

## Art Matters

## Art and nature: how we shape our wellbeing



By Janet Sellers

Every pinecone, every pine needle, and every tree has the wisdom of life and the will to thrive within it. The common pinecone is a time-traveling vehicle and carries within it the past, present, and future in its seeds; there is a wisdom and knowing within this life form.

In botanical illustrations, artists attempt to show what they see and what they think is the gist of the nature of their subject as accurately as possible. In fine art, we know we cannot create the natural life form and cannot even effectively “copy” it, yet the inspiration nature offers as the spirit of life in our rapport with her is what engages artists to make something. In fine art, artists strive to feel and portray the spirit of their impulse with a deep response to it.

Visual attention is the foundation for imagination and ideas, and thereby involvement with ideas, planning, and fulfillment of plans. Visual attention and ideas are even considered the new social and financial economy by industry and advertising. Visual art, as attention holder, is the basis for billions of commerce dollars in digital visual industries via games, photography, software, movies, and printed matter.

At Stanford University, the visual studies programs have changed to include visual culture and the relationship of ethnicity and cultural impact and their impact on local and global society from visual media in terms of art, film, and media. This change from art history as a study of archaeological or mere

object interest to a much more lively spirit of ethnic visual awareness indicates a change of heart in academia as well as contemporary society, and of course commerce.

In this current social awakening, we now understand that both our ethnoecology (the study of human knowledge, perception, classification, and management by people in their environment) and our cognitive awareness are shaped by our environment. We have educated our minds and learned to recognize manmade environments and their influence upon us. Still, our neurology is made to relate first to the influences of nature all around us, and it is nature that balances and helps mend our neurological and mental health.

Our ancient cultures in Europe and the Americas understood this and used nature for all manner of health practices, from breathing the forest air to days of forest living and engagement. We are seeing a return to this powerful mending of the spirit and body in the ever-increasing interest in forest bathing, or forest atmosphere immersion as a health therapy known by the Japanese term “Shin-rin-yoku.” It is not walks and hikes or other exercise but people visiting the forests and nature for this restorative purpose.

We can benefit from this practice in our local forests amid the culturally modified trees (CMT) of which many were created to show the way to the natural mending of our minds and bodies. We are es-

pecially fortunate to live amid these Native American ancient living treasures that are hidden in plain sight, in our own backyards for some. We can go out locally and see amazing culturally modified trees and rock formations, forms of extraordinary beauty. They are not just aesthetically beautiful, they provide connectiveness to nature through our five senses connecting us via our senses to the natural world and thereby actually changing and improving our physical and mental health. Our local Native American heritage ceremonial landscapes include rock formations with deep meanings regarding Native American sacred sites.

#### June Art Events

Let’s get off the couch and support our local art at these local venues, too:

**Art Hop** is June 21 and on third Thursdays all summer long in downtown historic Monument, 5 to 8 p.m.

**Bella Art and Frame Gallery** offers an exhibit of its member artists, 183 Washington St., Monument.

**Bliss Gallery** features sculptures by Jodie Bliss and guest artists, 243 Washington St., Monument.

**Palmer Lake Art Group** 2018 Color Splash Art Show, May 29-June 22, Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, 304 Highway 105 Palmer Lake.

*Janet Sellers is a local artist, writer, and public art sculptor. Her artworks are exhibited in Colorado museums, galleries, and at the university level. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.*

## Snapshots of Our Community

### Higby Estates Firewise



**Left:** Higby Estates residents attended a Firewise demonstration and barbecue lunch at a homeowner’s property on April 28. The demonstration was conducted by Dave Root of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) as he led the group in a walk around the property, explaining Firewise guidelines for homeowners to reduce wildfire risks to their home and surrounding property and to improve the wildfire preparedness and safety for the entire community. Also, John Anderson presented information about Ute Prayer Trees in the area, urging residents to avoid damaging or removing these trees when mitigating if possible. Higby Estates has been a recognized Firewise USA Community since 2014, and the community’s Firewise programs are coordinated by its Wildfire Mitigation Team. Besides the Firewise demonstration, other Firewise programs include an annual inspection of the Higby Estates forest by CSFS for insects, disease, and mitigation progress, and a slash chipping day every May. Contact David.Root@colostate.edu for information. *Photo by Sherry Saye. Caption by Higby Estates Wildfire Mitigation Team.*

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### Thunderbirds



**Left:** Every year, the Thunderbirds arrive in the skies over Colorado Springs for the Air Force Academy graduation. Locals flock to the nearest parking lot to watch them zoom by faster than the speed of sound. The AFA graduation was May 23, and “America’s Ambassadors in Blue” flew in a few days prior to practice for the show. The team is made up of 12 experienced fighter pilot officers and a slew of enlisted and civilian personnel on the ground. Six F-16 aircraft fly over our skies, performing amazing aerial maneuvers in formations with planes flying a foot away from one another. In the solos, two planes fly toward each other, turning in mid-air and pointing the noses straight up, trapping the

powerful sound and rumbling feel of the afterburners and sending the sound into the valley below. *Photo by Allison Robenstein*

### Palmer Lake chipping day



**Above:** Local Palmer Lake citizens brought their slash wood cuttings, including fire mitigation cuttings, to the Palmer Lake chipping day, a free event in Palmer Lake on May 5. The wood chips were available after the chipping day for use in gardens as free mulch, which not only keeps out unwanted weeds but helps hold in moisture and recreates soil in situ via the natural method of the forest. This event was sponsored and chipping work done by the Coalition for the Upper South Platte, whose mission is to protect the water quality and ecological health of the Upper South Platte Watershed. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

### Taste of Tri-Lakes Cares



**Left:** Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC) held a Taste of Tri-Lakes Cares benefit May 9 at the Flying Horse Ranch Event Center. Local chefs and restaurants cooked tasting meals for the hundreds in attendance. Each chef was given a list of basket ingredients and asked to make a meal using all of them, ala Food Network’s TV show Chopped. The foods—spaghetti, potatoes, canned green beans, and others—all came from what the TLC pantry offers to its customers. People waiting in lines at the various stations happily ate offerings and chatted about their favorites. *Photo by Jackie Burhans. Caption by Allison Robenstein.*