

Landscapes with a Twist | Chris Ann Abigt

The Art of Chris Ann Abigt brings a breath of fresh air to the world of painted landscapes. Abigt and her husband Bill have owned a small Art Gallery and Custom Frame shop in Ottumwa, Iowa since 1985, but her passion for painting started very early in her childhood.

Abigt was born in Marion, Iowa and lived there until she and her husband, Bill, Married and moved to Des Moines for a year. They then decided to move to Ottumwa where they purchased the local art gallery and frame shop and have lived ever since. They raised three children who are now grown and married with children of their own and the

Abigts treasure being grandparents to 8 grandchildren.

When asked about her own childhood, Abigt replied, “My childhood was the quintessential small town Middle of America childhood! I had two brothers and we lived in a neighborhood full of kids. We played outside every chance we could. We all bounced around from home to home so parents could refuel us and send us back outside. Of course during the school year we had to finish our homework first but early on T.V. was black and white and a limited privilege so the great outdoors played a major role in my childhood.” Abigt remembers being in the third grade when she realized she

had a gift and a passion for art. Her third grade teacher, Mrs. Huntoon had an art contest with a patriotic theme. Abigt's Poster won the contest and she was surprised by how encouraging the other kids were about her artwork! Her small private school didn't have a big budget for Art but fortunately for Abigt both of her mother's parents were artistic and very encouraging and instrumental in her artistic growth.

Abigt recalls that in the summer before her 4th Grade year a neighborhood friend introduced her to the Walter Foster "How to Draw" books that were so popular at the time and she fell in love with charcoal pencils, blending stumps and kneaded erasers! Shortly after the discovery a neighborhood Art Club was formed and Abigt designated herself as the teacher. She laughs as she thinks about it and remembers, "There were two of us who loved to do the art projects while the others came mostly for the food. It really worked out great - we needed them to purchase our art when we had our neighborhood art sales! Who knew I was beginning an art career way back before 4th grade!" It was Christmas that same year that Abigt's Grandma Bert bought her her first set of acrylic paints, real paint brushes and canvas from the local art supply store. She

promptly set up a studio in her parents basement and has been painting ever since.

Abigt went on to take every Art class her high school had to offer. The summer between her Jr. and Sr. year of high school her Art Teacher encouraged her to attend a month long Art Camp at the University of Kansas where her passion flourished and her decision to become an artists no matter what it took was set in stone!

Abigt went on to be a Fine Arts Major attending both the local community college and then the University of Iowa. She continued to paint regularly on her own so during her University days she took classes in everything else art related; Pottery, Film, Metal Working, Multi Media and Print Making. She also read a plethora of books about famous artists and spent many hours at the art gallery on campus and made several trips to the Chicago Art Institute.

"Growing up in the Heartland," Abigt says, "One can't help but be influenced by Grant Wood and the rolling countryside that inspired him!" Nature has always been Abigts favorite subject. She loves to travel and experience new places especially the National and State Parks with their unique landscapes.

She loves taking time to experience the personality of each place on foot with camera in hand. “Hiking and exploring breathes life into me and my work as I try to capture the feel of a place on canvas rather than merely the look.

Abigt chooses her subject matter based on how deeply a place inspires her. “If I can sit or stand or walk through a place and gain an understanding for the elemental and organic essence of it’s unique atmosphere then I have something special to paint!” She loves to capture the light playing it’s way through the trees, the way the wind whispers its way through a canyon or the way water can be tranquil in one setting and resounding waves in in the next.

The natural landscape has always been Abigt’s favorite subject matter - doodling many flowers and sunshine as a child in the 60s. However, throughout her high school and college years she worked primarily in an



An Oil Painting done for her Grandma in 1982

impressionistic style. She was inspired by the

spontaneous and naturalistic rendering of light to create an atmosphere and was influenced by the works of Claude Monet, Pierre-August Renior and Mary Cassatt. Post college Abigt developed a love for Realism working both in pencil and oil paint. She received a copy of the book “The Pencil” by Paul Calle in 1984 and he quickly became a favorite artistic influence. However, it was Vincent Van Gogh’s inspirational insight “real painters do not paint things as they are...they paint them as they themselves feel them to be.” that has encouraged Abigt to explore the technique that she has developed in recent years and continues to pursue. Abigt’s current technique is a marvelous integration of her work through the years. Sara Gerot, MFA Cal Arts recently said “What is great about Abigt’s work is the way her portfolio of content has shifted through the years but remains consistent at the same time. Throughout all of the movement a constant that remains within her painting is palpable energy. Each of her pieces, whether harnessing the wonder of the natural environment or delineating the organic and fantastic, offers the viewer an intuitive experience.”

