

Artist's Statement

I was born in San Francisco, California, on February 5th 1951. It was a difficult birth for both me and my mother, who after 52 hours of hard labor delivered only afterbirth. I was born immediately afterward, via caesarian, but minus a sense of direction, co-ordination, the ability to do math or learn to type, and short-term memory. I'm also dyslexic, and imagine I lost a little too much oxygen during the ordeal of delivery. Though never officially tested or diagnosed, I've known from an early age that I could not do things or learn things the way other kids did.

What I was born *with* was artistic ability and the obsession to turn much of what I see and feel into drawings and paintings, which is what I have done from a the time I could hold a crayon or pencil. My father, who was also very creative and artistic, nurtured my natural talent and taught me everything he knew about drawing. He also insisted that I had all the art supplies that I wanted.

By the time I was 11, I was riding the bus by myself the 15 miles from Tamalpais Valley to Sausalito every weekend I could. Sausalito at that time was an artists colony; there were probably at least 50 galleries in the tiny hillside town on the sea, and the place was packed with tourists, beatniks, homosexuals, and every type of misfit you could imagine, and I fit right in. I got to know some of the gallery people and when I told them I liked to draw pastels, they asked to see some of my work. They displayed a couple of my pieces for several months—dark, depressing images of a sad girl behind bars, and of course they never sold. That the images were so dark is odd, as at that time I was quite happy. A few years later, before someone decided to turn Sausalito's galleries into souvenir and tee shirt shops, I also had some more appealing pieces in the High-end Portal Gallery there.

Though I worked in oils early on, I switched to pencil drawings in my teens and the Viet Nam war was raging, and I did a lot of anti-war drawings depicting the horrors of war.

By the time I was nearly 19, I was actively saving money for a trip to Ireland that I'd promised myself I'd take since I was 9, when my Irish grandmother, whom I was closer to than anyone, died. She had always promised me that when her "ship came in" she'd take me there. I made my fare by doing watercolor paintings on plywood, and staining the background, and varnishing over both. I was living in Lake Tahoe at the time, and my 'gallery' was the sidewalk of Stateline Boulevard; both the Harrah's and Harvey's sides. I'd sit and display until the security guards came out to tell me I had to leave. So I'd walk across the street, set up there till I got booted out—day after day, until I'd earned my \$264 fare for my five week charter flight with The Irish Cultural Center of San Francisco. My mother said I'd never go, that people don't go places for no reason, but I proved her wrong and went, with \$50 in my pocket to last me the entire 5 weeks, and

came back with money in that same pocket, vowing to move there one day, which I also did. Don't listen to your mothers-- Ireland is a magical land; I highly recommend it for artistic inspiration, and a great time.

Because of my short-term memory problems, I have always had to draw and paint from photos or life in order to get the realism I strive for. I can see something or someone I'd like to turn into a drawing or painting, but as soon as I look away, the image is gone from my brain. The only time I can make creative and spontaneous artwork is when I do dot paintings or mandalas, and even then I sometimes have to look for designs I'd like to incorporate in the final piece.

Some of my favorite pieces are the 9B pencil on illustration board drawings, which I would probably still be doing if I hadn't woken up with crippling arthritis one morning, shortly after my 50th birthday. The pain in my hands forced me to switch to painting. My favorite painting medium is Watercolor on Ampersand Claybord Textured boards, but I'm slowly learning if not to love, at least to tolerate acrylics, which I used in a couple of my 'blue-line' dog paintings.

I still love oils, but with a houseful of animals, oils would be pretty hairy by the time they dried. If I outlive my dogs, I may someday take back my studio, which has become a 256 square foot doghouse with windows that let in the North and South light—perfect for painting, but it's literally gone to the dogs. Ah, well...