

Art Matters

Beauty in black and white from elegant stone-age art



By Janet Sellers

Drawing as art comes to us via our ancients' art of pictography, the creation of monochrome images through the application of carbon pigments. We have them in North American caves, preserved in our desert lands on rocks—the oldest are likely charcoal horses in art from over 35,000 years ago in the Chauvet caves of France.

Stone-age artists painted caves with charcoal paste. In the caves of Chauvet in southern France, they are beautifully created and depict lifelike, action-oriented and extraordinarily beautiful horses and animals. Our Native American peoples used a variety of pigments, charcoal included, to create pictographs on rocks and petroglyphs. Ancient masters in China used the burnt wood charcoal to create their inks for black ink painting.

In our area, I have seen ash-scarred tree images made by Native Americans in the bark of ponderosas. These are known as "cat faces" (ceremonially burned into the bark of trees as arborglyphs) even if the image is of another animal or person. In Black Forest, there is a tree with a visage of a conquistador telling of foreign visitors. In forestry, the term "catface" refers specifically to the scars or knots left on a living tree by a fallen tree or mechanical rubbing, and is considered a deep flaw for lumber use.

Our relatively recent artists such as Michelangelo and before him Leonardo Da Vinci drew with charcoal to think through creating their imagery as well as create their murals and paintings. Contemporary favorites of only a hundred years ago such as John Singer Sargent and others used charcoal for their sketches and for preparing their paintings. Modern photography masters, such as Ansel Adams and Imogen Cunningham, relied



Above; The French "Chauvet cave" charcoal drawings were accidentally discovered in 1994 by local French cavers. Notice the delicately nuanced line and loving, expressive quality depicted in the horses. This art was made over 35,000 years ago by people who had great visual and physical skill. *Image courtesy of creative commons/wikimedia commons.*

on their camera, film, and above all, dark and light via the silver in the photo papers for their tonal range.

Nowadays, we can easily create imagery with our cell phones. This doesn't mean we'll make masterworks mechanically—we'll need inner mastery of the tonal range and what we desire to communicate.

Fine artists make sublime artistry in any medium, which is always the elusive part that takes conscious practice to create. It's inspiring to know that such a simple medium as charcoal and thereby also black ink, hold a vast, expressive, stone-age history and that today we

can still use it to make extraordinary, sensitive art.

September art events—everyone is welcome!

Art Hop last chance! Local shops and galleries host artists and art demos at our final 2018 Art Hop, 5 to 8 p.m. **Sept. 20**, Historic Monument.

Bella Art and Frame Gallery, September artist: oil paintings by local favorite John de Francesco, artist reception **Sept. 20**. 183 Washington St., Monument.

Bliss Studio and Gallery: September Saturday mornings, create a mold for the grand iron pour on Sept. 29 (a ticketed event), mold fees vary. 243 Washington St., Monument.

Front Range open studio tour: Sept 8, 9. Meet the artists and watch them create before your eyes. Maps at local shops, online. www.frontrangeopenstudios.com

Santa Fe Trail Jewelry: Digitally enhanced fine art photography by artist Dave Marquith, **Sept. 20** Art Hop. Second at Washington Streets.

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery 2018 Second Weekends Champagne Tour: September guest artist Steffany Suze Boucher, installation artist. Champagne artist reception **Sept. 14**, 5 to 8 p.m., artist exhibit and talk. Saturday **Sept. 15**, monthly art tea time 11 to 3 p.m. New! Fox Run Studios has art classes at Southwinds Downstairs Studio. 16575 Rollercoaster Rd.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, and speaker. Her public art sculptures and paintings are on exhibit in Colorado cities and museums, for sale at Colorado art galleries and online. She can be reached at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Monument sidewalks



Above: Monument is getting more pedestrian-friendly sidewalks as the town installs ramps on curbs and sidewalks as required by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. Town engineer Tom Martinez directed the project on Beacon Lite Road and Front Street on Aug. 9. The project is financed entirely by the town. *Photo by John Howe.*

Sertoma Golf Benefit, Aug. 13



Above: Golfers representing the Donald Wescott Fire Department posed Aug. 13 at their tee-off at the 17th annual Gleneagle Sertoma 4-Person Scramble Patriot Golf Benefit for first responders. This year, the event honored and benefited the family of Sheriff's Deputy Micah Flick, who gave his life in service to El Paso County earlier this year. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

Northern El Paso County information shared at Parks Party, Aug. 16



Left: In 2019, the new Elephant Rock Open Space at the bottom of Ben Lomond Mountain in Palmer Lake will connect to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. At the Parks Party at the Pikes Peak Brewing Company Aug. 16, El Paso County representatives told visitors about the variety of amenities available at 27 parks, trails, open spaces, nature centers, and plans for new ones. El Paso County Recreation Coordinator Theresa Odello, left, collects input from Black Forest resident Judi Tobiason, who describes herself as a "trail activist." Contact the recreation coordinator at TheresaOdello@elpasoco.com or 520-6977 with questions or ideas or to register for mountain bike event. Please note that National Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day, for tots on strider bikes to teens, is coming to Fox Run Regional Park on Oct. 6 at 9 a.m. *Photo by Lisa Hatfield.*