

 **Goodnight Raleigh** – a look at the art, architecture, history, and people of the city at night



Local Artist Spotlight: Matt McConnell

by John Morris in Arts on 12/11/2008



If you've dined at The Mint, Fins, Lucky 32, Margaux, 18 Seaboard, Tavola Rossa, or Solas (among many others), you've seen Matt McConnell's work in the form of lit sculpture. Matt's team includes Mac Farris, Dan Furguson, David Eichenberger, and Greg Palmer. Josh Davis, Jim Appling, and Conor Boing also help out part time. Together, they create absolutely beautiful artwork, lighting, furniture, and a number of other projects for both industrial and residential use.



I first became acquainted with his lighting work which was positioned throughout the restaurant that I worked at a few years ago. Later at the first Downtown Appetite for Art, I was able to see a few of

his larger works. Once you've seen one of his lit sculptures, you'll probably start to recognize more around town. Many of his pieces are striking examples of geometry and symmetry, yet his work is so diverse you can't possibly lump it into any category.



Pictured above is Matt's new studio. He and his team are still getting things unpacked. A little over 2 months ago, the warehouse housing his studio was largely destroyed by a structure fire. Although no materials, projects, tools, or supplies were lost, it was a massive setback. Such a situation could have spelled disaster, but it hasn't affected any of Matt's existing works in progress. He is still able to continue working on projects such as a commissioned sculpture for The Cancer Center at DCH Regional Medical in Alabama. The new studio is located in Boylan Heights, behind Ant Farm.



Although many of his clients are corporations or other professional organizations that may be facing budget cuts or perhaps reigning in spending as a result of concerns over the economy, demand for his work hasn't slowed in the least. His studio is unique in that it occupies a very unique niche – lit sculpture, railing, concrete countertops, as well home and office furniture.



When asked about how much of his work is free-form art as opposed to a piece built to spec, he had this to say:

“There is art – and art is ‘I’m going to make whatever’. Design is answering a problem and responding to people’s suggestions. Design is interaction and dialogue. Design answers an issue that needs to be addressed. Art is free thought. Often, artwork generates the design. As a business you are responding as a designer – unless someone calls and says I liked what you did, make me something cool, but that’s uncommon.”



Although he designs and fabricates massive sculptures dozens of feet in length for companies and large non-profit organizations, he also works with individuals to provide lighting for their home as well as donating work to several art benefits.



Raleigh is incredibly lucky to have such a talented and visionary artist providing such stunning work to beautify the public meeting spaces that dot the areas not only in the Triangle region, but also across the country as well. The showroom isn't yet set up at the new studio, but if you're interested in his work check out his [web site](#) for more information.