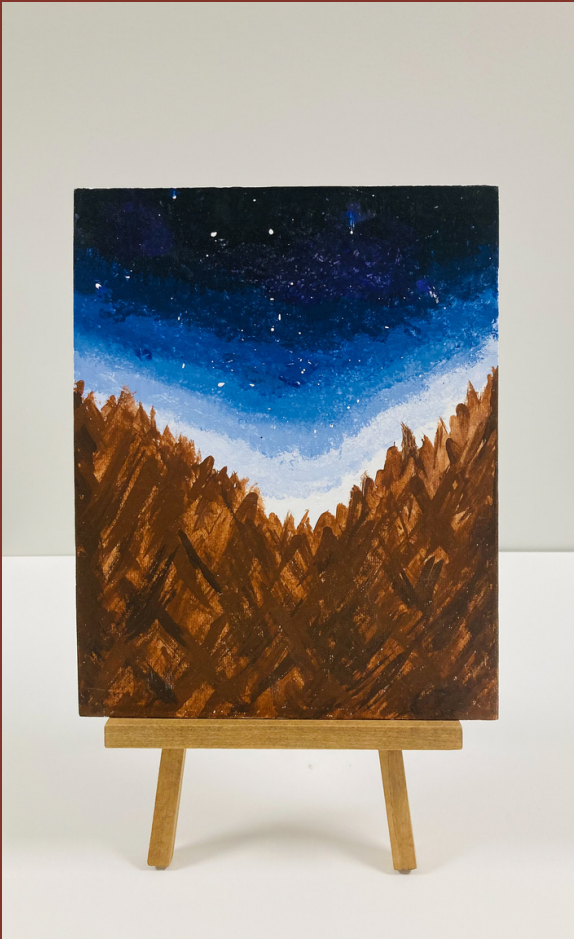


Ellen Ibele



1. Did you make any art before becoming a member of the BIAWW?

I know about brain plasticity, and working with special ed kids at school I knew how important it is to find other ways of doing things. About two years in I realized that I needed to do something different and my mum set me up to learn how to knit preemie hats, so I did that for a couple of years. Beyond that I didn't do anything else until I joined the Brain Injury Association.

2. Is it part of your daily life now?

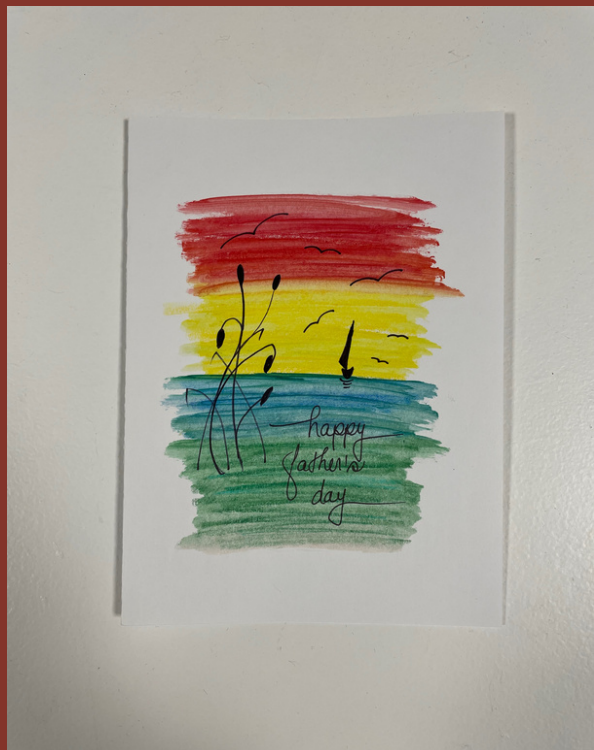
I haven't been to a lot of workshops, but I thought spreading my wings in a different area was really good and they fairly quickly started a card making program. I went to the initial one just to be supportive of everybody else, because I felt that I really didn't have anything to contribute. In that first meeting somebody noticed my script and asked me to write greetings on the cards that they were making and from there I was asked to do some blinging. Somebody showed me some pinterest pictures of some christmas trees and I just haven't looked back from there. I got hooked, and I've moved on to quite a few other things now.



3. What medium do you like to work in the best? What was the most memorable program for you?

I think the cardmaking program has been in existence for about three years. I tried a number of things and came across watercolour pencil crayons and one of the ladies at one of the meetings knew how to use them and showed me and that's what got me started. I went on to buy some paint brushes, we had paints at home and I did a little bit of googling, and that hooked me on watercolour. I've always had a penchant for watercolour pictures, in art museums or friends who had done that type of thing, but I had never pursued it myself until now.

Ellen Ibele



4. Why do you think these programs are important?

I've always been open to therapies of different kinds, but I think when you're in your regular life you don't really think about that. It's only when your life stops for one reason or another, in my case it was a traumatic brain injury, that you start to think in terms of other things. I know one of the members in our association had done glass fusion and now she has a little business, which she never would have thought to do previously. Now she has a little bit of that added income and it gives her purpose. I think we flail in our existence if we don't have some reason for being, and purpose does that for us. Art therapy has a plethora of opportunities if we just avail ourselves of those opportunities and we may find ourselves in a whole different light, but also feeling very purposeful, despite whatever limitations we may still live with or which disabilities we may still live with.



I find that because we are selling our cards, there is a purpose for me in making the cards because as one customer said at one of our shows the cards speak to her, she looked for cards that would speak to her. It's interesting to think that some work that I have done or another member has done has spoken to another person. They are not just buying the card for themselves, they are buying to pass along to somebody else, for whom that will be a cheerful or a comforting message. It can be a fun activity just for the sheer pleasure of doing something, creating something can be sheer fun, but there's that added layer of having a goal and feeling some purpose for yourself as well as for someone else.