



Smithsonian  
*National Portrait Gallery*

**PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST  
PATRICK DUEGAW**

Patrick Duegaw, one of the featured artists on the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's competition Web site, has taken the term "living in a fishbowl" to a whole new level. Duegaw and his wife, along with three other artists, live and work in Fisch Haus Studios, an artist cooperative he co-founded, located in Wichita, Kan.

"The Fisch Haus" operates out of a three-story warehouse that contains living, studio and gallery/performance space. Using found materials and whatever tools they happen to have, the artists create what they need from the world around them. Run on a shoestring budget, Fisch Haus has developed a distinct approach to art and design. It is this inventive process that has most influenced his work, Duegaw says, and why he is excited to be a part of the National Portrait Gallery's Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition.

"In school we were taught to evaluate the artwork alone, independent of the artist. But I always felt this takes the work out of context. In my opinion, art is, and should be considered as, an extension of the artist. 'Portrait of an Artist' takes you behind the canvas, so that you can actually witness the processes of the artists featured. It's a way to gain insight into who the artists are, how, why, and under what conditions, they do what they do."

Duegaw's artistic journey began when he enrolled in architectural courses at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan., along with his friend Eric Schmidt. It was here that Duegaw felt the need to expand his boundaries and be both artist and architect. Drawing on their shared experiences, Schmidt, Duegaw, and two other friends from high school co-founded Fisch Haus Studios in 1989. This innovative experiment in cooperation was such a success that Duegaw was able to quit his day job (working on different architecture projects), and devote himself to the full-time pursuit of art.

Duegaw's competition entry, entitled "Swimming Through Interiors," is a portrait of his wife, Elizabeth Stevenson, painted on a substrate composed of salvaged sheetrock. "I tried to paint a portrait of Elizabeth that would somehow breathe with a life that is sometimes lost in the physical imprinting of painted portraits. She is a beautiful swimmer, and I have often thought she is more than human when in water. As Elizabeth is also an architect and an artist, I painted her in the kitchen that we designed and built together in the Fisch Haus."

Fisch Haus has self-produced large-scale annual, and sometimes bi-annual, shows every year since its inception. Throughout the rest of the year, it hosts numerous community art events, ranging from visiting artist exhibitions, to plays and music festivals. Duegaw and Stevenson are currently in Montreal, working on this year's studio.

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Media: For more information or to schedule an interview with Patrick Duegaw, please contact Vicki Moeser at (202) 357-2627 Ext. 111 or Shonali Burke at (202) 974-5027 or [burkes@ruderfinn.com](mailto:burkes@ruderfinn.com). For more information on the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006, please visit [www.portraitcompetition.si.edu](http://www.portraitcompetition.si.edu).