



De-Ann Holmes – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #127

January 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features De-Ann Holmes, a carver who works with both wood and ice. She grew up in Winnipeg's inner city, but now lives at Seddons Corner and has been a resident of the area for twenty-six years. Although she spends a lot of time on her carving, she has a full-time day job at Beausejour Dental Centre and previously served as a councillor in the Rural Municipality of Reynolds.

In the past, Holmes used to create small hand carvings and duck decoys. She was even good enough at small scale wood carving that she won prizes at Prairie Canada competitions. But, at 50 years of age, she picked up a chainsaw and found a new way to express her artistry, and quickly made an impression as a fearless and seriously talented artist.

Her carving styles range from traditional to contemporary and her pieces reflect Canada's wilderness, in both nature and history. Also, as one of the few female carvers in Canada, she really stands out. A proud Metis, forager, mother, and grandmother to four grandchildren, Holmes has lived in unison with the land for many years. When asked what inspires her passion for chainsaw carving, she said, "Life!"



De-Ann Holmes



Walter Keller, a well-known builder and carver from Elma, taught Holmes the art and basics of chainsaw carving, and Cheryl Laschuk and Ron Jackson taught her how to work on the finer details. At present, she's an established member of the Manitoba chainsaw carving community and her work in this medium is admired across the province and beyond. She said, "I'm blessed to be a part of this crazy carving family."

Holmes has demonstrated her chainsaw skills at Festival du Voyager, 4-P Festival, Ducks Unlimited, and many other events. She said, "I have lots of commissions and requests for my work. I'm busy with grandkids and visits to my mother in Dominion City, but I have more time for carving now, after I decided not to run again as a councillor."

One of her favourite events is Arbour Day, located in city parks such as Kildonan, St. Vital, Assiniboine, and The Forks. She said, "I love this event. Each year, it's held on a Saturday in a different park, and kids show up with their parents. They love watching the arbourists and their machines, and they get to plant trees and participate in all kinds of activities related to trees. Then we do a small chainsaw carving to demonstrate how it's done."

In the upcoming months, she will be featured at a Winnipeg dinner and show sponsored by Fish Futures in May, will be exhibiting her work at Beausejour's Breezy Oaks Carving Bash on Canada Day, and will hang out with world class carvers in Saskatchewan at Manitou Beach's Maple Madness in August. Pictures of her work can be viewed on Pinterest, under "De-Ann Holmes – Carving."

Her motto: "Attempt the absurd; achieve the impossible!"

Assassinating Thomson – MTC Featured Event – Issue #128

February 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's regional tour. Their journey began on January 30, and on March 4, it will have visited 24 communities from Snow Lake to Sioux Lookout. On February 26, the travelling show arrived at Great Falls Community Centre.

After greeting folks who volunteered to help with setup, the crew swung into action. Although this gig was their twentieth, the unloading routine proceeded with precision and cheerfulness. Within hours, the chairs, backdrop, large paintings, cables, lights, sound system, and performance area were positioned in appropriate places.

Of special interest was a large, paint-splattered drop cloth taped to the floor, with an easel, and paints, cloths, and paintbrushes arranged on nearby tables. Bruce Horak, actor and creator of the play, used this space to describe the famous Canadian artist's mysterious death. Interspersed with details about the Group of Seven, possible causes of Thomson's death, and suspected killers, Horak told stories about his early years, performance history, art education, love, politics, ghosts, and life as a legally blind entertainer.



Bruce Horak

As the play progressed, the audience learned how Bilateral Retinoblastoma, a childhood cancer, left Horak blind in one eye, with limited vision in the other. The crowd was enthralled while he performed his lengthy monologue, moved around the drop cloth covered with words to jog his memory, and painted a picture of the audience. At the end of the show, the painting was auctioned off, with proceeds going to Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Horak said, "Since I started doing this, the highest bid for a painting was \$3,200.00. Tonight's winning price (\$400.00) was pretty good for a smaller community."

Horak lives in Stratford, Ontario, but has spent time in Manitoba, appearing in Winnipeg Fringe Festivals and a Manitoba Theatre for Young People tour. One of his many claims to fame is acting in Star Trek: Strange New Worlds. During the COVID shutdown, he did street theatre. He's a brilliant performer, but he admits, "I couldn't do my work without the crew. They feed me and make sure I get to where I need to go."

