

## Line designs

Heather Rule  
hrule@postbulletin.com

Austin artist Bruce Loeschen drew his first city montage, of Austin, in 1979 for an art show advertisement.

When his advertisement seemed to create more buzz than the event, that was the first sign that Loeschen might be able to go forward with drawing pen montages.

"It was a wonderful surprise," Loeschen said. "How often does your ad sell more than your artwork?"

He began to get requests for more city montages, so he made just a few over the next couple of years. As demand for the artwork continued to grow, he eventually reached completing 24 cities a year.

### Background

Originally from Golden, Ill., Loeschen is a retired art teacher, having spent 19 years at Austin High School and 15 years in Southland Public Schools before that. He has a bachelor's degree from Wartburg College.

For awhile now, he's been working through Community Creations to determine what cities he will draw and what items to include in the montage.

"It's supposed to look like a 19th century portrait illustration," Loeschen said, "and still keep them photo realistic."

There can be about 200 items in a montage representing a city. Of those, about half are landmarks, historical aspects and famous people "to give a character of the city." The other half is ad space, which is negotiated between Loeschen, the sales staff and company owners.

He is sent pictures and lists of items that need to be included. He uses bulletin boards and smaller sheets of paper to plot out what the montage will look like based on the items involved and their directional areas in the city.

He said the hardest part is getting started with the pencil layout.

"It's like a jigsaw puzzle," Loeschen said.

### Works of art

Since he started with his first Austin montage, Loeschen has drawn more than 200 city montages (some cities with multiple pieces different years). Thirty-six pieces are from Minnesota cities, like Rochester, Red Wing, Adams, Albert Lea and Owatonna. Fifty-one works have been done for Iowa.

Other states with montages include Colorado, Indiana, Illinois, Florida, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Maryland, Michigan, Kentucky, Kansas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

When it rains, it pours. Loeschen said there was a six-week period recently when he didn't have any montages to work on. Then four projects came in during the same week.

"It's so busy, I haven't got time to be bored with it," Loeschen said.

As far as his art goes, Loeschen said pen montages are "definitely the focus" for him. His pieces are so filled with detail that they've become easy to spot across the country by friends and former students; they know it's a Loeschen print.

Other montages are out there, but what makes Loeschen's art stand out is the degree of detail he puts into them. There's one other thing that makes his pieces of work identifiable.

"Every time I do a city, there's a Volkswagen Beetle somewhere," Loeschen said. "And that's a sure sign that it's mine.

"The fun part is the appreciation you get from the work. And it's a great feeling when you've finished it."