



Northwest painter Myla Keller.

Photo by Thad Kreisher

## Art A Diary Of Life



Photos by Beth Coffey

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To have a career that is both a full time occupation as well as a life long love.

In a world where necessity takes precedence over desire, this goal is often far fetched to say the least.

The energetic Myla Keller, however, is one person who has managed to tear out a piece of the dream world and make it her reality. Art and personal expression is her career, and her love.

Keller has been on the Oregon art scene for 25 years now. Her works have been displayed in a myriad of galleries throughout the Northwest and many of her pieces hang in both private and corporate collections, including one piece that was one of the first pieces of art ever purchased for the College.

In addition to all of this, Keller was the owner of the Keller Gallery for 18 years. For years this was Salem's only serious commercial art gallery. However, seven years ago, Keller left all of this and moved to the scenic

Oregon City area where she now resides in a sunlit house that is more of an art studio than residence. Why? One reason given by the mirthful artist was to find a new audience. "Salem people say 'Oh, I like the way you used to paint,'" explains Keller, "but I am a better painter than I used to be. That's the trap. You get a group of patrons who support you, they don't want to see you change because chances are they're not going to change with you."

Despite the fact that she is an accomplished and well known Northwest painter, Keller did not set out to be an artist. "It was never meant to be something to keep me busy" she says, "I started out looking for knowledge. I never started out to be a painter, ever."

In her life long search for knowledge, Keller has found her art to be a very useful tool towards that end. It has given her knowledge of both herself as well as of others.

"It is a diary of my life," she says of her art, "They all tell me

a story. There are things that have gone on that there is no one in the world I would share with, but they (her paintings) trigger the memory for me." She continues saying that she has a "secret weapon in touching people and getting to know them through what I create. The way people respond is very revealing to me."

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Twenty-five years ago, when Keller first began painting, she had no idea why other than that she had a strong desire to do it. Now, however, looking back in retrospect, she is a bit more sure as to what exactly it was that appealed and motivated her so strongly. "Reproducing space and time," she says in thoughtful tones somewhat

removed from her usual light hearted mode of conversation. "Still, that is what drives me; to try and capture what I felt when I saw what I saw. And if you, a viewer, even get just a little bit of what motivated me, it's successful. Because I'm a communicator, I want to communicate those things with you. Maybe not with the intensity that I felt, but even if I carry that energy to the next step, it worked. That's what it's all about."

Concerning her paintings, one does not have to look hard to discern that Keller's favorite medium of expression is the landscape, both realistic and abstract. She attributes this to the fact that she spent the formative years of her childhood in seclusion in the wilds of Montana. Later on in life, however, Keller found another aspect of the landscape that appealed to her. "You're in control of that world," she laughingly explains, "There are not many things in life that you can say 'I created it, it's mine and if I

what to share it, I will, if I don't, I won't, and if I don't like it, I'll eliminate it.' There's a lot of personal power just between me and the canvas."

Keller's artwork is currently on display in Pauling Gallery in an exhibit entitled "Intimate Landscapes." This is a concept that Keller explains has been an ongoing thing for her for the past two years.

"To me," she states, "an intimate landscape is created by someone who really is emotionally involved with the subject. Someone who really looks and is involved on all levels, emotionally, botanically, color schemes, growth patterns. As I said to the class, someone who has a bug's eye view."

Keller's work depicts the landscape with a style that mirrors her energetic personality. The collection currently on display in Pauling is a mixed set from several different periods throughout her career and can be viewed for a limited time.