The Crew:

Sadie Wannamaker (stage manager) – A graduate of Fanshawe College, she's worked in more than 20 professional productions, and took over the RMTC job after a friend told her about it. During her first time in Manitoba, the tour opened her eyes to the varied geography, climate, and cultures in our province. Although she's from Kitchener, she enjoyed their stopovers in new-to-her towns in Northwestern Ontario. She said, "At times, it was cold, but it feels amazing to visit small places and put smiles on faces. People are hungry for theatre."



Sadie Wannamaker

Jazz Marcelino (apprentice stage manager) – A 2021 graduate of University of Winnipeg's Theatre and Film Studies program, she has worked at Rainbow Stage, MTYP, and numerous other film and theatre venues. Born in the Philippines, she came to Canada in 2006. Growing up in Winnipeg's North End, she caught drama fever at Sisler High School. She said, "My passion is meeting all kinds of people. In Thompson, I was amazed to see mountains. I regret we can't explore much on our days off. But we need to stay put and catch up on rest."



Jazz Marcelino

Claire Bestland (tour technical director) – She lives near Ottawa in Wakefield, Quebec, but grew up in The Pas and still visits family there at Christmas and on other holidays. Also an experienced sound designer, she has worked with various musicians and on television commissions. Also, she has premiered a show in Berlin, as lead composer and sound designer with STO Union, a theatre company based in Quebec. She said, "I'm used to small towns and I loved bringing our show to Manitoba's more remote communities. I was especially excited to educate my crew about the North."

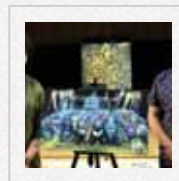


Claire Bestland

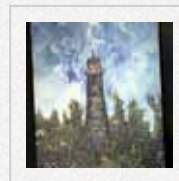
Will Medwick (tour technician) – A student at Toronto's Humber College, he moved back to Winnipeg in 2018. Always able and willing to solve technical tasks, he calls himself, "The Swiss Army Knife of Theatre." A member of International Alliance for Theatrical Stage Employees, he's worked at Centennial Concert Hall (Phantom of the Opera), Festival du Voyager, Manitoba Opera, Winnipeg Folk Festival, and other places. This was his first regional tour, and he enjoyed visiting new places in Manitoba and Ontario. He said, "It was fun seeing the impact of live theatre in smaller communities. And I didn't realize Riding Mountain was so high."



Bruce Horak



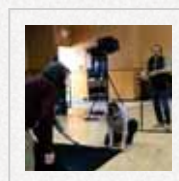
Bruce Horak and painting buyer Bob Stafford



Bruce Horak – Art



Bruce Horak – Art



RMTC Volunteers



Hans Arnold – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #129

March 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Hans Arnold, a landscape, nature, and wildlife photographer, and a digital artist. Born in Germany, he lived there the first 10 years of his life. In 1959, his family moved to Winnipeg, where he still lives. In 1976, he built a cottage in the Lac du Bonnet area, which he owns with his two daughters.

Between nine and fourteen years of age, he took up drawing in pencil, ink, and crayons, and also painting with water colours. A self-taught artist, he loved experimenting with different mediums. At the age of 15, he taught himself how to animate characters and cartoon stories.

He said, "I developed a cartoon family and local newspapers almost syndicated it. Due to family matters, the opportunity slipped away. In 1964, the Walt Disney Company even approached me to work in their animation department. But I was too young to be on my own at their LA headquarters."



Hans Arnold



Although Arnold has no formal training, he saw art challenges everywhere. In 1968, he took up photography, to record the beauty around him. In the early 70's, he started photographing weddings. Constant use of camera and lighting equipment provided the training he needed.

He said, "I love all genres and keep up with photography trends. I'm passionate about creative, wholesome photography, and producing high quality fine art images for wall décor, book publications, marketing, workshops, and presentations. Also, I was inspired to become a digital artist by using software to create painterly impressions of my photography."

From the 80's to the present, he's done presentations to camera clubs. In the last fifteen years, he's instructed children in a Manitoba school division, using a curriculum he developed called "The Art of Seeing."

He said, "I've taught over 3500 kids how to see the world around them and how to use a camera to record their memories. I also do workshops for photography enthusiasts, taking them to various parts of the province and teaching them how to take better pictures."

Over the years, Arnold has participated in tradeshow across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, selling his prints for wall décor and making new contacts. Also, he has published two Canadian bestselling coffee table books – in 2001, "Wish You Were Here, Photographic Images of the Canadian Landscape," and in 2014, "Up North, Manitoba's Last Frontier." These books have sold 10,000 copies across Canada, USA and Europe.

