

Weekend 11 octobre 2007



Matt Ryerson/The Hawk Eye

David Garrison and his wife, Cecile Houel, are surrounded by their art in their studio in Burlington. Garrison remodeled the early 20th century attic into the studio, that is now complete with a large window and skylight. Houel is from France, where she and Garrison met five years ago. The pair split their time between France and United States.

From here to there with their art

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Light pours through the windows in David Garrison and Cecile Houel's upstairs studio space, where pastels litter tables with their vibrant colors.

On the floor, the walls, pieces of their art vie for attention — each work speaking its own language.

Those pieces won't hang in their show at the Fort Madison Gallery Depot, but plenty of their other excellent work will, and Saturday, the pair will celebrate their show opening with an artists' reception from 5 to 8 p.m.

"It will be a nice event," Houel said.

Passion to create art infected the pair early on, and eventually, Garrison, a Burlington native, and Houel, a native of France, crossed paths.

"I've painted all my life," Garrison said Wednesday morning from his Burlington home, where the pair shared their story. "It's all I was interested in doing."

He attended the American Academy of Art for four years, and then started creating his work and putting on shows across the globe. He had exhibits in galleries on the East Coast, the West Coast, China, and eventually France.

"I was worried to do (a show

Artists' reception

Fifty-two pieces hang in the center, 30 of Cecile Houel's and 22 of David Garrison's. The pieces will hang until Oct. 27.

A reception with the artists is 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday at the Fort Madison Gallery Depot on U.S. 61 and Tenth Street in Fort Madison.

The show will hang until Oct. 26. On that day, Garrison will speak at a Lunch-ala-Art program, for which reservations are required.

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday.

All the pieces are for sale.

— Shawna Richter

in France in 2002) because of the European/American attitude," Garrison said. But he decided to do the show.

While in France, the gallery owners asked Garrison to give a workshop, and Garrison agreed if the gallery would get a translator for him. Houel volunteered for the job.

"She knows five languages," Garrison said with a smile. "We stayed in contact."

Over the next few years, both Garrison and Houel went through divorces, and then they discovered a match in one another. The pair were married about 18 months ago and now split their time between Normandy, France, and Burlington.

"We support each other," Garrison said. "We work so well together."

On Houel's end, she was always a painter, but her work became serious after she studied under master pastelist Alain Victor.

"It was two years of intense practice with him," Houel said, "and then I took off by myself."

It didn't take long for Houel to build a name from herself. She has a following of students from her workshops in France, and she has had a number of shows there as well. She also serves on the board of the Art du Pastel en France.

More recently, Houel had an art show at the Arts for Living Center, where she also has given a workshop.

The Fort Madison show is one of their first together.

Houel does mostly portraiture, "painting people as the

world." (She does commissioned work also.) Garrison sticks with mostly landscapes in an impressionistic style.

"What is important for me is to ... try and express and the expressions of people," Houel said. "I paint humanity as it is. When I paint a person, I paint it with respect and love for that person."

Garrison eyes light up as he describes her work in much the same way — people captured in their joy, their suffering.

When Houel describes her husband's work, it is with respect and a little awe.

"We use strong colors," Houel said, "but David is especially bold with colors."

Houel paints from photographs she takes of her subjects, and Garrison from a single one-and-a-half to two-hour sitting in front of his landscape subject.

While Garrison works with three mediums — pastels, oils and acrylics, Houel uses mostly pastels, sometimes oils. Both like the spontaneity pastels offer them.

Both wake up in the morning and hit their studio to do their work. Both plan to continue their craft, working and improving every day, so someday they are classified as fine artists.

"It's a fantastic life," Garrison said. "It's not boring."