

Illustrating Good Vibes Only

by Simone Wichers-Voss :: 1/5/2024



Her World In Colors: Bosque County artist Judy Parton's art illuminates with vibrant luminosity, bringing smiles to faces of art patrons

Sure, art can be an extremely serious business, with talk about values, techniques, the composition and the complicated philosophical motivation behind the piece. But it can also be so much fun, make you smile and just feel all warm and fuzzy inside. That is exactly what Judy Parton's art does to a viewer; it puts them in a happier, much more colorful world, whether it's that frolicking baby donkey, or that burst of color in her wild flower paintings, or the bold color choices she makes.



During November, Parton's expressive paintings, with elated bursts of color in an incredible variety of techniques, left visitors to the Bosque Arts Center Atrium Gallery feeling they could take on the world again, getting that boost of energy from Parton's exhibit. Her art is a feast for the eyes and soul. Just the gallery alone, decorated in a Mexican fiesta style with flag garlands, an orange cow hide as well as a black and white one for contrast invited them in to her kaleidoscope universe.

At the opening reception Nov. 2, honoring the Hispanic tradition of remembering deceased loved ones with a "Day of the Dead" celebration, the BAC foyer filled with Hispanic and Latino music, and sugar skulls graced the tables covered with vivid, multi-colored serapes. A tasty Sangria, served along with delicious Mexican-inspired foods, right down to Parton's exquisite dress and boots all contributed to a fun fiesta feel. Even an emerald green and lemon yellow grasshopper posed on one of the happily-hued metal-work cacti. Was it part of the décor? Nope, it was real, hitching a ride to the party.

“I think I have a bit of Mexican in me,” Parton said explaining her theme. “I love the food, the music, the culture and above all the colors.”

In the past three years, Parton’s work has been selected into the prestigious BAC’s Bosque Art Classic and The Cowgirl Gathering Art Exhibition with Cowgirl Artists of America. Selected for the Bosque Art Classic, “*Bearing the Load*” suggests life is heavy and hard at times. But the depicted donkey’s baskets overflow with pink, red and yellow blooms, changing the message to a joyful one – while some loads might seem cumbersome they are bearable in their innate nature.





“*Top Hand*,” a water color painting in sepia tones – a break from multi-color – of a delightful, youngest of cowboys waiting to grow into his hat, watching the experienced cowhands do their thing, was also selected for the Art Classic. Both were on display at the artist’s solo exhibit.

“It meant the world to me to have so many friends, old and new, come to the Bosque Arts Center to see my artwork,” Parton said. “Your smiles viewing the art brought me as much joy as it was to create it!”

Prior to the exhibit, Parton had an exhilarating burst of creative energy, setting a goal to create as many diverse pieces as she could. With her ageing mother temporarily in rehab in a nursing home, and her three-year-old grandson in day care, she was able to fully concentrate on her art. It was like being back in college again she said, working deep into the night, with 80s rock and country music blasting, living off whatever might be in the fridge.

“While I’m not quitting any time soon, I did this show as if it was my last,” Parton shared.

Her painting “*Mi Corazon*” (My Heart) symbolizes that period of time. Parton took on the stereotypes of crows being associated with death, fire associated with destruction, and doves associated with peace, and gave them new meaning. For her, the crows signify her passion, squawking and inspiring her to paint, paint, paint; the blue doves are her works of art freed into the universe.





The painting also embodies her love for her family and friends, they are the fire that fuels her. The connection to her circle of motivating and inspiring friends brings a quote to mind by author of self-help books SARK – Susan Ariel Rainbow Kennedy, “The circles of women around us weave invisible nets of love that carry us when we're weak and sing with us when we are strong.”

In return, the warm-hearted, compassionate artist is exceptionally supportive of her community, local retailers, family, friends and fellow artists. Whenever she's asked, she supports local charities like Area Go Texan, Bosque Spay and Neuter and Bosque Animal Rescue Kennel with her art. And not really surprising, she loves to get into a fun cowboy character and play the role of exuberant rodeo clown.

Parton's paintings reflect her personality – vibrant, warm, caring, with a strong love of animals and nature, free spirited and free from convention, a clear representation of her eclectic style.

