

COLOR AS EMOTION & ENERGY

KATHERINE JONES

Even as a small child, she was always drawing something, but it wasn't until it appeared that it might be taken away from her that Kathy Jones realized she needed art to survive.

"One of my earliest memories is of lying on the floor of the attic with old restaurant order tablets with carbon paper and being able to make two drawings at once - one to keep and one to give away. In kindergarten I drew horses while the other girls drew lollypop trees with colored dots. I don't remember having any art classes in school. There were no art museums in my town and I never realized art could be a profession. Art wasn't really valued at my house but my mother must have understood my love of art because every Christmas, my major gift was always some type of art material. I got my first set of oil paints at 10 but was told to go to my room or the basement to work with them because they were too messy. When the paint was gone it was not replaced but colored pencils were always available."

Early on, Kathy had thoughts about how much fun it might be to be an artist after reading a Life Magazine article about Jackson Pollock ("Jack the Dripper"), but she had never met an artist. "My mother said, 'You need to study to find a career you can support yourself with - art isn't it'. In those days a woman could be a nurse, a secretary or a teacher.



As an adult I painted and taught art both at a private elementary school and later at university level but I didn't really realize that I needed art to survive until after I had a heart attack and major surgery, spending two months in the hospital recovering. It was three months before I got back into my studio and could start painting again. It was like being able to breath again. Now I spend as much time as I can in my studio. Thinking, planning and making art is what keeps me alive."

Kathy was born in Bay City Michigan in a neighborhood filled with relatives. Her father and his brothers subdivided their father's land during the depression and they all built homes on it. She had what she describes as an ideal childhood; "I was the middle of three children. My father had his own business; we spent every summer from the time I was six up north at our cabin on a lake.

"My grandfather was a boat builder so each of us children had our own boat. We usually spent the entire day outside exploring the lake or wandering around it. Since we were permanent summer residents, we knew everyone around the lake. I was close to my older brother who taught me how to take care of my own boat and motor, how to build a fire in the sand to cook a hot dog, how to find my way home from our wanderings in the woods. We picked huckleberries and wild strawberries. We caught small bluegills and he taught me how to scale and clean them for eating while he gave me fish anatomy lessons. When he wasn't around, I spent a lot of time by myself.

"My mother and father expected us to entertain ourselves. We had to clean the cabin after breakfast and then were free for the day until dinner. I read and I drew when not surrounded by cousins and friends. I was always a curious child and loved to watch my grandfather and other men build things. The process of creating something fascinated me, whether it was cooking, sewing or using my dad's tools.

My father and his six siblings were all untrained designers. Only one of them went past 8th grade in school. Their father designed and built boats. I remember seeing a small oil landscape painting that their mother had painted before she died so maybe I inherited something from her. I have a cousin who has an MFA and is a furniture designer. He lives about six hours away but we stay in touch by email and Facebook. My daughter does communication graphics and is now

painting and taking photography classes. I was an avid reader from age six and thought I would like to be a teacher when I grew up."



"Heavy Seas" 47x47 oil on canvas

Entering college to become a teacher, Kathy majored in English and minored in Philosophy and Psychology. When she ran out of money she dropped out and got a job as a secretary, eventually training to program computers. "My first formal art class wasn't until my husband's job moved us to Hong Kong and I signed up for figure drawing at Hong Kong University."

Returning from three years overseas, Kathy re-entered Central Michigan University to finish her BS degree, changing her major to Art. She subsequently graduated with an MFA.

Kathy currently resides about 20 miles from where she grew up, in Midland, Michigan a small, quiet, corporate town with a wonderful art center, hospital and pretty good schools. Her studio is

located on a main street about a ten-minute drive from home.



"Eclipse" 20x20 oil on canvas

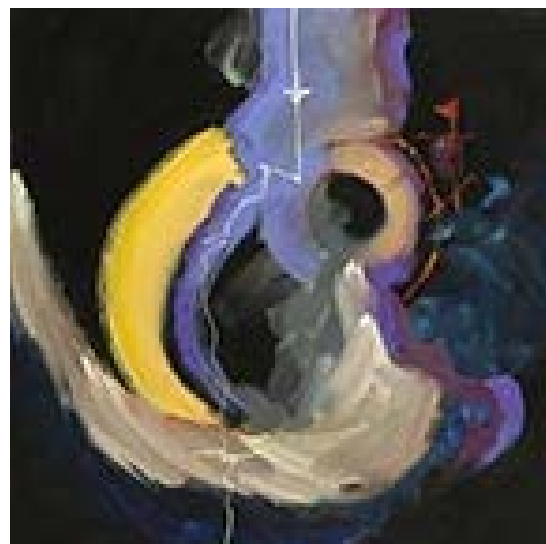
"After grad school I painted in my garage and basement until I found a studio. I shared the space with another artist until two years ago. Now it is all mine."

