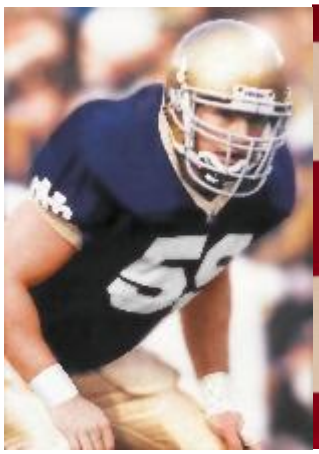
An Artists Journey: In Conversation with Artist Matt Kunz

Interview by Marilyn DeCusati





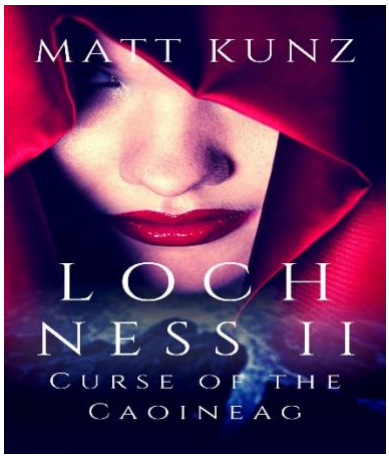
Eagle Scout, author, filmmaker, business professional, entrepreneur, community leader, and former walk-on football player at the University of Notre Dame, Matt Kunz has always embraced adventure. He has climbed mountains, competed in athletic championships, and helped lead a city. More recently, he has turned his attention to the visual arts, embarking on a new and creative chapter in an already diverse life.

Here is my conversation with visual artist Matt Kunz.

MD: You've been an athlete, elected official, business professional, entrepreneur, author, filmmaker, and, more recently, an artist. What first drew you to making art, and when did you realize it might become a serious part of your life?

MK: I've written and published eight books, but the art just happened. I was writing a sequel to one of my books, *Loch Ness II: Curse of the Caoineag*, when I ran into writer's block. I had never experienced that before, so I simply picked up a pencil and started drawing. I took a picture of my drawing and posted it on Facebook, where I received some very positive feedback.

Then I discovered an app called "Sketch a Day," where people are invited to create a sketch based on a daily prompt. That led to people asking me to create charcoal sketches, which eventually led to a commission to draw the eighth hole at Pebble Beach in charcoal.



Then, through an artist acquaintance, I was introduced to Hal Schwab, a watercolor artist and instructor at the Cumming Arts Center. Hal was a huge fan of my dad, George Kunz, a Hall of Fame nominee who played for the Atlanta Falcons. Hal told me that he had even worn my dad's jersey number in high school.

That connection led me to take Hal's watercolor class, which helped me move beyond my writer's block. I was eventually able to finish my book.

At the time, in 2023, I was earning a living as a financial advisor, but I wanted to do something more creative—something inspirational. The answer came through an appreciation for the beauty of the moment and my deep and abiding faith.

During COVID, St. Brendan the Navigator Catholic Church in Cumming, where I am an active member, held services outdoors, including in all kinds of weather. One such service took place on a very cloudy and stormy day. I took a photograph that day, later painted it, and showed the painting to the pastor.

There had been a church committee working on a video that told the story of St. Brendan the Navigator, and the group needed illustrations. As a result of that initial painting, I was asked to create a total of 55 illustrations for the book.

From there, I made the difficult decision to close my financial practice and pursue a creative career full time. It was 2024, and the decision was an act of faith. I hired an art coach and joined the Cumming Arts Center, becoming part of a community of artists.

MD: **What aspects of your various career backgrounds or upbringing show up in your artwork?**

MK: Faith has always been important to me and is a key element in my creative process. Many of my nonfiction books include elements of faith. I also draw from my experiences in football, business, and leadership.

I've always been curious about everything, and I journal regularly. I easily have about 100 journals. I find that my art is a process of discovering what I like and what might have meaning to someone else.

My process is similar across all my endeavors. It's about thoughtfulness, discipline, and alignment—aligning technique and rules and doing the right thing at the right time. I've learned to trust that process. My view is that you have to love the process as well as the finished work and hopefully, people who view it will be able to relate to it on some meaningful level.

MD: Other than your commission work, what usually comes first in your artwork—an idea, an image, a feeling, or a material?

MK: Any or all of those can come first. Even if I'm not specifically inspired, I go into my art studio every day for at least 30 minutes, and something almost always happens.



What I think about in my creative process is what might be relevant in today's world and helpful in the moment—a moment of beauty captured, or something hopeful and inspiring. My hope is that my art will help someone see and feel something beyond themselves and bring them joy and inspiration.

That's where my idea for a painting of St. Michael the Archangel originated. I wanted to create a large painting on watercolor canvas. It took some time to research history and determine how I wanted to portray him, and I was ultimately pleased with the outcome. As I'm sure is true for many artists, the hard part is parting with your artwork. The painting is now in a dorm room at the University of Georgia, and I'm happy that it meant something to the young man who purchased it.

MD: I've heard a lot about "artist's doubt" as an issue at times. What role, if any, does doubt or fear play in your creative process?

MK: It really doesn't for me. Even if I'm trying something new and it isn't successful—like a recent self-portrait I shared with other artists—I can still use the experience to inspire others to keep trying new things and to try to be better tomorrow than they are today.

I also like to think that artistry can create a reaction in other people independent of the artist. Hopefully, it can help them feel inspired and see beauty in the present moment.

MD: What are you working on next?

MK: I like to do large paintings in bold colors like the one below because I enjoy the challenge. I still enjoy working in watercolor and like the way the water moves. Acrylics have that same sense of flow.



"Go Braves" Painting (Acrylic)

I'm a minimalist, so I like to keep things simple. I don't like to control the imagination with too many details. I think it's better to suggest things and allow the imagination to reach its own conclusion. I'm also a big believer in the importance of composition, including disappearing edges and intensity.

So, I use a limited approach: a limited palette, limited strokes, and a limited

number of brushes. I'm practicing using only five colors. It may be different colors each time, but only five —warm or cool. I like that approach because I find it harmonious.

My journey into art is less about arriving at a destination and more about remaining open to what comes next. I am always willing to take on new challenges and follow where my curiosity and faith lead. I hope my art helps others to appreciate the moment, find beauty in it and keep moving forward.

Matt is a member of the Cumming Arts Center and serves on its Board of Directors, where he also chairs the Marketing Committee. He continues to focus on painting while pursuing his other creative interests, including writing and filmmaking. Above all, he remains a lifelong learner—continuing to explore, create, and find new ways to share beauty and inspiration with others.