Embracing contrasting colors, another crow, a black and turquoise one this time struts against a yellow background and hot pink ground. The color palette of “*Walk the Squawk*” sounds brazen, and it is, but the balance of tan with the yellow, and the black in the bird and the ground it just works.





Not afraid to diversify, Parton's techniques range from oils, acrylics, water color, drawing, to sculpture and even hand cut ink plate prints. And Parton's subjects are as diverse as her color palette, but quite often a donkey or a horse pops up, their often sassy attitude jumping off the canvas. Growing up with smart and noble donkeys, showing them in the livestock arenas plays a part in that love, but their sacred connection to Christianity – they were at Jesus Christ's birth and crucifixion – makes them that more inspirational for her.

Jokingly, she said that when she's old and retired – which is not going to be any time soon – she aspires to become Bosque County's "Judy, the Burro Lady," in the footsteps of somewhat recluse and eccentric burro lady and namesake Judy Ann Magers of the Big Bend area.

In the spirit of "*Day of the Dead*," her "*Muy Bonita*" donkey with white bones dominating its image at first glance seems a bit macabre, but the light blue background, the floral border, the red heart tucked under its shoulder blade just leaves you smiling. And then, "*Into the Light*" is clearly a horse, but no ordinary horse. He's oxblood red with white. At a distance it's a blur of white against red, but up close his eyes are soft, at peace as he steps from one realm into another, as the title suggests.

Always drawing and painting as a child, Parton studied commercial art and advertising at the Texas State Technical Institute, now known as Texas State Technical College. But after working in that field a while, and

free-lancing at the Spieler Art Gallery, she realized what she really wanted was to teach art. She went on to earn her Bachelor of Art/ Education from Baylor University.



For many years, Parton taught art from kindergarten to 12th grade, Advanced Placement Art in local schools and numerous summer Imagination Factory art camps. She lovingly remembers the enthusiasm of her youngest students; they inspired her. But she will never be finished with her own art education – she attends any workshop she can, and loves to visit museums with “out of the box” art exhibits.

“You have to expose yourself to different art and stuff to feed your creativity,” Parton said.

Draw inside the lines? Parton bucks that convention by painting wildflowers off the canvas onto the frame, or making a minimalist line the main feature of the work, allowing the splashes of color on a white background draw you in. Who said you need canvas? Parton painted an exquisite rainbow trout bursting out of a stream on a painter’s palette. Afraid of texture? Blobs of paint give her paintings extra dimension. And her latest project is in three dimensions, creating a relief sculpture of a horse’s head, awaiting being cast in bronze.

But in whatever medium Parton chooses, her personality shines through in her work. Like her pastiche of hues jumping off the canvas at you, her passion and artistic free spirit soars – good vibes only, daring, smiling in the face of adversity, and life has surely has thrown some doozies at her – she was widowed in 2006, left to raise her twin daughters by herself.

“I’ve noticed when folks are viewing Judy’s work, they have an expression you don’t often see on the faces of those admiring art... an enormous smile,” friend Bryan Davis said. “Julie [Bryan’s wife] and I couldn’t be happier to see Judy’s amazing works on display and all the love being shown this beautiful lady with such amazing gifts that bring pure joy. It truly couldn’t happen to a more deserving person.”





Her life's attitude and whimsical paintings resonates with people, making her exhibit very successful – she sold over 50 percent of her 50 paintings in the exhibition.

"When you buy from an independent artist you are buying more than just a painting or a novel or a song," fellow artist Rebekah Joy Plett said eloquently, explaining why it's important to invest in artists, especially your local artists. "You are buying hundreds of hours of experimentation and thousands of failures. You are buying days, weeks, months, years of frustration and moments of pure joy. You are buying nights of worry

about paying the rent, having enough money to eat, having enough money to feed the children, the birds, the dog.

“You aren't just buying a thing, you are buying a piece of heart, part of a soul, a private moment in someone's life. Most importantly, you are buying that artist more time to do something they are truly passionate about; something that makes all of the above worth the fear and the doubt; something that puts the life into the living.”

With the new year upon us, make that special somebody smile big at receiving a happiness-inducing Parton painting. Parton can be reached at judyparton84@gmail.com or 254-315-5997. She displays much of her artwork through her Facebook page Judy Seawright Parton at <http://www.facebook.com/judy.s.parton>







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