Kathy says the inspiration for her work comes from people: "I am a people person; I am energized by interaction with people. I love the human figure and color but never felt that my figures communicated what I wanted to express. Picasso was asked if he ate the fish after he painted it and his answer gave me insight into what I was trying to do. He said, "No, I eat the fish and then I paint it." Once I realized that I had to communicate what was inside me, I discovered what I was trying to express was the energy and emotion I found in the human figure. My figures began to dissolve and become abstract. I didn't have to wrap the energy and emotion in human form anymore.

I use color - bright, complementary color and strong contrast. I use symbols of energy - the spiral, the diagonal, triangular compositions. I am always looking for new ways to paint energy."

Your painting is dripping with intensity- there's never anything shy about the work. It is deliberate yet frenetic. There seems to be a wild energy on the surface but a calmness underneath." Melissa K, Detroit MI.

The historical influences Kathy identifies most with are the artists who worked with color, contrast and expression: JMW Turner, the Impressionists - especially Bonnard and Emil Nolde's unpainted paintings. "I love the experimental art of Picasso and the fact that he turned everything in his life into art. I am also inspired by Caravaggio's active, diagonal compositions and how his color seems to explode as it emerges from the black background.



"Lavender Mist" 36x36 oil on canvas

"Among the more modern period artists I would say my favorites are deKooning, Pollock, Frankenthaler, Gerhard Richter and Brian Rutenberg. I also had a wonderful advisor at CMU who painted every day. I could hardly wait until Monday morning to see what was on his easel. He was very inspirational."

Kathy paints with large brushes and lots of paint, thanks largely to some advice from a retired University professor she says. This professor/painter came to her studio while she was working on her MFA after he saw her work in a campus exhibition. He gave her some wonderful advice. He asked what she was struggling with and when she said she couldn't figure out how to get from one side of her 4ft. canvas to the other with a bold single stroke. He said, "Kathy, if you want to be a painter, you have to paint like you can afford it. Get rid of those tiny artist brushes and buy 3-inch natural bristle house painting brushes." Then he squeezed a big blob of paint into a nearby can and sloshed some medium into it and took the big old gesso brush and jammed it into the paint a couple of times and handed it to her.

"Now," she says, "I use lots of paint, paint fast, mixing colors as I go. I scrape and draw into the wet surface and often draw with the tube of paint. I work in series exploring a theme or color combination until I feel I have exhausted it. I also studied the various color theories of other artists. I was excited by the Impressionists' use of complementary colors and the German Expressionists' bright bold emotional colors. Color has the power to reach into

a viewer and discover a response they didn't expect."

When she is not in the studio painting, she is teaching art, reading about art, or looking at other artists' work, Kathy says. But she admits she loves to cook Asian foods - Chinese, Malaysian, Thai and Japanese. She considers cooking to be "performance art." And, she reads novels when she can't paint or teach or cook.



"Awareness" 36x36 oil on canvas

"I love the vivid colors that create a feeling of energy. The impact your art has on my home is of an intimate nature, every time I look at that piece, it brings me back to that very special place, that special day, the special people in my life, knowing that you're now part of that uniqueness." Kimberly L, Midland MI

Since she is an emotional, expressive, energetic person, Kathy says she struggled to find the perfect way to express this through her paintings.

Working with children and adults with mental illness helped her make the connection between color and emotion.

"I am red and each of my paintings has a bit of me in it. By using color and abstraction I can connect with people at a very primal, gut level. Abstraction requires me to paint from inside - from my heart, expressing my deepest feelings. Artists stand naked before the world with their art."



"Finding Joy" 47x47 oil on canvas

Kathy says she is not much of a joiner, belonging to only a couple of art organizations in the area. She has, however received significant recognition with more than 20 solo exhibitions and over 50 juried group exhibitions. In addition, feature stories have been written about her in the Midland Daily News, Bay City Times, Saginaw News, Central Michigan Life, Northwood University Idea magazine and the Saginaw Valley Journal.

Kathy sums up her mission as: "So much of today's art is dark, reflecting the

state of the world. My goal is to give the viewer a joyful, positive image that makes them leave the negativity behind.

I love sharing the joy I experience painting, with them and helping them understand that they don't have to find a meaning in abstract painting. They just need to notice how it makes them feel. The painting isn't finished until someone responds to it."

"Many people come up to me and share memories that a painting reminds them of or how it makes them feel. I love to watch the faces of people as enter my exhibition; they smile and then go up close to really look at a painting. My life has been a journey filled with new experiences and new people around every corner. I want my paintings to remind people of their own personal journeys and the emotional growth each event has inspired.

"Your work gives me a glimpse into the world as you see it - so different and vivid from the black-and-white world I know. Your art is suffused with energy. I get an emotional jolt from it. Each one of them reminds me there are many ways in which to view the world thus inviting me to look at things with fresh eyes. It looks like every journey we make ultimately takes us deeper into the person we are becoming." Mari Ann J, Glastonbury CT

