These are exciting times for Fioravanti. The Lynn Museum is hosting a six-month solo exhibition of his work, mostly pastels of Civil War scenes, titled, “The Vision Place of Souls.” An opening reception will be at the Museum Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m.

He has long possessed a love of the American Civil War inspired by his family and the artists of that conflict, including Winslow Homer and Conrad Wise Chapman and Currier & Ives. “My family includes many educators and historians. My mom was a teacher. They taught me that history was more than just dates, but stories, the stories I now try to capture in paint. Art and history for me has always intertwined.

“I’m painting the soul of America. My paintings are not about war, but about peace and hope. They’re not glorifying war. Each of my paintings have a story to tell.”

His Civil War works have received great acclaim. Brian Pohanka, the late author and renowned Civil War historian, often spoke of his admiration for Fioravanti’s work.

Curating “The Vision Place of Souls” is local artist and curator **Jocelyn Almy-Testa**.

Drew Russo, executive director of Lynn Museum, said Fioravanti will donate to the museum a portion of proceeds from all paintings sold.

Fioravanti is an internationally recognized pastel artist who also paints in oils. He has won many awards. The International Association of Pastel Societies last month awarded him the designation of Master Circle Pastelist at its convention in New Mexico. His work has been published in such publications as National Geographic: The Civil War A Traveler’s Guide, Best of American Pastel Artists Volume II (Kennedy Publications), Who’s Who in American Art and in such magazines as American Artist, Pastel Journal and Pastel Artist International.

He has often contributed his talents toward the restoration and preservation of America’s landscapes and museum collections. Fioravanti is an artist member of the North Shore Arts Association of Gloucester, as well as a signature artist member in such groups as The Connecticut Pastel Society, Pastel Society of Maine, Pastel Painters Society of Cape Cod, Pastel Society of New Hampshire and the most prestigious pastel group in the United States, the Pastel Society of America based in New York City.

Fioravanti lives with his daughter, Nicole, near Lynn Woods and often paints and finds inspiration there. He said Nicole and his late wife Cathy, who died of cancer 3½ years ago at age 54, have always supported his painting. “I might not have painted at all if it wasn’t for Cathy,” he said. “We both graduated from Salem State with business degrees and she decided to continue, getting an accounting degree at night. What was I going to do while she was going to school, stay at home cleaning the bathroom or watching Bruins games? My aunt in Gloucester was taking art lessons using pastels and oils. I joined her, and that was the start.”

“The Vision Place of Souls” will be on display at Lynn Museum, 590 Washington St., Lynn, through December 22. An opening reception with the artist will be held on Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information on this and other Lynn Museum/LynnArts events, call 781-581-6200 or visit www.lynnmuseum.org.