

“When I was little, we used to raise carrier pigeons,” she says. She, her brother and sister, and her father trained them by incrementally taking them longer distances from home, starting with across the street, and having them fly back. “There weren’t cell phones at the time,” she explains. “My dad was an avid hunter and fisherman. So he would go over to the coast and he would take the pigeons with him, and he would write little notes and put them around their legs, and they would fly back to the cage. My brother and sister and I would get these little notes.”

A pigeon appears in the painting “Home” (featured on cover), which she describes as her personal totem piece. “Every bit of that painting has a story in it,” she says. There’s the blushing deer, front and center. Above, a hummingbird with a twig in its beak represents her grandmother’s spirit animal. “She is a water witch,” Trumbly says. “She’s the one all the farmers came to to find wells for their property.” She describes how her grandmother would hold a willow branch to the ground as she traversed a property, and when she felt a certain sensation, would direct the farmers where to dig. The chanterelles and morels represent family trips foraging in the woods. The bare branches of a tulip tree — a tree that grew in the front yard of her childhood home and began to perish the same day her mother passed — frame the deer’s face. The stories go on and on.

“I would say love is the main theme in a lot of them,” she says of her work, describing her paintings as “little valentines.” The poster for the OCF is no different. Trumbly, who has been attending the Fair since she was 17 when she worked at the Create-a-Potato booth, was nervous about painting this particular love letter. (She rarely does commission work.) “It’s such an honor to get to do this project,” she says, pausing. “It’s a little intimidating at first. What am I going to do? What am I going to come up with to represent the Fair?” She decided to focus on what often is overshadowed by the dazzling kaleidoscope of costume, music, food and arts that is the Fair — and what remains the other 362 days of year: the native wildlife.

“I wanted to bring to light the critters and creatures and flowers, flora and fauna that are out there — that are native to the OCF site,” she says. “Everybody realizes it’s a beautiful setting, but I think that everything kind of scatters. There’s so much eye candy everywhere with the booths. There’s just so much going on that those are things we just don’t think about as much.” You can see this in the poster’s frame of tiger lilies, oxalis, trillium and wild iris. As for the juggling rabbit, mustachioed frog, crowned snail and other characters? You’ll just have to visit Trumbly at her OCF booth and ask her to tell you a story. ■

Trumbly will be signing posters at the OCF, booth 818, July 12-14. Her work can also be seen currently at Morning Glory Café, Davis Restaurant and year-round at Sweet Cheeks Winery.

‘I WANTED TO BRING TO LIGHT THE CRITTERS AND CREATURES AND FLOWERS, FLORA AND FAUNA THAT ARE NATIVE TO THE OCF SITE’

— SHANNA TRUMBLY

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