

Artist captures magnificent landscapes

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Janice Druian's artistic path was winding, and it took her through unexpected terrain over the course of a lifetime — but it led her true, out into the vast expanses of the American Outback, which she captures in work that has earned her a spot among the finest, most highly regarded artists in the vibrant arts community of Central Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

"I really have a passion for painting," she said simply.

She can't remember a time when that wasn't the case. As a young woman she studied at San Francisco State and UC Berkeley, and graduated with a degree in psych social welfare. But the pull of art was strong.

"I loaded up my tiny VW Beetle and drove up to Eugene and miraculously talked my way into graduate school in art education — and I never took an education class," she said.

She graduated cum laude in 1971. Then, the economics of the arts smacked her.

"I had a one-woman show and I made \$45 and I thought, 'Well, this isn't going to work out.'"

A day job was in order, and Druian started out in social work per her education, then moved into educational development and thence into organizational development, where she built a successful 30-year career, a highlight being time spent working for the Port of Portland.

She never stopped painting though.

"I painted at night," she said.

Though watercolor is not her preferred medium, she used them because they were easy to clean up and suitable for the time and space she was allowed for her art.

About 15 years ago, she and her husband, Greg, built a house in Central Oregon — and painting moved to the fore. Thanks to the spectacular view of the Deschutes River and the Three Sisters afforded by her new home, Druian was inspired to start painting landscapes, which she had never done before.

"Almost immediately, I joined Plein Air Painters of Oregon," she said. "I found landscape to be incredibly challenging."

In addition to the calling of her new home, Druian traces her inspiration to a book of paintings by the master of Western landscape painting, Maynard Dixon. She studied his work and thought, "I have to paint like this."

Druian is a dedicated and serious artist, and she studied her challenging craft intensively. She took classes with the renowned artist Jean Legassick, who remains a close friend.

"She kind of took me under her wing," Druian said.

Working in oils, Druian has explored the remote reaches of

Oregon and the Great Basin.

"I like the desert," she said. "The further you can get into Eastern Oregon and the remote places, the happier I am. I like being way out there, where you are in conversation with your own soul."

Druian says she paints en plein air only a couple of times a year, just to keep the chops up.

"I'm a cranky en plein air painter, yes," she confessed. "'It's too hot!' 'It's too windy!'"

Druian has for many years been a featured artist at Tumalo Art Co., and she has shown her work at Borrego Springs Invitational, and Cowgirl Up in Arizona; Clearwater Gallery Invitational; "The Crush," Columbia Center for the Arts (Hood River); and Art of the West at the Favell Museum.

She maintains a regular display at Bedouin in Sisters, which she refreshes with new work every four months or so.

"Janit (Brockway, founder of Bedouin) started putting my work in Bedouin," Druian said. "I became good friends



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Janice Druian's "Storm Over Summer Lake" earned her a prestigious spot in an *Artist* magazine feature — one of 10 finalists out of 2,000 entries.

with Janit — she's an amazing person."

That tradition has continued with Bedouin's current owner, Harmony Thomas, who is hosting Druian at the shop and the adjacent Good

Day Café at 143 E. Hood Ave. during the Fourth Friday Art Stroll on Friday, November 22.

Druian notes that Greg will be playing jazz at the shop during the stroll.

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