



Artist Michael Reibel proves it's never too late to chase a new dream.

By Margaret Evans, Editor

Interviewing Michael Reibel is kind of exhausting. He's got so much energy it's hard to keep up. Got a list of questions? Trash it. Follow him down rabbit holes instead. There's good stuff down there.

For instance, for a full-time working artist, Michael got a pretty late start. He dabbled in art as a kid – had a knack for it, too – but he didn't do anything with that knack, nothing at all, between the ages of 18 and 40. Instead, he studied accounting in college, then became a CPA and built an impressive career as an executive with a national healthcare company. It was going very well.

Then one night, at a party at the Reibels' home in Louisville, KY, a local artist noticed an old painting of Michael's on the wall – “It was a purple onion I did when I was 16,” he remembers – and she told him he “really had something.”

“I think I was actually *looking* for something,” he says. Though rapidly advancing at work and doing



triathlons in his spare time – see what I mean about energy? – Michael needed a new challenge. A hobby.

“She encouraged me to not let my artistic abilities go to waste, referring me to a local art studio in Louisville where I signed up for classes. Over the next six years I sought out the best instructors in the country, taking workshops from Roger Dale Brown, Gabor Svagrik, Phil Starke, T. Allen Lawson and most recently Marc Hanson.”

The hobby was becoming a passion.

The first juried show Michael entered was a big one in Nashville, where they only accept 10%-15% of the entries – about 100-150 paintings out of 1000. Not only was he accepted; his painting won the People’s Choice Award.

Michael was getting serious about this art thing – so serious he started contemplating something few successful business executives with three children would dare to: quitting his job and becoming a full-time artist. He and his wife had purchased a lot at Bull Point years earlier – with thoughts of retiring to a warmer climate one day in the far flung future – but now, they considered stepping up that move. A photographer friend had advised Michael to leave Louisville if he wanted to pursue art full-time – apparently, it’s a tough town for artists – and the

Lowcountry, with its beautiful light and landscapes, was looking better all the time.



So, like any good business executive, Michael developed a five-year plan.

“I knew the importance of having contingencies for the unexpected in any plan,” he says. “There were some surprises along the way in our plan but none as profound as the one I learned about in the fall of 2010.”

Michael was in a meeting at his Louisville office when he got a call from his wife Melody, asking him to come down to the parking lot immediately. Worried, he left the meeting and found her downstairs in tears.

“She had been to the doctor that morning and told me she was pregnant with our fourth child – 15 weeks pregnant at the age of 46. This was one contingency *not* in the plan, but so very special! With tears, astonishment and surprise, she told me she still wanted to pursue our plan (so much for being empty nesters!). My wife was also in the midst of pursuing her Ph.D. in Nursing Research at the University of Louisville. Needless to say, I am quite fortunate to have married such a wonderful woman!”

Today, Michael and Melody are happily settled at Bull Point, where they’ve been raising their 8-year-

New Light, New Life

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