

Opening up the world of art

Astoria artist shares her knowledge with students across the country

BY KATHERINE LACAZE

Although she's an exemplary artist in her own right, Deborah Stenberg's deepest satisfaction is derived from passing on skills, techniques and knowledge about the business side of creativity to others who are just venturing into the art world.

Stenberg moved to Astoria in October. Since then, she has been teaching college courses, giving private lessons and creating artwork out of her new home.

"I love to see the excitement of students succeeding," Stenberg said. "Sometimes I have to dig really deep to find it but I can always find that artistic gene in any person. And then the excitement when they discover, 'Oh my gosh, I can do this.'"

An Arizona native, Stenberg's introduction to art was provided by her mother, a registered nurse who wrote and illustrated several nursing handbooks. Stenberg's mother would also regularly keep a piece of paper near the phone and absentmindedly doodle animations and landscapes when taking a call.

"I used to just sit there while she was talking on the phone and watch her go to town with these illustrations," Stenberg said.

Growing up, Stenberg also regularly visited a cabin in northern Arizona with her mom, who would bring fresh art supplies and various projects for them to work on during their stay.

During high school, Stenberg took as many art courses as she could before heading to the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. It was during her undergraduate education that Stenberg discovered her affinity and natural talent for portraiture, although she was initially intimidated by the art form.



Artist Deborah Stenberg poses with an oil portrait she painted of her daughter.

As a college student, she was required to do an artist copy. Drawn to the old Dutch Masters, Stenberg selected a piece by Leonardo da Vinci for the assignment.

"I completely shocked myself and realized, 'I can paint people and I'm sort of good at it,'" she said. "That just started this ball rolling and I was all into it."

At Susan Thomas' A Great Gallery in Gearhart, where Stenberg has started showing work, she is marketed as a por-

trait artist and still life painter, although her talents encompass a broader field of artforms. She embraces the "Jack of all trades, master of none" persona.

Most of Stenberg's work is commissioned. She enjoys only showing at a couple galleries, she said, because there is less pressure to continually create new work and she can instead invest a majority of her time into her primary love, teaching.

Becoming a professor

After completing college and while raising her four children, Stenberg made a name for herself teaching private lessons and workshops. Her focus at the time was tole painting, the art of decorative painting on furniture, tins, wooden utensils and other objects. She wrote five

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