

Meet Katie m. Berggren - Local Artist
2008 ~ By Christine Pienkowski, Freelance Writer
“With each painting I try to express raw emotion and honesty.”

Katie, can you explain how you started as an artist?

Sure, I have always loved art and have known for years that I'd be an artist. Drawing was second nature when I was young. In grade school I loved the challenge of drawing humorous portraits of my teachers, especially when goaded on by my classmates.

When I was a receptionist for a styling salon, I would spend my spare time drawing the clients who were waiting to get their hair done. This actually grew into a portrait business that kept me busy for many years.

But, as a serious student, I began as a color pencil artist. I was attracted to the detail that colored pencils could provide. I loved experimenting with line and composition. Then at some point it hit me that my art was too structured and it didn't feel as freeing as I wanted it to be. I yearned to capture emotion in a more expressive way.

When did you begin painting?

It was before my second child was born. While I was painting a mural on my son's bedroom wall it hit me like a train! I loved the freedom and the ability to splash color and achieve texture with acrylic paint. I also loved the larger scale.

Although I love painting murals for my family, I don't do it professionally, but that experience started my use and experimentation with paint. And it was at that moment that I felt that I was traveling down the right artistic path. I eventually moved to larger and larger paintings and I plan to increase the dimensions throughout 2007, with new framing and presentations.

Is it easier to achieve mood and emotion with paint?

As it turns out, I can achieve similar detail with paint as with colored pencils but I can really achieve mood and emotion through the use of vivid color. Although I liked the colored pencil compositions, once they were completed they felt too static. With acrylic paint I can add daubs of color towards the end of the painting process and that way add excitement, emotion and spark visual interest. The process of painting just seems to ignite every part of me, so I often feel that the completed painting contains a piece of my soul.

How does the process of painting affect you emotionally?

Well, with each composition I try to express raw emotion and honesty. It is as if I am meant to capture a tiny moment in time or little parts of life, to draw attention to them in a special way. Basically, I create compositions based on life, motherhood, dreams, nature and devotion or a combination of them all.

Sometimes the ideas come to me faster than I can write them down. Not a day goes by without a flood of ideas and impressions. With two small children I often can't create fast enough, so I will just take notes.

How do you finally determine what is a good idea- or not a good idea?

It is when I am drawing in my sketch book. I will know when a really good painting is developing because the composition and the meaning will actually take my breath away. It doesn't matter what time of day or night it is, when the image emerges I must get to my studio immediately to begin working. Painting just helps me to feel alive! Even when I am completely overwhelmed by life, painting keeps me going.

What is your goal when you are painting?

I assess the pieces that I am working on constantly and try to achieve flowing motion with purposeful freshness. I am not afraid to grab a huge dollop of white paint and then cover up a piece on my canvas that simply is not working. One of the joys of using acrylic paint is that it is so forgiving.

I have no desire to ever put a piece of my work into public view if I don't think that it is beautifully done. There have been times when I have reviewed my portfolio and simply dumped a few paintings because they are simply not what I'd call my best. I tell myself every day that I am only as good as my worst piece. That helps me keep the quality of my work high.

So how would you, as an artist, define art?

In my view, art helps people to see something common in a unique way. A piece of art should take you to a special place. It should provoke intense feelings and grab your soul! It should invite you back time and again to experience it.

How did you get into graphics and web site design?

I figured that I should study an applied art to compliment being an artist. I chose graphic design because I found myself interested in typography and the shapes of letters. I would critique magazine ads as I read them. Web design came later and then I decided to include identity (logos) and web sites.

You were recently voted the "Woman of the Year" through the Vancouver based women's business club, Women Entrepreneurs Organization. Tell us about that.

I joined the group in 2002 and shortly afterwards I became WEO's newsletter, identity (logo) and web site designer. This group has added a huge part to my business career. They have provided inspiration, networking opportunities, educational experiences and growing friendships over the years. I believe that I was voted Woman of the Year in 2007 for my part in helping WEO to grow as an organization and because my personal business growth has shown that I have some strength as both an artist and a business woman. I feel really honored.

What is next?

At present I am building my portfolio, defining and refining my skills and techniques. I plan to continue to study art and to promote my work by setting up gallery and business showings. My paintings will be on display during April and May (2008) at Elements Day Spa and Salon in Vancouver. You can see more work and learn more at www.kmberggren.com. I can also be reached at Katie@kmberggren.com or 360.213.7879.

Christine Pienkowski is a freelance writer who lives in Battle Ground, Washington.