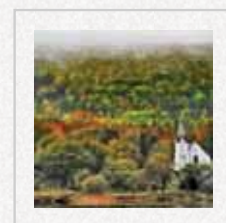
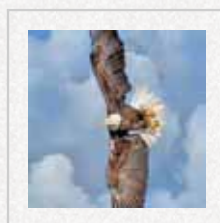
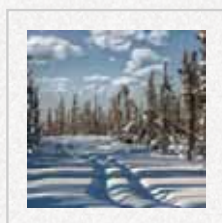
His photographs have been exhibited in numerous galleries in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and entered in prestigious national competitions, earning numerous awards and medals. In the previous month, his work won gold in a Canadian Association for Photographic Art competition, with entries from across Canada.

In June and July, he'll be taking pictures in the Mediterranean, and in August and September, he'll be going on a 10 week trip with his brother, a professional photographer from British Columbia. They'll travel 12,000 kilometres through Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska to photograph landscape and wildlife, and they hope to capture muskox in the wild, near Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean.

Their daily adventures and photographic technical talk will be broadcast weekly on a YouTube channel. They also plan to create a short documentary film (working title - "The Great Northern Project") and produce curated exhibitions, live presentations, and (hopefully) publications in various formats, along with works from other projects.

For 45 years, he's been involved with the photographic community. His partner, Brenda, with her down-to-earth honesty, supports and encourages his work. Also, his artistic daughters, Jennifer and Nancy, inspire him with their talents and often collaborate on projects. During COVID, he kept busy, creating virtual art galleries and engaging in social media.

His inspiring words: "Create your own style by listening to yourself, and don't let others discourage you. Always keep learning. Be focused, be positive, learn deeply from your mistakes, and have the courage to explore new ideas."



Nancy Arnold – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #130

April 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Nancy Arnold, a professional photographer. Her business, known as “Kiex Photography,” focuses on creative commercial/content photography, and the unique connections of people through family photos, portraits, and wedding pictures.

Arnold also works as a graphic designer, for print and website, and creates whimsical images, specializing in stationery for events, and branding for businesses. In addition, she has set up a mental health initiative on her website and Instagram. For this project, she designed a line of shirts (with lots more items coming) created from her own personal experiences.



Nancy Arnold

“I hope it will help others to become vulnerable with their journeys and know they are never alone.”

Although she lives in Winnipeg, she spends summer months working in Lac Du Bonnet, Pinawa, and surrounding region.

“My dad built our cabin in 1976, so I've lived my whole life exploring and enjoying the area. I prefer to work at the cottage and I'm grateful my career allows me to do so. I love doing lake weddings!”

When she attended The School of Art at the University of Manitoba, she majored in graphic design. Although she graduated with an Honours Degree and has participated in internships, she also believes creative talent and passion come from natural instinct.



“I find inspiration in the everyday, and I've learned to observe the world around me and see its beauty. I come from a family of artists, and this has definitely shaped my way of thinking as a creative.”

Camera clubs in Manitoba and a Winnipeg photo school have invited her to discuss her composite photography work. And, on her online platforms, she has spoken about her arts practice and her mental health initiative.

Arnold believes it's important for artists to express their vulnerability and show their imagination to the world. Her photos have been featured in wedding magazines, and placed in international photo competitions. When her father, Hans Arnold, published his award-winning book, “Up North,” she loved working on its design and learning about the production process.

She has already set aside weekends and weekdays in the summer and fall for photography sessions, to service the area, for couples, friends, and portrait photography. If they don't know any special spots, she'll take them to magical places, where they can create light-hearted family memories.

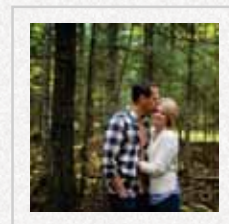
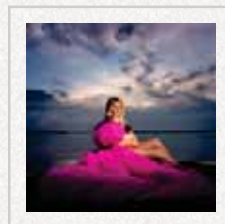
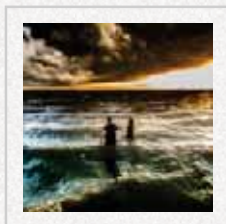
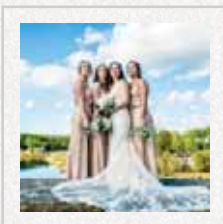
“I'm available throughout the whole year, and happy to travel to locations you love. My schedule is available on my photography website.”

