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William Stout brings fantasy to Pasadena

By Michelle Mills

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Although his work is truly

fine art, William Stout's creations stand out from the usual fare at American Legacy Fine Arts in Pasadena.

The private gallery, noted for plain air landscapes, global portraits and intricate sculpture, is now showing a selection of Stout's ink and watercolor pieces in his famous fantasy style. There are dragons, maidens and even a vampire that seem at home on the venue's walls.

Stout has been a professional artist since 1968, when he created the cover for the first issue of *Coven 13*. He has drawn comic strips, illustrated graphic novels and designed album covers. He has worked on more than 120 films, like "Wizards," "Conan," "Walt Disney's "Dinosaur" and Guillermo del Toro's "Pan's Labyrinth," as a movie poster illustrator, production designer and character designer. Stout was one of the first American contributors to Heavy Metal magazine and has also worked for Walt Disney Imagineering, Lucasfilm/Industrial Light and Magic and GameWorks. "I was known as the guy in Los Angeles who could duplicate any art style. I would get a lot of work because of that," Stout said.

WILLIAM STOUT

Where: American Legacy Fine Arts, private gallery, Pasadena

When: By appointment 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday

Tickets: Free

Information: 626-577-7733; www.americanlegacyfinearts.com; www.williamsstout.com

approached him this year.

"There's such variety here and such diversity. It's all traditional art, but each artist is a true individual, each with their own style," Stout said.

Stout typically works seven days a week, 18 hours a day, taking a break for dinner and an hour in front of the television with his wife. Having always worked freelance, he usually has up to eight different projects going at one time and trades off between writing, drawing and painting.

Stout starts his illustrations with a thumbnail sketch about the size of a postage stamp, which he uses to judge if it will be a successful picture.

"If the design is there in the thumbnail and it works, it's going to work great when I draw it. If it's not there, no amount of detail, color or anything else is going to help it. And because it's so small,



William Stout displays his ink and watercolor drawing "Brunhilde."

always drawing, but he dreamed of becoming a doctor. A move from an academically focused high school in Reseda to one in Thousand Oaks that seemed apathetic about its students, prompted Stout to rethink his opportunities and change his career path. He went on to attend the Chouinard Art Institute (California Institute of the Arts) and painted watercolor portraits in New Orleans Square at Disneyland to make ends meet. After graduation, he continued to study privately with Harold Kramer, head of Chouinard's illustration department, for 20 years.

Stout has published many collections of his art, as well as other books, such as his latest, "Legends of the Blues" (Abrams Comic Artists, \$20). He is planning to continue his blues series, writing and illustrating books on British and modern blues and soul.

Stout is also publishing a collection of his comic work, which will contain everything except for his underground work that is slated for another book and a book

He had seen many photographs of the area, but none could reproduce its colors like he could with his paints. When Stout returned from his trip, he sought to learn as much as he could about Antarctica's ecology. He also discovered the Antarctic Artists and Writers Program that provides grants to creative people to visit United States Antarctic Program stations and research camps and wilderness areas to help create awareness and understanding of the area. Stout was selected for a grant and has spent time there scuba diving, exploring volcanoes, taking in the landscape and wildlife and recording his observations.

Stout has 75 of 100 planned paintings of Antarctica finished for his upcoming book.

"It will be the first visual history of Antarctica from prehistoric times to present day," Stout said.

Stout has also become an environmental activist for the Antarctica Ocean Coalition, which is working to protect the continent as a permanent world park.



PHOTOS BY WALT MANCINI — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
William Stout's ink and watercolor drawing "Vampyr."

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Tickets: Free

Stout is also noted for his realistic pieces, such as his dinosaur murals that can be seen at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. He has been a member of the California Art Club since 1993 and is on its advisory board.

“My fine arts career happened in a backwards fashion,” Stout said. Instead of working hard, being represented by a gallery and then finally garnering museum shows, the Pasadena resident started with museum shows, dozens of them, and spent decades looking for the right gallery. Stout was thrilled when American Legacy Fine Arts

approached him this year. “There’s such variety here and such diversity. It’s all traditional art, but each artist is a true individual, each with their own style,” Stout said.

Stout typically works seven days a week, 18 hours a day, taking a break for dinner and an hour in front of the television with his wife. Having always worked freelance, he usually has up to eight different projects going at one time and trades off between writing, drawing and painting.

Stout starts his illustrations with a thumbnail sketch about the size of a postage stamp, which he uses to judge if it will be a successful picture. “If the design is there in the thumbnail and it works, it’s going to work great when I draw it. If it’s not there, no amount of detail, color or anything else is going to help it. And because it’s so small, if the first design doesn’t work, I go right to the second one. There’s very little time involved when you’re doing thumbnails. If I was working larger, I would have more time involved and feel more pressure to using what I did whether it was successful or not,” Stout said.

Although Stout’s work looks as if it is inspired by dreams — or nightmares — ideas usually come to him from travel, conversations, the news and everyday life. He overcomes artist’s block with a run (Stout runs three miles every other day), a long shower or just sketching until “the answer emerges.” Growing up, Stout was

always drawing, but he dreamed of becoming a doctor. A move from an academically focused high school in Reseda to one in Thousand Oaks that seemed apathetic about its students, prompted Stout to rethink his opportunities and change his career path. He went on to attend the Chouinard Art Institute (California Institute of the Arts) and painted watercolor portraits in New Orleans Square at Disneyland to make ends meet. After graduation, he continued to study privately with Harold Kramer, head of Chouinard’s illustration department, for 20 years.

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Stout is also publishing a collection of his comic work, which will contain everything except for his underground work that is slated for another book, and a book with his music-related art, such as album covers, flyers for bands, posters for festivals. He is currently working on 10 prints depicting the characters from “Peter Pan.”

Almost in juxtaposition to all this is Stout’s affinity for Antarctica. After his first cruise there, he has been on a quest to preserve the continent.

“The skyline was lime green to orange, the sea was mint green, the icebergs were blue-violet and there was an iceberg to the right of the ship just below the surface of the water that emanated a yellow light,” Stout said.



PHOTOS BY WALT MANGINI — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
William Stout’s ink and watercolor drawing “Vampyr.”

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