



Todd Mrozinski works in his studio at the Pfister Hotel.



Q&A With Artist Todd Mrozinski

Q: What prompted these “shadow paintings”?

A: I started to paint my late father’s portrait based off of a black-and-white photo. I looked out at the tree shadows and realized what I needed to paint. I took the canvas off of the working wall, laid it on the ground, knelt down and traced the tree shadow directly onto the canvas. My dad was showing himself in a different form, and I felt his presence profoundly.

What excites you most about this work?

It’s a fun, spontaneous thing for me. I don’t know who’s going to be walking through and what experiences they’re going to have. It all goes into the artwork.

What time of year offers the best light for your portraits?

As the sun gets lower in the sky when autumn starts, it’s better light for tracing. Winter is even better with its lower light, because the shadow isn’t distorted as much with the light coming lower on the horizon.

Inspired by Light

An artist at a Milwaukee hotel captures guests’ glow in a public portrait series.

It’s picture day at school. You wear your best clothes. You practice your best smile. Adults who sit for portraits at the AAA Four Diamond-rated **Pfister Hotel** (🌟🌟🌟🌟) in Milwaukee often feel like they’re back in that moment in school. “People enjoy those minutes of focused attention,” says Todd Mrozinski, the hotel’s seventh artist-in-residence.

Mrozinski creates shadow portraits that depict a face set against a background of glowing light. Guests walk into the historic hotel, wander to his studio and, if they choose, sit for a sketch.

Mrozinski asks his subjects to sit between a light source—either a window or a studio light—and a canvas. He uses pencil to trace the outline

of the shadow the person casts on the canvas. After his subject leaves, Mrozinski fills in the outline with a glowing shadow portrait.

Elsa Diaz-Bautista of Whitefish Bay had brunch at the hotel when she noticed Mrozinski’s work. She found the portraits strikingly beautiful, and her daughter sat for a sketch. The finished product of Iana Bautista perfectly captures Iana’s personality, Diaz-Bautista says. Later, she and her husband decided to pose, too, so the entire family has portraits at home.

“What I really hope to paint is the interaction of the sitter and myself in the light of the Pfister, to capture that moment and that memory,” Mrozinski says.