Her encouraging words: “Create! Create! Create! Everyone has a unique imagination. And everyone will come up with something different, which makes for community over competition. We all have the ability to create authentic art.”

www.kiexfoto.com

www.instagram.com/kiexfoto

www.instagram.com/ladyowldesign



Pinawa Art Gallery – Focus on Local Organization – Issue #131

May 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Pinawa Art Gallery, a prominent arts organization in the region, with members from Bird River, Lac du Bonnet, and other surrounding areas.

Starting on July 14, Pinawa will begin celebrating its 60th anniversary and, in honour of the event, the gallery will be opening a new exhibit. To mark this occasion, WRAC would like to give readers a brief background of the gallery. It is a non-profit organization run by artist volunteers, and has a volunteer board of directors, including the gallery manager.



In the late 1970's, Pinawa Art 211 began as an ad hoc group of artists with Vivian Thomson, teacher and art specialist from Whiteshell School District, initiating the project. Over four decades, the organization has grown to include Pinawa Art Gallery and the Art Educational Centre for artists in the Eastman area.

In 2013, the gallery moved into the W.B. Lewis Centre, and relocated to a larger room in 2015 as the number of artists increased. The space was subdivided into two display areas, and the Art Education Centre serves as a separate area for classes, mentoring, and the pottery group. These days, the facility is open four days a week every month, except January.

Within the Lewis Business Centre, some artists have set up their own private studios. This building has hosted several exhibitions by PAG members, fulfilling a requirement for a designation as a "professional artist," to be recognized by Manitoba Arts Network.

Every year, the Pinawa Art Gallery holds its Christmas "Artisans' Sale." In the summer, it supports the town's birthday celebrations with some artists taking part in the Indoor Market, while other artists greet visitors at the gallery. In August, PAG provides one of the many locations on the Boreal Shores Art Tour. Also, Pinawa's Solo Store supports PAG with a mini-display of members' work near their office area.



The space is open to the public, free of charge. Artists interested in membership must apply to the gallery, work as volunteer one day each month by rotation, and pay an inclusive annual fee to belong to both Art 211 and Pinawa Art Gallery.

It has an area where visitors can enjoy a cup of coffee, with snacks for sale, including treats from Morden's Chocolates. Tables and chairs are available for a game of bridge, knitting instruction, or just a quiet contemplation of the incredible art found in this beautiful facility.

Brenda McKenzie, a longtime PAG member and frequent volunteer, said, "I read the gallery's comments book and found two words used often: 'Lovely' and 'Amazing.' Former Pinawa residents return or Winnipeggers use it as a day trip destination. It has become a 'must see' when in town, with visitors from Lac du Bonnet to New Zealand. The Gallery is a great success!"

For more information visit: pinawaartgallery.com

Cathy Gregg – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #132

June 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Cathy Gregg, who has agreed to serve as the new administrator for the arts council. She has extensive experience in human resources, and WRAC is glad to welcome her to their organization. The Lac du Bonnet Chamber of Commerce also employs her as a part-time administrator and she has been involved in organizing several events for them.

Gregg has dabbled in many different artistic endeavors, but her main focus is on fibre art (knitting) and painting, mostly with water-based acrylics. She has done some mosaic work, macramé, and ceramics. Instead of creating paintings that hang on the wall, her favorite thing is to paint on furniture and cabinets; this makes the piece look beautiful, in addition to being useful. She also likes to refinish furniture, using mostly milk paint.



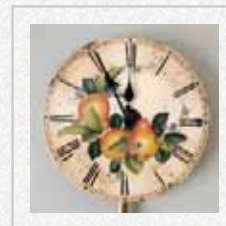
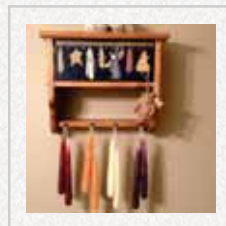
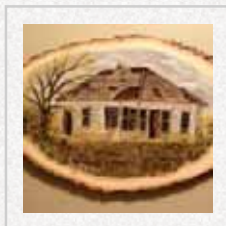
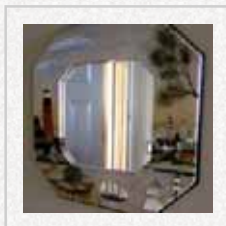
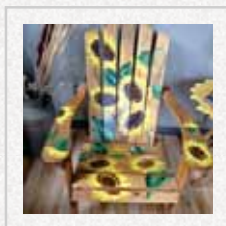
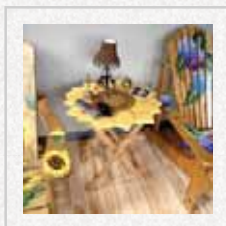
Cathy Gregg



