

ARTIST CHERYL SCHWEITZER

I hope that what you're about to read isn't too boring, but I wanted to deeply expand my history of being an artist. My artistic life began in Poplar Bluff, Mo. I've been an artist most of my life. I loved the beginning of school when I'd get to open new crayons and watercolor paint sets, ready for anything. I was encouraged from an early age by my mother, who also was an artist later in life.

I was the "art nerd" in high school, and had the best teacher, Mrs. Settle. She knew I wasn't one of the students she had to coax into painting and finishing projects. More likely she had to make me put away my paints when the bell rang. I won awards at the high school level and even painted a few paintings for teachers there.

I won a partial scholarship to the community college, along with Sam, a fellow student who was amazing, but he died in a car crash on his way to college soon after graduation. I often wonder what his potential could have been. In college I took the required basic courses and as much art as I could. My professor there was definitely hands-off, and I feel I didn't learn much from him. But it did give me the freedom to explore whatever medium he told us to use at the time. He did leave me with one lesson and that's to always be observing, imagining drawing a subject and the details. I still do that to this day.

I decided during college to take piano lessons. I bought an old mahogany upright piano and did just that. I didn't pursue it long however. I kept the piano no matter where I went, and later started a labor of love, scraping

off the layers of varnish and I have it to this day. I mention it because it too, was part of my creativity. My younger daughter started playing on that piano, and she wrote and sang a song about it. (I sometimes wonder, what if I didn't buy that piano and keep it, would my daughter have become the musician that she is today?)

I married my high school sweetheart 2 years after college, had daughters, and moved several times for my husband's career in retail. We finally ended up in Jefferson City, Mo, where we could be closer to family (only 4 hours from Poplar Bluff). I've taken photos of all the places we've lived and traveled. You'll see this reflected in my paintings. I started painting with oils, and when I ended up painting in basement with no ventilation, my mom gave me a set of acrylic paints. I was hooked! No smell and they dried fast, which was a plus and a minus. If you didn't like what was painted, you could change it in 10 minutes. However, the minus was, I had to learn new ways to blend large areas. With oils, it was easy, with acrylics, I learned a "broken color" method. I realized I didn't have to struggle with a smooth sky or clouds. It was more interesting to break up the colors and blend at the same time. I painted with acrylic paints and watercolors most of this time. More recently, since I have a studio with plenty of windows, I've gone back to doing certain paintings in water-mixable oils with little solvents.

I've painted and exhibited often in the last 24 years, in Jefferson City, Columbia, and Sedalia. My art led me to join the Jefferson City Art Club, a life-long pursuit now. I was the president, then vice-president, finding artists for

our meeting presentations. I think back fondly of my time with that worthy group. That's where I met my friend Roberta Dunkel and became close friends. She has since passed on to that palette in heaven, where I know she's painting furiously like she once did when an exhibition was looming. The group gave us opportunities to meet many artists along the way and had exhibitions every year to work toward. It helped us stay involved in art even when it was difficult with different family or health obligations etc.

As you can see, becoming and being an artist isn't just what you decide to do one day, or a switch you flip. It's a long process and evolvement. There was a time when my daughters were young (my first daughter was born with a hearing loss), I was a stay-at-home mom and wondered if I'd ever get the freedom to paint again. Far away from family and friends who could help, I still kept up some painting when possible. I always bought art magazines and books which helped me stay connected. Each place I lived gave me different inspiration, a variety of subjects, and reasons to keep painting. I learned as I went, even though I took a few classes along the way. Once in St. Charles, Il, I was in a watercolor class. The instructor kept walking by my painting to check on progress. He finally said, "you know, you could be teaching this class". I haven't taught many classes, especially temperamental watercolor. But the future is open for teaching, and I'd especially like to open people up to acrylic painting. The colors are beautiful, there are different techniques to learn, and the results are amazing! I'm going to stop here since this has become a

“book”, ha, and paste my old bio below, but first an ode to my mother and mentor-

“Mom, you learned to paint when I was in high school and I helped you get started, then you flew. I wouldn’t have been able to help you without your amazing art genes, so thank you! Our connection was unique and special.”

Cheryl has been an artist most of her life, painting through high school, college, married life, moving, and settling in the Midwest.

She works from a studio in her home, surrounded by acres of lush foliage, flowers, and wildlife. She travels with her camera, taking photos as she goes, to use as inspiration later. Cheryl is active in her community, volunteering at local galleries, and entering art exhibitions.

At this time, she feels exhibiting is not her top priority and is enjoying painting for herself. Her art subjects are varied, but usually are of nature, her beautiful daughters, or her amazing grandsons. Please enjoy her many works from the past to the present on the slide show at www.jeffersoncityartclub-missouri.com. Thank you.