

Art Matters

Art and beating the winter blues



By Janet Sellers

October brings us our beautiful fall colors every year. While the brilliant colors are a direct result of the diminishing sunlight of our days, that lack of light also can have a severe effect on our children and adults in terms of mood and physical comfort related to missing their sunshine exposure. I found some vital information on how making art with our hands can benefit us greatly regarding mood. I always knew making art helps people be happy, and now I can share with you why it does.

It is commonly thought that art making helps us to express feelings and thereby diminish pent up frustrations and relieve depression. But this may not be why making things is such a boon to our health. It is linked more strongly to using our hands to make something satisfying and that those manual creations have a powerful effect on our brain/body/mind connections.

Beyond self-expression and emotional repair, making things with our hands such as art is an activity that we return to in our lives and have been doing so since the dawn of history. Starting in early childhood, the proto aesthetic operations—making things for reward, pleasure, and meaning—evolve for more than psychological needs, although that is a primary driving force in creating fundamental cultural aesthetic forms.

This connection, reports psychologist and neuroscientist Kelly Lambert, proposes that “The accumbens-striatal-cortical network—a system in the brain that connects movement, emotion, and thinking—is linked to the inability to concentrate (a symptom associated with depression).” There are other parts of the brain that are involved, too, according to Lambert’s research. Those areas account for slow responses (accumbens), perceived

loss of pleasure (striatum), and negative feelings (limbic system). These areas form what Lambert defines as the effort-driven rewards circuit.

Such research indicates that using our hands to create things and manually elaborate on ideas and the like has more than a psychological or emotional release in terms of human quality of life. While the term “human quality of life” may not be a conversational topic for us, it is an unspoken driving force of advertising and sales, which affect us day and night in our lives, but at the whim of commerce.

We can take back our quality of life by taking art into our own hands, literally. Making some art in local classes and visiting the local arts venues where we can see, feel, and appreciate with our own senses offers us that primary source for human satisfaction and improved mood, and thereby improves our daily quality of life. What a simple, elegant solution to beating the winter blues!

Here are some interesting local arts venues to get you going, too!

New director at Southwinds

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery has a new director, fine artist Leo Huff. Huff was born in Arizona in 1947, and when his family moved a dozen years later to Pasadena, Calif., he studied art at the Pacific Asia Museum as a youth. This early exposure to Asian artworks gave him a lifelong interest in these intricately delicate art forms.

After retiring from a career as a probation officer serving youths in California, he returned to the arts and worked in a new, detail-oriented medium of Scratchboard, creating unique three-dimensional etchings. His work, Geodesic Dome Community hangs in the White House. Architecture, geometric design, and wildlife are

among his favorite subjects.

Second Fridays returns

The Second Fridays Art Walk and Studio Tour returns on **Oct. 12** from 4 to 8 p.m. at Bella Art and Frame. The opening reception for artist John DeFrancesco’s new show will coincide with the monthly art event. Gallery owners Maggie Williamson and Ethan Ahlstrom are also planning a kids and adults art and treat mini-fest for the town’s Safe Trick or Treat event 4 to 6 p.m. on **Oct. 31**.

Call for artists

Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts has a call for member artists for its annual member show. This is a great time to get involved. If you’re not a member already, I think you could even join the center pronto and have some artwork up for the holiday sales art season. The intake for artwork is Nov. 4, and the show runs Nov. 6 to Dec. 8. The opening reception will be Nov. 9, 5 to 8 p.m. Details are online at www.trilakesarts.org.

From Baptist Road to Palmer Lake, our Tri-Lakes area has a lot of art to share that you can take home and enjoy. Our numerous Tri-Lakes art galleries, artists’ studios, and merchants have a wide variety of art and objets d’art for your enjoyment every day, so do drop in and see what they have for you this season! Most local places have a map of the Monument area that includes the arts venues, and you can also search for “art in Monument, Colorado” on a computer.

Janet Lee Sellers is an American painter and sculptor who works in paint, metal and, most recently, concrete. Sellers lives in Woodmoor, Colo. She can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.



At the Tri-Lakes Views arts strategic planning summit in Monument Sept. 28, local community members met and then took their ideas into small groups to discuss actions for the arts. Tri-Lakes Views has created a variety of arts events and public art venues such as the Monument Sculpture Park at Second and Jefferson Streets. Left to right are Monument Town Manager Cathy Green, Tri-Lakes Views member Betty Konarski, Southwinds Gallery Director Leo Huff, Brent Hedrick of First National Bank; and artist Jodie Bliss.



At the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, an exhibit titled *Pathos* offered works from five artists in the main gallery, while local artist Jodie Bliss’ solo exhibit *Forged Identity* was held in the Lucy Owens gallery. Photographer Randall Barbera, left, and painter Rodney Wood gave an art talk with audience participation the day following the artists’ reception for these shows on Sept. 28. Wood curated the *Pathos* exhibit, which runs through mid-October.



Artist John DeFrancesco with works from his new exhibit at Bella Art and Frame in Monument. Bella gallery is the featured gallery on Oct. 12 for the local “Second Fridays Art Night” gala arts event. The artworks in this show illustrate the artist’s interpretations of noted biblical references.

Photos by Janet Sellers.

Snapshots of Our Community

Businesses donate time, materials to landscape fire station

By Bernard L. Minetti

In an outpouring of gratitude to firefighting and emergency medical services in the Tri-Lakes area, several community businesses contributed to a landscaping makeover project for Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Station 1.

The design was provided by the Monument Home Depot’s certified garden and landscape designer, Lucia DiThomaso-Centola, under the supervision of new store manager Jason Genter. The store provided the landscape design, new sign, paint, soils and mulch, landscape fabric, wall block, step stones, tools, and memorial rock for the garden.

Dutch Van KeKerix, owner and partner of “R” Rock Yard Inc., donated labor, a mechanical loader, designer rocks, boulders, and a dump truck to help

execute the operation. The labor and materials amounted to over \$3,000. Home Depot contributed items that amounted to about \$1,500. Firefighters, under the direction of Battalion Chief Greg Lovato, donated additional labor for the project.

King Soopers donated 12 dozen doughnuts, and Domino’s Pizza donated over a dozen pizzas to support the volunteers who worked on the project.

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Right: Firefighters and employees of Home Depot supplied the labor and muscle to construct the landscape makeover at Station 1. *Photo by Bernard Minetti.*

