

Grants Pass Daily Courier

After 25 years in art, card creator gets her first show

By Kathleen Alaks of the Daily Courier

Though she's been doing art all her life and making a living at it for 25 years, artist Katrina Meister is just now having her first-ever gallery show.

Her paintings, prints and cards are featured through February at Art on First, an intimate art gallery that opened last summer in downtown Ashland.

"I'm represented at the gallery," Meister says. "My stuff is up front right now but they'll be keeping it year-round."

Her "stuff" is a collection of nature-inspired paintings that are full of color, line and movement, images that capture the essence of the subject — be it bird, fish or flower — but that also convey a sense of wonder or magic.

"I always want my work to lift someone's spirit, to have them find some joy in it," she says. "And that brings me a lot of joy."

Meister, 54, grew up in Ashland and lives in Talent. Her only time away from Southern Oregon was when she attended the University of Oregon in Eugene, where she earned bachelor degrees in fine art and psychology.

"I was fascinated by [psychology] but realized it wasn't the profession I wanted," she says.

After college, she worked at a menial day job while pursuing art on her own time: "It was necessary for my own well-being," she says.

On a whim in 2000, she bought a scanner and printed greeting cards of some of her artwork.

"I went into an independent bookseller in the valley and asked if they'd like to carry my cards. That was almost 25 years ago and they're still selling my cards," she says.

And so Katrina's Cards was born.

Among the area retail shops that carry her cards are Bloomsbury Books, Northwest Nature Shop and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Gift Shop in Ashland, and the Grange Co-op stores in Ashland and Medford.

By 2005, Meister's business became her family's soul source of income, with her husband Chris doing the printing and she doing the art and handling sales.

Being self-employed means Meister can put her energy into "whatever inspires me for the moment," whether it's the new koi in Ashland's Japanese garden, cranes gliding over a misty landscape, lavender in terra cotta pots or pink calla lilies.

Meister works in three mediums: watercolor, oils and block printing. Which she uses depends on the subject matter or her mood.

"The mediums all have different personalities," she says. "Watercolor is the most fluid, obviously, the way the pigment moves across and settles on the paper. It's also the easiest to pick up and put down."

Oils produce "layers of buttery texture" and prints are "very graphic, with bold lines."

For a time, Meister wondered if her card business would "die a natural death" as people turned more and more to email. But over and over again at art fairs, people will stop by her booth and tell her how they received one of her cards and how it still has a special place on a shelf or on the fridge or tucked into the frame of a mirror.

And knowing that her work has touched someone, that it "sings to someone's soul," is most rewarding, she says.

Meister's work will be featured at Art on First through February. The gallery, at 20 S. First St. hosts Art-in-Action artist demonstrations every third Thursday from noon to 5 p.m. Meister will be the Art-in-Action featured artist for April.



CHRIS MEISTER

Katrina Meister works on a painting in her studio in Talent. Working primarily in watercolors, oils and block printing, Meister turns much of her work into cards, which she sells at local shops and through her website. Her work is currently being featured at Art on First in Ashland.

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