





You can go Home again

Regional artist, Pamela Searcy, tested Thomas Wolfe's famous quotation, "You Can't Go Home Again," by moving back to Yakima with her husband, Mike Mullen, many decades after she'd left the valley for college!

While visiting Searcy in her mid-century home in the Barge Chestnut neighborhood, it seemed appropriate to discover she had a brass doorknob located smack dab in the middle of her fuchsia colored front door! Once inside it became immediately evident by the number of amazing paintings and bronze sculptures scattered around her sunny living room that this woman lives and breathes her artistic pursuits.

Inside the home of artist Pamela Searcy, you can see her greenhouse, turned art studio next to her serene pool





Searcy grew up in Wapato where her family owned an orchard on the Yakima Indian Reservation. From a young age, she loved art. She remembers her mother being artistic and an excellent seamstress. Her father had a talent for carving and could take a piece of wood and whittle an unbroken chain from it. As a child, she tried to copy him by pinching an Ivory soap bar in an attempt to make it look like a turtle.

After graduating from St. Joseph Academy in downtown Yakima, Searcy moved to the west side of the state to enroll at Seattle University, determined to immerse herself in the school's art department. However, her father had another idea for her future and insisted she major in education so she would have a job after graduation. Not one to give up on her dream of becoming an artist, she majored in education though she also enrolled in as many art classes as she could fit into her full schedule. "I did a lot of design, drawing, painting and sculpture," Searcy said. She chuckled, remembering that her father never realized that taking 23 credits a quarter didn't equate to a standard course load for an undergraduate student! Outside of class, she would spend her free time walking around Seattle's beautiful Capitol Hill neighborhoods while filling her art notebook with detailed pen and ink drawings of the old mansions. She wistfully recalled the loss of that same precious notebook because her art instructor failed to give it back to her.

OPPOSITE: Pamela's "Eleven Faces" sculpture took her over a year to create TOP: Pamela's painting styles go from traditional to abstract, all in vivid colors and interesting textures

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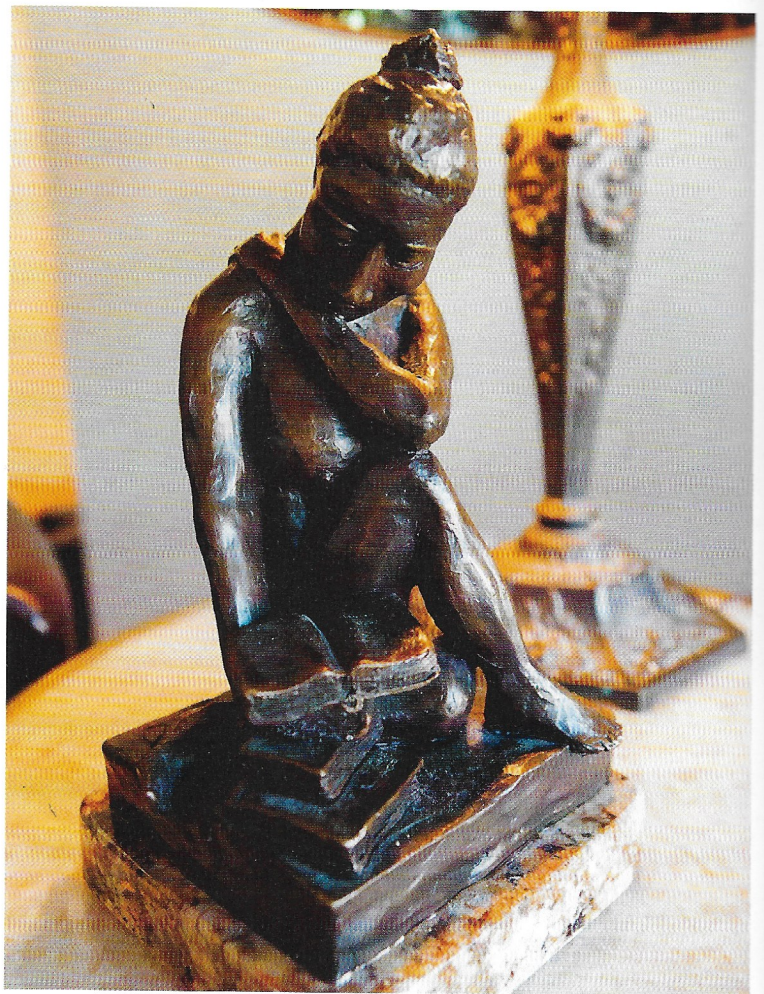
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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Pamela puts the finishing touches on her most recent sculpture, which will be shown at her one-woman show in July • A close-up of another of Pamel's bronze pieces called "The Angler" • Another bronze of Pamela's "The Reader" now resides in San Francisco

After completing her undergraduate and graduate studies, she started her career teaching elementary and high school art as well as working as a middle school counselor. During those years of juggling work and taking care of her three children, Searcy never gave up her dream of becoming a full-time artist. During her children's college years, she changed tracks and became a real estate agent in Bellevue, where she worked for 18 years.

Finally in 2007, her children all earned college degrees and Searcy decided it was time to get serious about pursuing a career as an artist. "We sold our big house in Redmond, moved into a smaller home and bought a vacation place on Camano Island," she said. It was during this time she started to explore sculpture. "I never liked throwing clay on the wheel. My mind couldn't force me to make a perfect pot!" she said. However, sculpting from a solid brick of clay allowed her to take a photo and by using dental tools for detail, sculpt what she saw in the picture.

A fascinating bronze sculpture entitled, "Eleven Faces," sits in her living room. "This took me over a year to create including having it bronzed. I'm very patient," she admitted. "When I'm doing art you can't talk to me because I can't hear it!" She usually spends at least four hours at a time working on a specific piece of art. She has a special place for the Native American neighbors she knew when she was living on her parent's fruit farm on Yakima Nation. She often sculpts the images from her mother's collection of pictures taken during her childhood.

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Brushes in Pamela's art studio are ready and waiting for her next creation


Searcy has also incorporated her mother's old photos into her impressionistic paintings that capture the colors of the Yakima Valley. One beautiful piece, titled "The Root Diggers," shows two Native American women working in a field covered in sagebrush. Many of her paintings reflect the ever-changing beauty of Eastern Washington's rugged terrain.

Searcy decided to take her artistic pursuits out of her living room. She renovated the glass pool house into a year-round studio. By replacing the glass roof with solid roofing material and insulating the structure, she now enjoys the privacy of her new studio while having a lovely, seasonal view of her backyard through the glass walls.

While she's been involved over the years with the Camano Island Art Guild, Searcy is now earning her place in the Yakima Arts community. In July, she will have a one-woman show at Oak Hollow Gallery, located in the Chalet Place Shopping Center.

When did Searcy realize she'd made it as a full-time artist? She reflected that it probably happened several years ago. "A lady flew up all the way from San Francisco, got a rental car and came to see my show in Camano Island," she said. "She bought my bronze sculpture, 'The Reader', so she could see it when she looked out her bathroom window!" Laughing, Searcy admitted it was a big sale and a huge ego boost for someone who has spent a lifetime working to become artist. 

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