

## My Art Biography

As far back as I could remember, I loved to draw. As a pre-schooler, our home didn't have a lot of art materials and my memory tells me that I used a pencil as my sole drawing instrument. And perhaps my parents didn't have a lot of paper available for me to draw on, so in one case, I took an old book which had some beautiful illustrations where on the blank sides of the illustrations I drew my pictures. Perhaps my parents may not have recognised at that young age my need to draw!

During my elementary school years I attended an art class taught by a local artist and one year in that time I won a local art contest and as a prize I was awarded a year's instruction at the Saturday children's art class at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. And as I grew older and into my teen years I continued to draw, honing my skill at creating representational art.

It was during my years of attending Concordia University in Montreal that my adult education in art really began. It was there that I learned the basics of composition, the use of the elements of line, shape, colour and where I began to create abstract art, using objects around me as the basis and abstracting them in my artwork. Later near the end of my university years I began to do abstract art without any reference to representation. I received my degree in Fine Arts in 1975 with a focus on painting, print making and a major in art education.

I met my future husband in university and we married in 1975. Children arrived and my energies in caring and bringing up the four of them became my focus. Art making for the most part fell by the wayside although I never regretted that during this period.

It was when my youngest was launched in school that I began to consider creating art again. But it wasn't until we moved to Alberta from Ontario in 1997 that I met my first year university professor, Susanne Swibold, who had moved to Canmore in 1976 unbeknownst to me until a chance meeting brought us together. It was then that she once again became my art mentor as well as my friend. She guided me through a difficult period and helped me gain the creative self confidence I had lost over the years.

While I can and do draw cartoon illustrations when making personal greeting cards, my other creative side especially enjoys making abstract art. In the past few years I have been doing so with the use of colour pencils which I had not used since childhood. I really enjoy the mystery but also the mastery of creating shapes, lines and colours in a harmonious and expressive manner. The mystery is never really knowing exactly how my drawing will evolve and turn out on the page and the mastery is from the challenge of working to make all the parts work harmoniously together. And the delight is having my finished drawing 'look back at me' - showing me the expression that was within me and that has arrived on the page.

Shirley Verdone