Gregg was born and raised in Winnipeg, and spent about 10 years in Calgary. For the past 14 years, she has called Lac du Bonnet home, living on the lakefront at Pinawa Bay, in the Lee River area. During her time in Calgary, she took plenty of art classes and her passion was born in those sessions.

She said, "I am a goal-oriented person, so I derive pleasure from starting and finishing projects. I am also a very active "A" type person and don't ever sit down as I'm always busy doing something. Painting and knitting are two things that allow me to be at peace and to enjoy sitting and being creative."

Although she has not done any instructing or exhibiting of her work, the arts council hopes her new position will inspire her to take steps in those directions. WRAC invites artists of all disciplines to join the arts council, and help "connect people through art."



Sarah Paquet – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #133

July 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Sarah Paquet, who lives near White Mud Falls in the RM of Alexander, between St. Georges and Great Falls. She has lived there for almost 3 years, and, 10 years prior to that, she called the same place home for 3 years. During the time in between, she resided in Winnipeg, and in her own words, “I’d never dream of going back!”

Paquet makes jewelry, such as earrings, necklaces, and bracelets; home decor, such as wall art, trinket dishes and other items; and metaphysical pieces such as black/grey salt, runes, and other witchy things. In addition, she works with epoxy resin, and creates all kinds of projects with it. In her artwork, she uses crystals, natural items such as stones, seashells, feathers, driftwood, bone, and more. She said, “I like to collect as many raw materials as possible, and am a firm believer in recycling and up cycling as much as I can.”



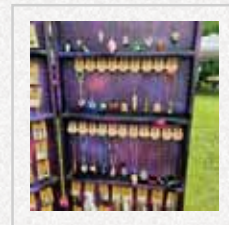
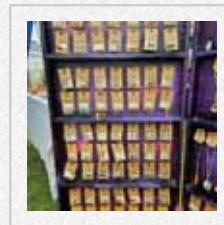
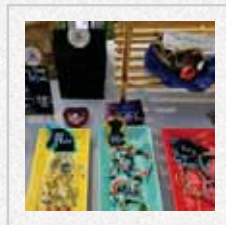
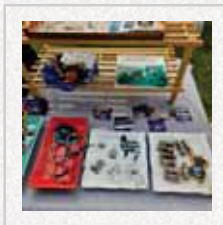
Sarah Paquet

Like many local artists, Paquet finds nature to be a huge inspiration, beautiful without even trying. Almost everything she produces has something natural in it, or is inspired by nature. She said, “I wish more of our existence was that way. I try to put as much back out into the universe as I pull in; I leave symbols of thanks, and gifts for what I’ve taken.”

Although Paquet is mostly self-taught, she learned macramé as a young adult, and then re-learned this art as an adult. She uses it often, along with wire wrapping techniques. Via YouTube videos, she learned wire wrapping and resin pouring. To learn various techniques, she follows fellow resin artists on social media. But, she admits, lots of practices helps.

Paquet hasn’t done any instructing yet, but plans to host macramé classes at Pinawa Art Gallery in the fall. Her work can be viewed and purchased in two different places — Manitoba Made in Lac Du Bonnet, and Pinawa Art Gallery. During Piñata’s Birthday Weekend in July, the art gallery was a busy place, and she had 3 new pieces highlighted there. As well, her art will be displayed at PAG during Boreal Shores Art Tour (August 19 and 20).

Her inspiring words: “No art is bad art. Art is subjective; some may love it, some may hate it. But, as long as you are expressing yourself to the best of your ability, you truly own your talent and capabilities. Don’t give up on your craft!”



Jen Arnold – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #134

August 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Jen Arnold, who creates miniature replicas of people's most sentimental places. She gets commissions to construct tiny copies of first homes, local shops, heritage buildings, barns, grandparents' homes, famous movie houses, and other structures.

