

Urban Stele exhibition at Lincolnwood Village Art Gallery January 10 – March 15, 2011

Sculptor's works adorn Lincolnwood Gallery

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Eric H. Steele, already a successful lawyer and technology consultant, turned artist to create the steel sculptures shown at Lincolnwood Village's Art Gallery now until March 14.

A public reception will be held for him from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday at Village Hall, 6900 N. Lincoln Ave., where his art may be viewed 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

All of the 25 pieces his is showing are abstract and architectural in the show, titled "Urban Stele," yet tell different stories.

The general theme of his work explores the interaction between organic forms and structural, architectural forms. It also shows how the man-made environment influences people and people influence it, Steele said.

"A lot of these pieces are really totems. The analogy I like to use is that the Northwest Indians who live in Seattle, British Columbia and Vancouver made their totems out of big trees and showed eagles, hawks and vegetation, because that was their environment," he said. "I made the environment that we live in -- buildings, architectural details, and parks," he added.

Steele was born in Chicago and grew up in the Lakeview neighborhood. His education includes courses and workshops at the Evanston Art Center; Lill Street Art Center, Chicago; Ox-Bow Summer Program of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Saugatuck, Mi.; and Yale University, New Haven, Ct.

But when it was time for him to settle down, he returned to live in Lakeview, then Lincoln Park, where he now resides with his wife, Tammy, after raising two now adult children, Meg and Donnan.

"My mother was a sculptor and I grew up thinking that would be an interesting thing to do, but I was more of a consumer before this, buying an occasional piece at an art fair," Steele said.

"Now, I'm working harder than when I working at making a living. Am I making a living in art? No -- but I'm retired!" he joked.

Steele noted that steel is his favorite medium, because it is a basic material of the engineered, built environment.

"When heated steel melts and flows, it takes on a variety of surfaces, textures and shapes," he said.

"Heat is one force of life and emotion. It devastates. It can be harnessed. It transforms. It can infuse hard reality with hope," he added.