

The Art of Randal Harvey

By Randal Harvey and Erika Paleck

First Friday has taken a different twist in cooperation with the Blue House Café at 919 Bridge Street in Vernonia. The First Friday events will now be the opening for a series of month-long exhibits by local artists while other artists and crafters will be displaying inside as well. Other activities, demos and information will be held in the VCLC Courtyard in conjunction with the Open Air Market.

The first exhibitor in this series is Randal Harvey. Since she was instrumental in creating this program along with Sam and Eleonora Semerjian, I'll let her tell you about herself:

First and foremost I would have to call myself an "Outsider" artist, but having said that, I don't consider myself a Primitive, because of the wonderful teachers I've had the privilege to learn from."

I have always loved arts and crafts. I have always loved color and the interplay of colors.

I am a mid-century model, born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Graduated from high school and have about 2.5 years of college, but alas, never graduated.

I've worked a number of jobs over my lifetime. One here in Vernonia, a long, long time ago, was as a typesetter for The Eagle newspaper. It was interesting, because they had

this old machine that would pump out hot lead through pipes to make the large letters and a new computer thing (at the time), that we would type in the small columns and then we would paste everything down with hot wax. It only lasted a very short time because I moved



back to the Bay area. I also worked for the Oakland Tribune newspaper doing display advertising. I worked and lived in San Francisco. I worked for Wells Fargo many years as a forms designer and manager. My husband and I moved to the East Bay from San Francisco to help take care of our aging parents. It was at this time I started having the time to get back to what I have always loved, Art.

I was first drawn to stained glass by the strong and vivid colors. After a few years, I decided to move on to painting; it seems a natural progression.

I began watercolors with a delightful teacher, Pat Strout. I also took classes in California Impressionist Painting with George Holmes and a short

stint with Mark Jezierny, who showed me the effects of Light and Shadow and Perspective and Grids. BUT, then I met two incredible artists (and teachers) to whom I seriously owe so much, Gary Bergren and Margaret Bromstrom.

Gary hammered into my head what a good painting should have. The A, B, C's of painting, all the rules and regs of how to do it. His portrait class or "Creating an Illusion," changed how I painted or will ever paint again. He taught me how to listen to a critique without my ego getting in the way. He said to me once that you had to know the rules before you could break them successfully. He was right, of course. He was and still is a wonderful and giving teacher, and just a plain fantastic person.



Margaret Bromstrom taught me to be free and brave with my painting, and the gift of time to do so. I spent over two years with Margaret and a little over one year with Gary.

I feel my style, if you were to put a name to it, would have to be somewhere between Realism to Surrealism. I'm still evolving. I started with watercolor; I like watercolor and still do it occasionally. I tried oil, but soon found out I was allergic to it. So, I now paint in acrylic. The Pacific Northwest is a great place to paint with acrylic, with all the moisture in the air. I can keep my sponge palette workable for up to a month and, on occasion, longer. Really!

My style? I have tried impressionism, but my style and colors seem to end up more realistic and dark. But who knows what the future holds?



My current body of work is my "Vernonia Series." Some examples are: The painting I have donated to the Lions Club for a raffle is called "Dogwood Blossoms on Texas Avenue, Vernonia, Oregon." (Tickets will be available during First Fridays until the last First Friday on October 1st.

Also, "Treasures from Julie's Garden: 'Beets and Squash,' Vernonia, Oregon" and "Christmas Pomegranate from Sentry Market, Vernonia, Oregon." These are the ones I had on display at the first First Friday at the Scout Cabin. I currently have nine in the series, with more in planning stages. How many will be in the "Vernonia Series?" I have no idea.

I love and am influenced by many artists. To name just a few, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Vermeer-- I love the darkness vs. light of their portraits. John Singer Sargent, whose brushwork just blows me away, so loose up close, but stand back and it's magic how he makes it come together. Salvador Dali, because his body of work just sings. Anything from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dante Rossetti being one of my favs and John William Waterhouse, who some say isn't a Pre-Raphaelite, but I say he is, so there! And I can't leave out Henri Rousseau, one of my favorite "Outsider" Artists.

Well, Erika, I'm not sure if this is what you were looking for from me. But, I'm sure you'll be able to glean something out of this.

One thing before closing this: I must say I have enjoyed looking at Sam Semerjian's artwork. I think he is very unique. I also enjoy Walter Neuman's work. I love seeing the work of the young artists in town, also. I want to see more, please.

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