Arnold fabricates these pieces, which can be held in the palm of the hand, from recycled cardboard. She designs and cuts the cardboard to make the appropriate shapes and, from start to finish, the process can take fifteen to seventy-five hours (or more), depending on details and size. Like her father and her sister, previously featured WRAC artists, she is from Winnipeg but calls the Lac Du Bonnet area her second home. Her parents built their cottage in 1976 and she's been enjoying it ever since.



Jen Arnold

Arnold has always been intrigued by architecture. As a child, she'd look through her dad's architect books and magazines, fascinated with the variety of styles and angles. As an adult, her love for the tiny colourful and glittery Christmas dwellings ("putz houses") began, and she knew immediately they'd be easy to create.

She said, "My first project was building the three homes that my mom lived in, and I displayed them on a Christmas wreath. After posting this creation to social media, my passion grew. What encourages me to keep going is the love of the art form. And my 2-year wait list."

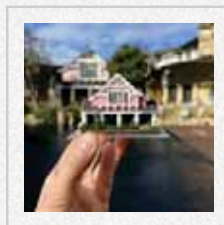
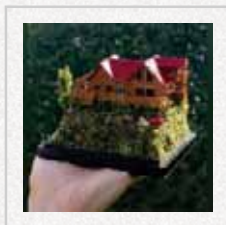
In her day job, Arnold is employed as social worker in community mental health, and she appreciates having an outlet for her own self-care. Working on the miniatures inspires her and she loves finding out what her next project will be. She has several upcoming projects, and some are still secret. As mentioned, she has a wait list for her pieces, so she stopped taking requests. But they keep coming.

Arnold hasn't done any instructing, but she's had numerous teachers message her to ask if they could share her work and if she could teach this art to their students. Also, she has no formal training in creating miniatures; it seems she has an innate talent for this intricate work.

She said, "When people ask what scale I use for the miniatures, I giggle. Honestly, I don't have one. It just comes naturally and just works out!"

She has been featured in the Winnipeg Free Press, and has been interviewed on 680 CJOB, Global News in the morning, CBC Radio morning show, and Canstar community newspaper.

"We all have a passion, and I have found mine. To create sentimental miniatures that make people smile, and sometimes even tear up. To have a handheld memory in the palm of one's hand inspires me. To recreate a home that has since been torn down inspires me."



Alexa Hoerster – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #135

September 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features wood carver Alexa Hoerster, who is originally from Germany. Along with her partner, Walter Keller, another well-known local carver, she makes her home in Elma, and has lived in Canada for the past sixteen years. She credits Keller with initially teaching her how to carve, but, she added, “With time, I developed my own style.”

Although Hoerster has not done any formal instructing, her carvings have attracted attention and awards. In the spring of 2016, her piece, “Driftwood Disc,” was one of the final three shortlisted designs in Trails Manitoba’s competition for the Grand Beach Gateway. The entire piece was supposed to be assembled out of driftwood from the area carved into the desired figures, and then attached on a big weathered steel wheel.

In the 2021 Eastman Juried Art exhibition, her intricately carved oak door won first place in the sculpture category. The piece, called, “Towering Pine,” was created because her client wanted to see an interpretation of a special white pine, located in his view over the lake.

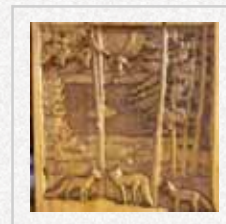
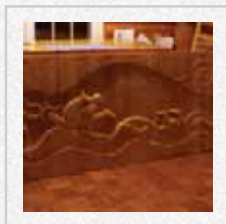
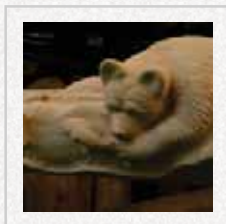
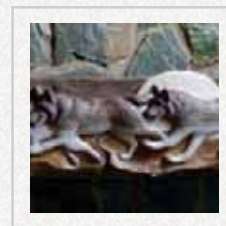
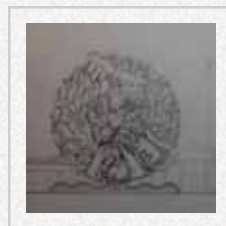
Hoerster states that Mother Nature, with all her intricacies, has always been most important for her as a human and an artist, and affirms that “Being outdoors in natural surroundings is the only place where I ever feel free and alive.”

This intense love of nature finds plenty of expression in her artistic work. Her carvings of birds, wolves, and other flora and fauna reflect her reverence for all things wild. It’s one of her main goals as an artist to bring positive feelings and an understanding of wilderness creatures to the people who purchase her work.

