

It's a Dog's World.

by Helen Kelly

At least it is to artist Michael McWillie, whose whimsical, mischievous paintings are all about our canine companions.

McWillie grew up in Texas, in the company of dogs, which included a Doberman and a Bulldog. He received his BFA in Painting from the University of Texas at Austin, did post-graduate work at UCLA in filmmaking, and then embarked on a career that included stints in visual design, advertising, s

television and experimental film directing. He currently owns McWillie Design, an advertising and design company that serves clients such as Microsoft, The Wall Street Journal, American Airlines and the Walt Disney Company. But he continues to paint for his own satisfaction, usually in the barn on his horse ranch in Parker, Texas.

In McWillie's paintings — which are grounded in abstraction and have an underlying emphasis on shape, color



"After the Joint Closes", acrylic/canvas, 48 x 60", 1998



"Missing Bulldog", acrylic/canvas, 20 x 24", 1998

and texture — the dogs are metaphors for people, and are usually depicted in human pursuits, such as smoking cigars. "There are a couple of ways to look at the paintings," explains the artist, with a note of humor in his voice. "They are either about what your dog might do while you're asleep... or what you would do if you were a dog." Often featured in the background of the paintings is a neon sign in the shape of a bone, which McWillie says is a nightclub called The Bone Factory. "The pups go there from about 2:00 to 5:00 in the morning," he laughs.

McWillie currently owns a Dalmatian named Winston and a Schnauzer,

Risky. Winston has been the inspiration for several paintings, along with Scotties and Bulldogs. Risky exerts her own influence on McWillie, as well. "I find that the Scotties in my paintings are becoming a little grayer, like the Schnauzer."

Michael McWillie's work was most widely seen in the 1997 Neiman Marcus InCircle Celebration, and is represented in the permanent collection of the University of Texas at Austin and in numerous private collections.

This delightful artist's paintings will be on display August 6 through September 17 at Christina Gallery, 271 E. Paces Ferry Rd.