

Art by Gurecchen

Gretchen Brannon

Artist's Statement

I have always been an artist, even as a child, I was consumed with drawing and painting. I learned tempera paint and drawing at school, but was self taught in oil. I continued to be interested in art, but was unable to take more art classes until my senior year. I already knew I was going to major in art in college. I took two high school art classes, and help form the art club during my senior year. I won the first DHS Art III Award, and graduated with honors. In the fall of 1993, I began pursuit of an art degree at Arkansas Tech University. After disappointment in the art department, at that time, I dropped out of school. I worked for a few years, and painted on the side. I married Cliff Brannon, who I had met in ceramics class.

As soon as I heard there was a new painting instructor at ATU, I went back to school. When I started back in spring 1999, I was finally getting the kind of knowledge I was searching for. That spring, I was introduced to raku firing and wheel throwing, and fell in love. I continued to love painting, and when I was frustrated with one, I would work in the other for a few hours. Instead of inhibiting production, it actually increased it. In fall of 2000, I took watercolor class. I had always struggled with this medium, but loved the way it looked. After a few weeks, I finally had a breakthrough. The majority of my work since has been watercolor, mostly because of convenience. There are times when a work I have in mind is more suited to watercolor, than oil, and vice versa. In spring of 2001, I had my senior show with 14 other students. Our show was very successful. That May, I graduated as magna cum laude with a BA in fine art. I have shown watercolor paintings since graduation. I worked full time, and was only able to paint on the side. I taught six community education courses at ATU. One of my proudest moments was seeing a student's work in an exhibition my own work was in. We recently moved to North Little Rock, a city any artist would be proud to live in. I am very excited about moving here, not only for the extra workspace, but all the opportunities the metro area offers.

My subject matters vary as much as my interest in different mediums. The majority of my works are of plants and flowers, including bonsai and orchids. Occasionally my subject matter includes birds, landscapes, and figurative work. Color is the strongest aspect of my work, something that comes naturally to me. I have some Japanese influence on my work, from different sources. I sign my name in Japanese, mostly because it is much easier to sign using a brush. I also think it has more of a design look to it, and is less likely to subtract attention from the subject matter than my normal signature.

I like to think that I'm able to convey the personality of a particular moment in nature in all of my work. I want people to be able to really see the objects that I paint. I only began to learn a few years ago, that most people don't really look at things. They might take a brief glance, while their mind quickly slaps a label onto the object, then they quit looking. Those who do this are missing such beauty from their lives. My hope is that the viewer can see the world through my eyes. For them to see to the level of Spirit of my subject matter, then to observe the whole world in this way. Once you see the Spirit in everything, then you begin to see the Spirit within yourself. It is the real key to freeing yourself from the empty, unhappy self.