Chatter Magazine Features Corporate Attorney David Spiller about Legal and Artistic Pursuits

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Miller & Martin corporate attorney David Spiller was featured in the December 2023 issue of *Chatter* magazine. In the article titled “Brush with the Law: David Spiller, The Painting Lawyer, Splits His Time Between Paintbrushes and Portfolios,” Mr. Spiller discusses the similarities between art and law. A companion article “Chattanooga Lawyer David Spiller Balances Professional and Artistic Pursuits,” was also published online on Dec. 4, 2023, in the Life section of the Chattanooga Times Free Press.

Mr. Spiller is both a talented artist and dealmaking attorney. A corporate lawyer with an active mergers and acquisitions practice, he has negotiated and closed business deals on behalf of his clients since day one of his legal practice. Understanding both the art and science of a deal, he regularly works with buyers, sellers, vendors, customers and investors, as well as brokers, accountants and other professionals, to understand key deal points, assess risks, bridge gaps between parties and efficiently drive deals to conclusion.

Click here to read the full profile, “Brush with the Law: David Spiller, The Painting Lawyer, Splits His Time Between Paintbrushes and Portfolios,” on pages 22-23 in Chatter magazine.

Click here to read the full article, “Chattanooga Lawyer David Spiller Balances Professional and Artistic Pursuits,” on TimesFreePress.com.

CULTURE

David Spiller with some of his watercolors in his office at Miller & Martin in downtown Chattanooga

Brush With the Law

David Spiller, the painting lawyer, splits his time between paintbrushes and portfolios

BY SAM STILL | PORTRAIT BY MATT HAMILTON

In David Spiller’s office at Miller & Martin, a law firm in downtown Chattanooga, several pieces of his own artwork break up the monotony of legal papers, binders and books that fill the room.

There’s a painting of a vibrant sunset; there’s an ink portrait of his wife and a rendition of the Château de Chenonceau, a castle in France; and there are several landscapes depicting the American West.

Spiller sees similarities between art and law. He says that in both, there’s a big picture you want to create, and once you have that big picture, you can craft the details. It also helps to have a light touch, so as not to overemphasize the minute particulars.

“The technique of thinking, the way of thinking [about both art and law] is not that dissimilar,” Spiller says. “Each one of these paintings is a problem that you’re solving ... In a legal arrangement, it’s the same thing.”

Spiller says that he was interested in art as a child growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After sustaining an injury at age 12 that required months of recovery and left him unable to participate in sports, his parents enrolled him in art lessons at the Baton Rouge Fine Arts Academy. He studied a variety of mediums, including pastels, charcoal, watercolor and oils.

While studying philosophy at the University of the South, Spiller kept up his artistic pursuits by doing portraiture on commission. While in graduate school for philosophy, he interacted with law students who he says were practical and grounded. These interactions made him gravitate towards a career in law.

In the beginning of his legal career, Spiller worked as a clerk at the Texas Supreme Court and at law firms in that state. Over time, focusing on his career and family led to a slowdown in his artistic pursuits, but he always had a sense that he would return to them.

Once he was more settled into his life, Spiller felt the need to create. At home with nowhere to go during the pandemic, he would paint more frequently, and now he says that he paints most weekends.

“Art is something that can bring you peace; it can challenge you; it can aggravate you, but it’s going to do something,” he says.

Spiller’s work is often inspired by his travels with his family, whether that’s camping in state and national parks or exploring cities and countries abroad. His current series is inspired by a recent summer trip to France. Works in this series include watercolors of Parisian streets, French countrysides and waterlily ponds, following in the steps of Claude Monet, he says.

“In painting, I’m trying to capture places in nature and in the world that, to me, are either beautiful or sublime or reflect a transcendent peace beyond our daily lives,” Spiller says.

In 2022, Spiller had his first solo exhibition at the Exum Gallery at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. It was a goal of his to have a solo show by the time he was 50, and he managed to do it six years ahead of that. He feels that having his work displayed for others is meaningful, and it’s also meaningful to show his children that it’s possible to achieve something if you put your mind to it.

Outside of his own work, Spiller serves on the board of directors for the Association for Visual Arts and ArtsBuild and visits galleries and museums to see other artists’ works. Supporting the arts not only enriches the local economy, but also makes the community a “pleasant and attractive place to live,” he says.

Aspiring artists shouldn’t get discouraged if they aren’t prolific or world-famous, Spiller notes, because if they’re following a path like his, it’s about having art in your life in a meaningful way. “Does it matter if anything you’re making is the one that never sells?” he says.

As for himself, Spiller hopes to continue improving his skills — trying new techniques and being open to new subject matter and media. He wants to continue to create pieces that reflect things and places that have brought him joy, and he hopes that his works can bring that same joy to others.

To see more of Spiller’s work, follow him on Instagram at @atelier_jds or visit his Etsy store: Atelier JDS.

Right and Below: Miller & Martin attorney David Spiller displays artwork from a 2023 plein air session in the South of France, during a summer study, with a master watercolorist.

PHOTOS AND IMAGES CONTRIBUTED BY DAVID SPILLER

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