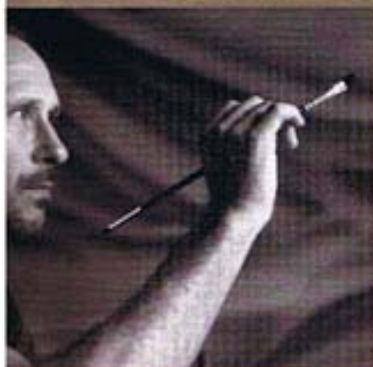


TAKING FORM

A TALENTED MURALIST ANSWERS ART'S CALL

WRITTEN BY SARAH GREAVES GABBADON PHOTOGRAPHY BY F. CARTER SMITH



Asked why he became an artist, Allan Rodewald's answer is succinct: "God gave me no choice." The vibrant work of the abstract painter and mural artist can be seen in Houston's City Hall. "Even at a young age I could appreciate art and my parents nurtured my talent, giving me art lessons at the age of seven." Eventually, Rodewald earned a degree in drawing from Michigan's Siena Heights University, but he values equally the "street-smarts art education" he gained in the years afterward.

Making a living from his art was always one of Rodewald's priorities, and he began by painting custom graphics on motorcycles, cars and boats before branching into the vivid abstract art and captivating murals for which he has become known. "I always did what it took to survive," he says. Now, Rodewald does much more than survive; his career is thriving, fueled by a unique talent and creativity. His striking murals adorn public spaces, including the Houston Aquarium, and his paintings accent some of the city's most stylish residences. Custom murals and mural wallpaper are also part of his repertoire.

Inspired by artists like Picasso and Dali, Rodewald is passionate about his own creative process. "I see shapes, forms and colors in my head and things just develop organically from there. I don't sketch, because I find it dilutes the creative energy. I get an idea, immediately put paint on canvas or pencil to paper, and things just evolve by themselves," he says. And when the process is complete, Rodewald reaps his reward. "When someone can relate to something I've painted, perhaps even recognize something in it that even I don't see, that's what I find most satisfying."

Rodewald grew up in Ottawa Lake, Michigan. Encouraged by friends, he seized the opportunity to move to Houston in 1984. He put down roots in the First Ward, one of the city's oldest downtown neighborhoods, where today he enjoys a "killer view" of the skyline from his home, which is also his gallery. Here he paints and plots his artistic path. Pondering his goals, Rodewald says, "Most of all, I'd like to have a piece of my work on display in a museum." If the popularity of his work is any indication, Rodewald may very well see his dream realized.