She said, “I find that the design as well as the execution is a challenge for every single piece, but also a difficult and endless quest trying to capture the beauty, harmony, and delicate perfection of the natural world. And I hope this helps a tiny bit to protect nature with all its beings, to suffer a little bit less.”



Alexa Hoerster



Joyce Shaw – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #136

October 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features multi-talented visual artist Joyce Shaw. When describing her artistic skills, it's hard to find the words; intrepid, playful, spiritual, and versatile spring to mind. She has mastered oils, pastels, and watercolours. Although she admits she doesn't do much pottery and sculpture these days, she has previously created numerous works in these forms. As well, she's written and illustrated beautiful children's books for family members. Of special note are her detailed and realistic portraits of animals and people.

Her employment history also reflects her lifelong willingness to try new things. She has worked as a model, clothing designer, aesthetician school manager, hairdresser, boutique clothing store operator, and massage therapist. Also, for years, she was actively involved with Interlake Art Board.



Joyce Shaw



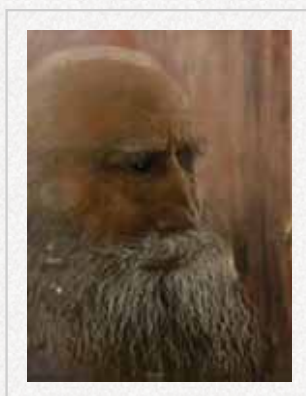
Originally from Shoal Lake, near Brandon, she has lived in various other places, including Teulon, Winnipeg, Ste. Anne, and Sioux Narrows. Her husband's job with the railway meant they moved around a few times. Despite all the relocations, they built a cabin at Lee River and, in 1995, she retired there. In 2000, her husband also retired and came to live full-time at the cottage. She now resides in the town of Lac du Bonnet.

When asked she learned how to make art, she said, "One day, I told my husband I thought I'd be able to paint, so he bought me a cheap paint set and I started."

Over the years, Shaw has explored various medium, and numerous taken random classes. The Forum, located in Winnipeg's Canadian Pacific Railway building, was a special place where she learned a great deal and found mentors. Although she hasn't done any paid formal instruction, she taught her friend, Charmaine Watt, how to make extraordinary art, and led informal art classes with women friends, getting together in homes.

Along with Charmaine Watt, Shaw exhibited her art at the Assiniboine Park Conservatory. Her work has also been exhibited at The Forum and in a Teulon massage parlour. She's sold many pieces of commissioned art, for clients in wide-ranging places. She said, "My paintings have been purchased by people all over, as far away as Ireland, and even by a princess in Bali."

Her inspiring words for making art: "Follow your passion. Believe in yourself, and do what you can do."



Stan Kelly – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #137

November 2023

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features visual artist Stan Kelly. Over the years, he has worked in multiple mediums: everything from pencil, charcoal, pastel, oil paints, acrylic paints, stained glass, clay, wood, ink, gouache, as well as found objects ranging from computer parts to chains and rocks. He added, "I've also been heavily invested in photography for many years and using a computer to manipulate my images."

Kelly was born and raised in Winnipeg, but spent 10 years in Calgary. Despite his time in Alberta, he stayed connected to Manitoba. Since the early 60's, he has owned a cabin at Pinawa Bay on the shores of the Lee River, after a subdivision opened up there. In 2006, upon returning to Manitoba, the original cabin was torn down, and Kelly and his wife had their present home built on the same location.



Kelly's wife, Cathy Gregg, is the new WRAC administrator and also a visual artist, featured in June's artist profile. Recently, Kelly and Gregg registered their business name "Pinawa Bay Fine Folk and Photo Art" and secured a domain name. His daughter is in the process of establishing their website where they intend to feature their work.



No one thing acts as a catalyst for Kelly's art. From small objects to large, from Nature to the artificial constructs of humans, there are endless influences in his imagery. He said, "As well as nature inspiring my artistic vision, the ability to plumb the depths of abstract and surrealistic thought are key inspirations. I am currently, and have been for some time, resurrecting historical images and reinvigorating them with a new take on what's come before."

Kelly's earliest recollection of getting hooked on art came from a kindergarten experience. When he was giving his crayons a workout, depicting the sun in the middle of a drawing, his teacher informed him the sun couldn't be placed in the middle of the scene.

