



Robert Villamagna - *Music and Fine Arts*

Robert Villamagna has been referred to as “The Tin Man” with a heart, because his primary choice of art media is repurposed tin, cut and hammered onto wood as collage elements and then assembled to create his iconic art. Villamagna’s painted sign work graces walls, murals, and businesses throughout Wheeling. However, his work reaches well beyond the medium of tin and includes paintings, cartoons, collages of wood and metal, as well other mixed media. His visionary artistry reveals what some might see as the evolution of “found” materials into truly ground-breaking representations of the world around us. His work has also been featured in multiple print media throughout the nation.

Robert Villamagna is Assistant Professor of Art at West Liberty University, where he teaches studio art and is the curator of the Nutting Gallery exhibiting a wide variety of artists’ work for the campus and community. Robert came to academics along a circular path after having been an illustrator for the U.S. Army, a steelworker at Weirton Steel, and a father of four. He graduated from Franciscan University and took a Master’s degree in Art Therapy from Wright State University.

While Villamagna is a full-time professor and a working artist in his own studio, producing art for exhibitions, museums, and sale, he is also an ambassador and promoter of the arts in our community. Robert is a member of the Wheeling Arts Commission and lead member of the Visual Arts Committee. Not keeping his art nor his work to himself, he is responsible for numerous public art installations around Wheeling, including the parking meter art project in the Centre Market area and murals under the Interstate 70 bridge. As a member of the Wheeling Arts Commission, his work on beautification

projects throughout the city has been instrumental in strengthening Wheeling’s image as a center for the arts in West Virginia and the region. He is a strong participant and supporter of local art fairs and festivals.

In 2016 the West Virginia Division of Culture and History chose him as West Virginia Artist of the Year, an award that recognizes an individual artist who has impacted the exposure to the arts in West Virginia through his or her work. On bestowing the award, Arts Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith said, “His artworks speak to the heritage of our state.” A frequent winner of their West Virginia Juried Biennial Exhibit, Villamagna’s works have consistently been purchased for the permanent art collection. His Fountain of Youth and Moundsville Prison Break, 1949, both reside at the State Museum at the Capitol Complex. His works are also exhibited at private galleries throughout the region. Other state awards include multiple awards at Tamarack’s David L. Dickirson Fine Arts Gallery. His work has appeared in private galleries throughout the region, and because of his breadth of knowledge of the visual arts, he is frequently asked to jury art exhibitions and offer workshops.

Robert Villamagna is truly an exemplary, award-winning, and practicing artist in Wheeling, one who “talks the talk and walks the walk” by making art every day and by unselfishly sharing his art, his knowledge, and his passion with all of us. Wheeling is fortunate to have him working in our midst and in bringing the notoriety of his art home to us, thus making Wheeling an Art Center for the state and the region.