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**Elvis, Doc Holliday, Jim Morrison, Mark Twain:
Val Kilmer, the actor, now plays the role of artist**

By: Michael Granberry



Actor Val Kilmer is bringing his artwork to Dallas, where it will be shown during the upcoming Dallas Art Fair.
(Tom Fox/The Dallas Morning News)

As an actor, Val Kilmer has given us memorable portrayals of Elvis Presley, Doc Holliday and Batman. He is perhaps best remembered, however, for the chilling edge he brought to the role of rock icon Jim Morrison in *The Doors*.

It's hard to believe, but Kilmer is 56. And there is more to his life than starring in movies. He is also an artist whose work will be shown at the Dallas Art Fair, which begins Friday at Fashion Industry Gallery on Ross Avenue.

"As an actor," Kilmer said in an interview conducted this week by email, "one is always trying to convey a truthful emotion, and because of the extreme challenges involved, lots of rehearsing is always desired."

Kilmer is bringing five pieces to the fair. Two are titled *Godblock*. He has applied acrylic paint to six wooden boxes that form a column with the word GOD in capital letters at the top. He's represented by the elite Santa Fe-based gallery James Kelly Contemporary.

"I see the current interest I have in a repetition of words as a kind of emotional exploration, a kind of rehearsal about the subject of art itself, perhaps ... Using a word like 'God' invites, or even demands, a response," Kilmer says.

Kilmer grew up in the San Fernando Valley near Los Angeles. He graduated from Chatsworth High School. Actor Kevin Spacey (*House of Cards*) once described seeing a performance by Kilmer and Mare Winningham in a high school drama festival as a turning point in his own life. Spacey soon transferred to Chatsworth High, where he, too, graduated. Spacey said he also went to the renowned Juilliard school because Kilmer did.

"I'm very proud of all my alumni," Kilmer says. "Kevin and I were friends from Sunday school in the San Fernando Valley, so with all his awards and accomplishments, it's a special kind of bond."

Growing up in Los Angeles did not necessarily "have anything to do with my interest as an actor," Kilmer says, "except, perhaps, I discovered sooner by living there than, say, Cleveland, that acting was a way to make a very good living."

And that alone helped Kilmer reach an epiphany.

"I remember this just entertained me to no end," he says, to realize that millions of dollars and the mansions one could buy would fall "to class clowns and misfits from around the world."

Juilliard, he says, "defined my standards, but I wouldn't blame that fine institution for my wayward career." He says it fostered "brilliant high standards that still inspire me. Two of my classmates have their own theater companies."

Theatrical excellence no doubt inspired Kilmer's mesmerizing portrayal of Morrison, as did the direction of Oliver Stone, whom he says "was and is a true artist, always growing and ambitious to be original and to be relevant, 'to hold the mirror up to nature' as Hamlet says of the charge of the actor. He's surprisingly underrated, perhaps because his passion for his subject always remains his main focus — even years after the film has come out — a true artist trait."

Kilmer lists as his own favorite characters Hamlet, Doc Holliday and Mark Twain, whom he played at the Wyly Theatre in 2013. "Morrison was awesome," he says, "but not fun."

Looking back at the expanse of his career, he defines the sweetest moments, the lasting highs as being the product in many ways of "extraordinary luck. So many locations and experiences that just could never happen in real life."

He counts among those moments "performing at the Whisky a Go Go — live! And having the streets of Paris and London and Times Square roped off and protected by police because you are working there!

"And so many stars — I love stars — kissing Angelina Jolie and Michelle Pfeiffer, laughing with Robert Downey Jr. and Marlon Brando ... running lines in a convertible with Bob Dylan ... I've written three plays. All three received standing ovations during their entire runs.

"I'm blessed. People applaud when I do my job properly! What a privilege! I'm so grateful."

Plan your life

The Dallas Art Fair is from

11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and from noon to

6 p.m. Sunday, with most events at the Fashion Industry Gallery,

1807 Ross Ave., Dallas.

Ticket information and details at dallasartfair.com.



Val Kilmer's Godblock, 2014, acrylic paint on six wooden boxes, 72 inches x 12 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist and James Kelly Contemporary, Santa Fe, which will show Kilmer's work at the Dallas Art Fair.