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No Challenge Unmet

Artist Michel Muylle expands his vision to filmmaking

by Megan Smith • Photos by Morris Malakoff

A successful oil and gas professional, artist, art collector, and father of two, Michel Muylle is your modern-day Renaissance man. As if that wasn't enough, his résumé now includes his work as an award-winning filmmaker.

Originally from Belgium, Muylle moved to the States in the late 1980s. After a strong career at Shell, Muylle took a turn toward the creative side. Although he still dabbles in independent oil and gas consulting, Muylle has spent the last few years pursuing his artistic interests as a collector and emerging artist. "I grew up in an environment where art is very predominant," Muylle says. "Some of my family members are artists, and my best friends in Belgium are artists. I've always had that exposure to the arts, but I never really aspired to do anything myself."

Although an art collector since his early 20s, Muylle's creative passion was truly ignited after his coming out seven and a half years ago. "After coming out, one of the things I set out to do was to rekindle my interest in the arts," Muylle says. "I started going to a lot of galleries here in Houston. You start meeting artists and people that collect, and it becomes a whole network—a network of very close friends."

It was not until about four years ago that he aspired to create art himself. Muylle took a series of classes at the MFAH's Glassell School of Art, exploring different media and discovering his love for pastels, charcoal, and oil paints. Muylle displayed several of his paintings at White Linen Night in 2010 (the annual celebration of arts and culture in the Heights) and more recently showcased some works at Convivio Tapas Bar and Lounge on North Durham Drive. He is currently displaying two different series of paintings, one minimalist monochromatic, the other a play of linear color composi-



Mixing his media: Michel Muylle (seated on floor) is surrounded by (l-r) vocalist Kristine Mills and artists Joseph Cohen, Nicola Parente, McKay Otto, Lucinda Cobby, and Daniel Kayne, all featured in Muylle's *Collector's Waltz*.

tion, at J Black's Feel Good Kitchen and Lounge on Washington Avenue.

This year, Muylle has ventured into a new form of art—film. Self-directed and -produced, Muylle's first documentary, *Collector's Waltz*, reflects on his passion for collecting art, the close relationships that develop between artists and collectors, and the impact that art can have on others' lives. With an original soundtrack by award-winning Houston vocalist Kristine Mills, the film also highlights Houston's growing art scene, focusing on Muylle's desire to help emerging local artists flourish. "I like to do new things," he says. "I like new people, new situations, and new challenges—and it just popped up in my mind that I had never done anything in film. So, why not?"

Muylle describes the film as appealing to all lovers of the arts, but says that it specifically speaks to emerging artists, gallery owners, emerging collectors, and art students.

The documentary has achieved more success than Muylle ever imagined. Most re-

cently, *Collector's Waltz* was awarded a Gold REMI in the Arts and Culture Film category at the 2012 WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival. "I never intended for this to

become a real film that would go into festivals, but that's the way it evolved," Muylle says. "In concept, it was just to do something new and to capture a moment and put it on film. It was just fantastic to get that recognition."

Collector's Waltz is traveling next to Bologna, Italy, to screen at an art-related festival in January 2013. Muylle is also working on scheduling a select number of viewings in Houston to share the documentary with local audiences.

The success of *Collector's Waltz* has fueled Muylle to pursue several additional concepts for future films. He hopes to find new, young, and local talent to help collaborate on these works and, in turn, create more inspiring documentaries for audiences to enjoy.

Megan Smith is a news and features writer for OutSmart magazine.



Michel Muylle