

## meet your neighbors

By Laura Hall.



Friend and neighbor, George Post, with a beautiful characteristic face -- strands of hair put on with a toothpick and wet paint.



Church window in the bedroom from a burned-out church in Kent, England.



Flavor organ showing 1,500 bottles of raw material.



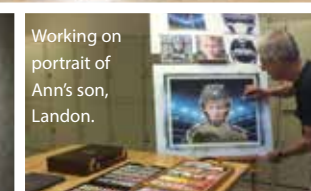
Willem's first still life pastel!



Pastels are kept by value, not color.



3D cabinet in the entrance foyer.



Working on portrait of Ann's son, Landon.



Pastel of grandmother



Willem and Ann van Osnabrugge



Willem in front of Engelberta portrait, Ringling Museum of Art

# Down the Rabbit Hole with WILLEM VAN OSNABRUGGE

I visit with Willem van Osnabrugge in building one of the OWP Towers, and what a diverse and exciting interview is in store for me! I meet a man who has lived life very “large.” How about a graduate of organic chemistry from Utrecht, Holland, trained as a perfumer, immersed in photography, hiked 500 miles on a pilgrimage across Spain, worked as a volunteer docent at the Ringling Museum of Art, and is now enjoying life as an artist? As I exit the elevator into the foyer of his condo, I am awestruck as I face his latest composition that took him over 100 hours to complete. Hanging on the wall is a framed piece of art that leads me beyond the boundaries of my everyday life. It appears to be a mirror reflecting a glass shelf with Delft pottery showing the intricate design of color, done in blue and white, on both front and back along the top shelf; the bottom shelf shows a silver teapot, oranges, and glass decanter. Whoa, wait, as I take a closer look; it's artwork painted on plexiglass, and I realize this delightful deceit of foolery is a *trompe l'oeil*, and I am delighted. This word *trompe l'oeil* is French for “fool the eye,” and I accept that this artist has hoodwinked me with his incredible artwork.

Willem was born and raised 25 miles south of Amsterdam, Holland, and his artistic talents are recognized in grade school in a

small town in Holland. He buys a cheap watercolor set and makes many pencil drawings and watercolors. Willem tells me, “In my early twenties, I discover photography and quickly become very proficient in darkroom techniques to manipulate and improve my prints. I won several awards and had a portrait of my grandmother published in our newspaper. I had my first large exhibition at the age of 25, showing over 40 large prints.”

After graduation from college, Unilever employed him for the entirety of his professional career. After being hired, Willem was sent to Chester, England, for five years and gained intensive training as a perfumer. “My job allowed us to travel extensively and move home many times in various countries. Although being a vice president of a flavor-science department might sound dull, my job was very creative, with the precise application of thousands of flavorings. This job took me to virtually every country in Europe, Far East, Indonesia, Australia, North, and South America, where I interacted with the local people to learn about their cultures and odor and taste preferences.” This job as a perfumer was the point when I begin to feel like Alice when she tumbled down the rabbit hole. This profession was unknown to me, and the information turned my thought processes upside down. I

read this book Willem lent me, and it stated that several years ago, there were only 200 perfumers in the world, and all were men, though scientific research says women have better smell than men. Training for a perfumer can take five to ten years, and his choice of added flavors seem to be like the *trompe l'oeil* of the food world.



Horse Eats Matte.

The flavorist arms himself with a kaleidoscopic palette of flavors, but he must curtail his creativity by price, legal consideration, and the need for local familiarity. Would you guess that the aroma of strawberry is made up of more than 400 added components, coffee has 800 substances, and yes, roast meat, 900 elements? Strawberry is the “king” of flavoring, and all the things you can think of with strawberry flavor or aromas like ice cream, yogurts, jams, or jellies have hundreds of natural chemicals added that mimic the flavor profile of the real fruit. His creations hide inside packets of sauces, soups, or yogurt covered pretzels, almost anything. Flavorist or the perfumer has between 1,500 to 3,000 choices in his organ of natural additions to make an item more stable or intense in flavor and make us say, “Oh, what a delicious strawberry aroma or taste.” The food industry is not waiting for tree bark peach, but pure, natural or nature-identical flavors. This flavor addition is like putting a colossal jigsaw puzzle together.

At age 55, Willem retired and moved to Sarasota, Florida, where he enjoyed 12 years as a part-time docent with the Ringling Museum of Art. Here, he fell in love with the portrait of Engelberta van Brienen, painted by Nicolaes Maes, one of Rembrandt's best pupils. “Every morning, she smiles at me, and we get to know each other.” Look her up at engelberta.

com; she is fascinating. After Sarasota, Willem, and his wife, Ann, of 10 years moved to Destin, Florida. Here, Willem begins painting with his favorite medium of soft pastels. “I often take mental snapshots of striking subjects and events and then spend considerable time mentally photoshopping a composition, details, and colors into a mind painting, long before I put the first stroke on paper.” I get a tour of the living spaces of their condo and find the walls filled with his artwork. Within most every painting, I find something uniquely Willem that expresses something unexpected. The portrait of a horse is entitled “Horse Eats Matte,” and that is what he is doing. There is a \$1,000,000 bill painted with pastels with Ann on the front cover. His choice of portraits is exceptionally varied, and I often get a glimpse of a whimsical or whacky rendition of art that makes me smile with joy and appreciation of his uniqueness.

Pull up heavensart.com for his artwork gallery.



Laura Hall is a freelance journalist and longtime Kelly resident. Contact her at llhall4386@gmail.com.