He said, "Apparently, the sun had to be in the corner of the page! Even at that age I thought to myself -'When do you ever see the sun in the corner of the sky?' Thus began a love of art that, to this day, requires a questioning of opinions."

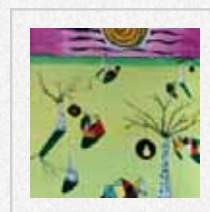
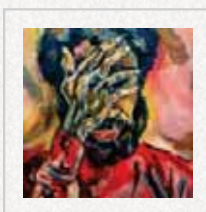
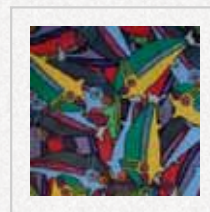
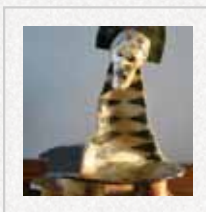
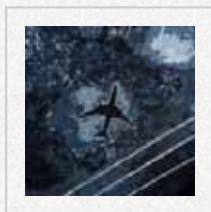
In 1988, Kelly earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Manitoba. It took him a while, since he worked full time and was a single parent raising two children. He said, "By the time I'd finished my program, fellow students asked me if I was the professor. When presenting my student card number, people asked me if I had missed a number. My standard response was 'No, I'm just a slow learner!'"

Aside from preparing and presenting an introduction to Surrealism for a grade school class many years ago, he hasn't done any instructing. Although he has exhibited in a few shows, it seemed he couldn't keep his art around for long; he'd complete a piece and then sell it. Lately, he is more focused on accruing a supply of finished works and not marketing them right away.

Also, when asked about public accolades, he said, "I don't create works for awards, prizes, or any other rewards."

After studying fine art and listening to endless comments about its essence, Kelly has learned to reject negative comments about what constitutes "Art." He said, "From an artist's viewpoint, art should be whatever you enjoy producing. Whether others like or reject what you're doing, that is moot. If a person has a fire within, they can produce art, in whatever form it might take."

Kelly finds the wide range of visual arts that impact people interesting, but not surprising. He said, "I'm always impressed when someone who is not blunted by the over-saturation of images in our society steps up with insightful observations about a particular art work."



Melvin Vincent – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #138

December 2023

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features woodcrafter and visual artist, Melvin Vincent. A lifelong resident of St. Georges for more than six decades, he is a self-taught artist with a great fondness for wood. He loves depicting wildlife and fish on wood slabs of various sizes coated with oil or high gloss finishes, and making exquisite charcuterie boards.

His interest in wildlife evolved from his time in the bush as a woodcutter for Pine Falls Pulp and Paper Mill. This awareness of nature led to fifteen years of preserving boreal animals through taxidermy. Before the mill ceased operations, he also worked in the thermal mechanical section and, prior to that, he sharpened materials in the stone ground area.



Melvin Vincent



A few years ago, motivated by local chainsaw carvers, Vincent joined the Winnipeg River Carving Association. When some carvers required slabs to make benches, he went out and bought a portable Alaskan saw mill. This purchase opened up a world of new artistic possibilities for him. He has sliced up hundreds of cottonwood, poplar, and other woods into slabs up to 42" inches wide. He applies his artwork to the seasoned slabs to create intricate benches and wall art.

Also, Vincent uses these slabs and buckets of epoxy to create gorgeous live edge river tables. "Live edge" means the bark is not removed from the edges of the logs and the bark fringe adds striking visual interest. These days, his main passion is creating dramatic tables. He credits his wife, Annette, with helping him to make and market their live edge furniture.

When asked how he began making art, he said, "Several years ago, I was injured at work and was immobilized for six months. I started painting on canvas, and then made plaques and signs. After that, I switched to painting and etching on wood and birch bark."

Vincent has no formal training but used lots of step-by-step books to teach himself about painting and drawing. He has also passed some of his skills to his grandchildren and said, "They seem to like it and some are pretty good at it."

His words of encouragement for aspiring artists: "Nature is not perfect. Don't try to make your art perfect. Just do it."

From the looks of his many projects-in-progress and his full workshops, he keeps very busy. He also sells some of his work at summer markets in Lac du Bonnet and Victoria Beach. His business is called "Vincent Woodworking" and interested buyers can view his artwork on a Facebook Page of the same name. It's worth the trip to St. Georges, just to see the magical creations he fashions from large slabs of wood. Call 204-367-4376 to learn more.

