

most of our foxes have disappeared but are making a slight comeback in recent years.

Scientists believe that the foxes tune in to the Earth's magnetic field and can judge where the prey is from where the angle of the sound matches the magnetic field. Voles, mice, and other rodents forage under the camouflaging blanket of snow in subnivean (under the snow) tunnels, where they actually stay warm and hidden from most predators. Ermine locate these tunnels and

hunt within them, sometimes taking the tunnels over for themselves.

At my house, we've had some ermine (also called stoats and in the weasel family) in our yard in Woodmoor, and they are fun to watch as they dive in and out of snow drifts. They are very cute, and in winter they are all white but for a black spot on the end of the 5-inch-long tail. They have small, round ears and a triangular head with bright, alert eyes; their body is 10-14 inches long, not including their tail.

When we first noticed one from my art studio window, virtually bouncing in and out of some snow, my art students and I thought it was someone's escaped pet, but we researched and found they are common in our area. Fierce hunters, they dine on animals from mice to porcupines, body-wrapping their prey, then, with a quick bite, kill and eat the many unfortunate critters, many of which are pests.

They can climb trees, swim well and stalk prey in their winter white or

brown summer coats. But they in turn must watch out for owls, foxes, raptors, coyotes, badgers, and humans. We see their fur as prized ornament on royal garb in European paintings, and furriers still use it as trim.

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Art Matters

# Stain paintings: a fortuitous, incidental art of delicate beauty



By Janet Sellers

*"There are no rules. That is how art is born, how breakthroughs happen. Go against the rules or ignore the rules. That is what invention is about."*— Helen Frankenthaler, American stain painting artist

These days, people need a respite from their worries and their fears, and making stain paintings as well as looking at them offer that sense of freedom and joy in beautiful colors.

And we see that the mid-century era of stain paintings is making a comeback. Stain paintings are noted for their flowing, blooming effects on canvas, a soaked-in melody of thinned down oil or acrylic colors poured onto a canvas, usually made on a floor and in very large format. The style was basically dismissed as overly decorative in the

1990s but is having a comeback now. They are abstract and expressive, and very pleasant.

Vivian Springford, as an elderly shut-in, was "re-discovered" for her vibrantly colored splash paintings, known as "stain paintings," in the 1990s when a senior services volunteer visited her to keep a tab on her well-being. Springford considered her paintings her children and worried about their welfare should she pass on without making preparations.

The volunteer contacted New York art gallerist Gary Snyder, who snapped up Springford's entire body of work and had a number of robust sales. In the 1950s, Springford had shared a studio with Chinese American artist Walasse Ting and they enjoyed his friends, art luminaries Sam Francis, Pierre Al-

echinsky, and Karel Appel. Springford died in 2003, but when Snyder sold off some of the artist's estate in late 2020 to Almine Rech gallery, there was a surge in interest, and the paintings sold in the six figures.

In an *Artsy* magazine editorial, Montana Alexander confided, "She's kind of a sleeper, and I truly believe that these works will have staying power." Alexander is a New York partner at Heather James Fine Art. "She was developing her own manner of stain painting in the 1970s; she came from that Abstract Expressionist thing but really made it her own. And not unlike Sam Francis, had that East Asian calligraphic influence as well. And then later in life she unfortunately became really private. ... There's been a shift in tastes, and there's a sensuous beauty to

her work that's appealing."

While many stain painters used oils on canvas, making stain paintings can be a simple process. It can be as easy as soaking a paper and dribbling watercolors over the paper, or a more complex method is done on the floor using canvas soaked or sprayed with water and splashed with watered-down acrylic colors. The water-soaked canvas helps the pigments to "bloom" into each other in an abstract flow of colors.

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## Snapshots of Our Community

### Lolley's Ice Cream opening soon



**Above:** Monument's new ice cream shop will open soon. Owner Shelley Sapp hopes to open Lolley's Ice Cream at 175 Second St. early this year. She's been perfecting flavors and mix-ins for her all natural, gluten-free ice cream that will be made "100 percent from scratch" on site. It's a time-consuming process. Sapp says, "Each batch from start to finish takes about 72 hours." Once the process is perfected, she'll start building up her stock. In the meantime, you can buy gift certificates called "Lolley Bucks" that you can use once the shop opens. From left are Sarah Wehri buying Lolley Bucks from Sapp on Dec. 4. *Photo by Michael Weinfeld.*

### Comet arrives in Monument



**Above:** Comet the reindeer, age 2, meets visitors in celebration of Monument Small Town Christmas on Dec. 5. Kids of all ages got to see him up close and learn fun facts about reindeer. (Both male and female reindeer have antlers and shed them each spring, reindeer indeed can pull a sleigh, but usually just one reindeer is needed. In North America, the animals are called caribou if they are wild and reindeer if they are domesticated.) While Comet stayed in his corral on Front Street, Santa and Mrs. Claus made the rounds in town to meet shoppers. Comet came out for the day from Black Forest and provides enjoyment at other holiday appearances in Colorado. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

### Monument Police Bike Patrol



**Left:** Cars are no longer the only mode of transportation for Monument police. You'll now be seeing them ride bicycles through town. On Dec. 8, the Monument Police Department announced it has created a Bicycle Patrol Unit thanks to a grant provided by Classic Homes and Challenger Homes. Members of the unit had to complete a certification course given by the International Police Mountain Bike Association. Officers will ride their bikes through the town's parks, trails, neighborhoods, and shopping centers, making them more accessible to residents and visitors. Members of the unit are, from left, Officer Andrew Romano, Commander Jon Hudson, Chief Sean Hemingway, Sgt. Mark Owens, and Officer James Wader. *Photo courtesy of the Town of Monument.*