

A Smile is Worth a 1000 Paintings



Judy Knott was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania where she had close ties to her father's family; a family that was funny, brash and loving. Around the age of nine her world was changed forever when she moved to a small farm in Mississippi near where her mother's family resided. It was difficult to make friends at first because she didn't fit in—there was an obvious difference between the culture of the north and the south which was hard for a 4th grader to maneuver. So instead she enjoyed exploring the family farm and doing the chores of feeding and milking the cows and finding stray animals and wounded baby birds. The solitude of the farm helped prepare her for the ultimate solitude of painting.

As much as she loved to draw as a child, she couldn't see a path to using that art as a profession. "I knew I could draw but real life takes over and you find other interests that will help support you when you go out into that real world. Even considering becoming an artist came late to me."

Her father could draw well and one of her fondest memories was of them drawing together on the couch. Her mother appreciated art but with no art museums or galleries nearby, she wasn't exposed to professional art until later when she moved to a larger city. She discovered small pieces of artwork her mother had produced as a child. In the house where she lived on the farm there was one piece of art. "We had one of those prints of Yosemite hanging over our couch. It had those fake brush strokes and I always looked at and pretended I was in that meadow. I thought it was beautiful" says Knott.

She graduated with a BA from Fresno State University after having moved to California and she went on to work with several non-profits in marketing and fund raising before eventually jumping head first into the computer field in the early 1980's.

"Something about computers makes everything so black and white. I found that I could use my skills in communications to write clear and concise technical documentation so people could understand how to use the programs. I drew pictures with words." That eventually led to gaining an Adult Education Teaching Credential so she could teach computers in the local night school.



Knott met her current husband at the Fresno YMCA where she was the Membership Manager and he was volunteering as an instructor. Art was still not in the picture for her, but being an art

appreciator was. “I went to museums and art galleries at every opportunity. Even when I was very young and single and supporting myself, I would save money in order to buy a painting.” They eventually moved to the Sacramento area where she continued to train and document computer systems in the medical field.



Knott says “Although I loved my job, I didn’t realize how starved the right side of my brain was until I took a year off to care for my mother who was experiencing dementia. I started making jewelry to fill the void and my brain was having a hard time focusing. I kept bouncing from design to design and from one project to the next.” She described it as feeling like her brain was exploding. She went back to work training medical staff on computer software but just before retiring decided she had to have another life to move into—boredom was not an option.

In 2008 Knott went on an art studio tour in Elk Grove California where she was living at the time. A friend of her husband had just given her some oil paints and a small easel. At the last tour stop she met Kate Anderson whose artwork she loved and who had decided to start teaching art again. She jumped at the chance to take lessons. “Thank goodness that my first experience learning how to paint was from a very good artist who also knew how to bring the best out in me.” She took lessons every week

for about three months until her mentor moved away. She found other teachers and organizations that she could learn from and has since been involved with Sacramento Fine Arts Center where she received her Master Painter designation, Lodi Community Art Center, and Elk Grove Artists where she was President for two years.

Knott took many classes and workshops including those from Nicholas Wilton, Timothy Horn, Gregory Kondos and Peggy Kroll-Roberts among others. “I wanted to ensure I studied with the best artists that I could find so that my own art would rise to a higher level,” said Knott.

When asked what inspires her, the answers are many and varied. “There are so many things that inspire me it’s hard to list them all. Inspiration changes from year to year or month to month. What I can say is this...colors and shadows intrigue me as do old structures and interesting shapes such as chairs. I love to travel and get many ideas from just being around other people and cultures.”



Subject matter is always something that seems to set her art apart from other artists. A list of some of the more interesting things she’s painted include an old fire hydrant, drinking fountains, used metal and wooden lawn chairs, gas meters, bar stools and fish. “I like taking the mundane and giving it back

the dignity it may have once had. Old chairs in a backyard with shadows from nearby trees are fascinating to me.” Her artwork has been called painterly, inventive fun and colorful, with a little wit thrown in on the side. “I want to have fun creating my art and for others to have fun viewing it. I love for art to make me smile and thus I hope to have viewers do the same thing when they see my pieces.”

Knott built her resume by competing in both local and national shows. One of her pieces was recently selected from over 1600 entries for the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art Fall National Show. Less than four years into painting she entered the student painting competition in *Artists Magazine* and won third place getting published in their January/February 2013 issue. Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento auctioned off one of her pieces called “Waiting for Thiebaud” in 2017.

One of the things Knott takes pride in is that she became a Laughter Yoga Leader around the same time that she began taking art lessons. “I needed both of those positives in my life because of the stress involved in the daily work environment. I think we need to laugh now more than ever.”

Knott now lives in Galt, California about 25 miles south of Sacramento. “We bought this house for the light and I now have an entire room dedicated to painting and art supply storage. I can simply walk around the corner from my bedroom and go to work. What a blessing.”

<http://Knottjustart.com>

