



ORLANDO ILLUSTRATED

Thomas Thorspecken shows Central Florida in living color.

According to Thomas Thorspecken, if you stand in one place long enough, anything can become fascinating. And he would know. Since January 1, Thorspecken has spent no less than three hours a day gazing at random places in Orlando, locations most of us would consider mundane, unless you saw them through his eyes.

“Life is so beautiful when you really look,” he tells me over coffee in a Roberto Benigni-reminiscent moment. He hands me one of three sketchbooks that he has filled with the watercolor renderings of hundreds of Orlando’s famous and more esoteric landmarks. Colorful, quirky and nothing at all like the drawings Thorspecken created during his decade-long tenure as a Disney illustrator, each sketch chronicles our fair city’s culture.

So, what motivates someone to spend their days traveling around the city sketching? After the digital revolution made Thorspecken’s traditional illustrator position irrelevant, almost overnight, he decided to return to his urban sketching roots, a seed that was planted 14 years ago when he lived and worked in Manhattan as an illustrator for the *New York Daily News*.

Thorspecken’s blog, “Analog Artist in a Digital World” (thorspecken.blogspot.com), is a creative reconciliation between the analog and digital world – a way for him to keep with the times while still holding a paint brush in his hands. He’s the first person to point out just how much depth there is to Orlando: “There’s so much art and beauty if you really look for it.”

After discovering the perfect “poetic

moment,” he sits down for at least 90 minutes and captures the moment stroke by stroke. His sketches are posted daily on his blog, each including a petite anecdote about how the subject came to be and a person or two he met along the way.

Thorspecken has become something of an urban legend people whisper about in coffee shops. His sketches are unpolished, imperfect – just like real life. But they are endeared by many because they breathe life into common and relatable moments. “I capture real people doing real things,” he confesses proudly.

Next time you’re out and about, look for an artist perched inside the action with a sketchbook and pocket-sized water color palette. Who knows, maybe you’ll be the next “Orlando moment.”

– Kristen Manieri

PHOTOS: (LEFT) KRISTEN MANIERI (RIGHT) THOMAS THORSPECKEN