



"From Athens to Alton", The Art of Rip Kastaris Opens this Sunday, Messing Gallery at MICDS

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The "Athens to Alton" art exhibit will open this Sunday, January 16th from 3 to 5 pm at Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day Schools, 101 North Warson Rd. Euripides "Rip" Kastaris is an artist living in St. Louis whose work has been featured around the world. Kastaris has completed large scale projects that include the official art of four consecutive Olympiads, illustrations on an interactive DVD for the Rock Star "Sting," the transforming restoration of a historic Missouri church and a recently completed four story landmark mural in Alton, Illinois.

"From Athens to Alton" is a retrospective of colorful images Rip Kastaris has created over the past decade or so. The show includes official art for Salt Lake 2002, Athens 2004, Torino 2006 and Beijing 2008 Olympiads. The most notable of Olympic contributions is "KYKLOS", his permanent monumental mural in Athens Olympic Stadium for 2004, commissioned by the Hellenic Cultural Foundation and given to the Republic of Greece by Hellenes and Philhellenes around the world. Byzantine Iconography from the artist's Hellenic Heritage is well represented in the show. The 2000-year tradition of Byzantine styled Christ figures, Saints and Angels is expressed by this artist who has also made his mark in cathedrals and sanctuaries throughout the country. Last year's restoration of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in St. Louis City transformed the 80-year old building into a heaven-like space of soft pastel cloudscaapes and gold constellations of eight pointed stars. Kastaris invited the Sunday school children of St. Nicholas to assist him with the gilded stars, writing the names of their families on the back side of the canvas before he installed them on the ceiling to complete the 10,000 square foot sanctuary.

Around one million drivers a year pass the recently completed monumental mural on Landmarks Blvd. and Henry Street just across the Clark Bridge in Alton, Illinois. Sponsored by the Alton-Godfrey Rotary and conceived by his longtime colleague, Michael Eckhard, "The Alton Steamboat Landing" has become a colorful landmark to help revitalize the community of which the artist now considers himself a part. The natural as well as historic beauty of Alton is also represented by large and small original paintings in the show. The Clark Bridge, ever changing skies with gold rimmed cloudscapes and birds on telephone wires at sunrise are some of the subjects.

Kastaris is also an inspiring educator who brings his personal vision of art and history to students of all ages. Workshops for grade school art classes include a project that placed "Wings of Hope" angelic sculptures in Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital to inspire and comfort kids who were unable to leave their medical confines on Christmas. During the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Kastaris helped Lindbergh School District 4th graders create a tile mosaic of "Wild Horses" which can be seen when entering Long Elementary School. He coaches hundreds of kids at youth camps during the summer where he introduces them to the techniques of his Hellenic Heritage like mosaic making, the writing of Byzantine style Icons or ceramics that are hand painted and finished with gold leaf.

As an immigrant son of a Greek Orthodox priest, the valedictorian of his 1982 Washington University School of Fine Arts class and a current University of Missouri-St. Louis adjunct professor of a Greek History, Rip Kastaris uses his personal insights and expressive art to inspire and inform St. Louisans and many others around the world. His early years as an illustrator and designer for Fortune 500 companies have helped develop the skills he now uses to promote cultural organizations and large scale public works of art. The show runs through March 11, open weekdays from 9 am to 4 pm.

To preview the Artists' work, you may visit his online gallery at: kastaris.com. For More Information Contact Vicky Wroten at 314-351-7700 or email vwroten@charter.net