When asked about her current technique Abigt was able to weave together



Ebb and Flow
24x48 Oil
Painting



High Hopes
36x48
Oil
Painting

the story of her Art and the prevailing direction that is exhilarating her. “I have spent quite a few years working in a realistic style.

Several years ago, however, I challenged myself to paint an hour a day applying color theory with simple thoughts but in a more



Joy



Kindness



Looking Up

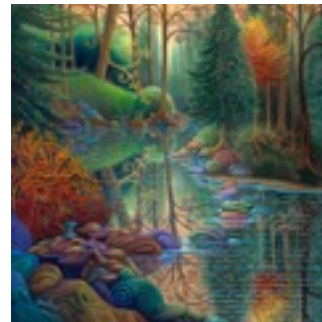


Patience

expressive way.” What developed out of that time was a body of work that Abigt refers to as her “Splurges!” It was an inspiring time. It was in 2012 that Abigt decided to work along with that inspiration and Paint her realistic Landscapes but with a twist! Pulling the “Splurge” Expression into her realism and create the feel of place not just merely the look. “It has been a delight to capture a real place but paint the light and the wind, the way the sun warms and the cloud cover cools, the way rain drops ripple and waves crash and the way foliage blows in the breeze.” Nature’s



Symphony was the first piece where Abigt pulled the two styles together. She went on to paint Stepping Stones to further explore her new approach. It was with the next painting,



Grand Design, that Abigt realized she



absolutely loved working this way! She has been developing an ever expanding portfolio of what she refers to as her “crossover style” ever since. She continues to travel with her husband to new places and find inspiration



for future paintings. These are from a trip to the East Coast.

During some of those travels Abigt participates in Juried Art Shows where she has had remarkable successes winning “Best of Show” and First Place for Painting at a variety of Art Shows and Festivals throughout the the Country. A collector of her work recently told Abigt “Thank You for making

the world Better through your Art!” When Mark McWhorter, the Professor of Art at a college in Abigt’s town, was asked about her work he said, “ I’ve known Chris Abigt for many years and I have admired her work for all of them. Chris is capable of great realism, but also has this wonderfully organic and symbolic style. Whichever manner she is working in, her art is crafted with great skill and thoughtfulness.”

When Abigt isn’t in her studio she is helping her husband at the Art Gallery and Custom Frame Shop that they have owned and operated for over 30 years. The Abigts along with their staff are “Master Framers”. Abigt’s focus is primarily on painting but occasionally still gets involved with specialty matting and framing projects.



The Abigts have three grown children who are all married with families of their

own. The 8 Grand children are 5 years old and younger that makes life especially fun. Their oldest daughter and her family live in Massachusetts and their second daughter and her family live in Arizona with their youngest son living just across the park from them in Ottumwa, Iowa! Abigt always says, “Since our kids live so far away, we’re happy they live in some of the most beautiful places in the Country! I have so much subject matter that needs to be painted from our visits to see them and I just plan on going as often as I can!”

When asked to give some final thoughts about her work and the mission she is trying to embrace through her art Abigt replied thoughtfully, “I love working in all mediums but my true passion is Oil Painting on Canvas. Oil colors are alive and the way oil paint blends allows me to get the kind of ethereal glow I desire. Whether it's my traditional landscapes or my more whimsical landscapes the eventual goal is the same - A work of art that invites the viewer to step back and relax into a special moment in time. I love painting real places with a whimsical touch and having people recognize them and with a big smile and say ‘I’ve been there and you captured how I felt when I was there!’ That is my very favorite comment! I’m also

enthusiastic about capturing the sunlight at it's most enchanting time of day. I paint not only what the eye can perceive but the way the wind blows and the way a variety of sounds mingle throughout the forest, the way light changes as it drifts along with the clouds and the feel of shoreline tides washing over toes and stones. It's the story of a place that invites me paint it. To tell the unique story of a place and a moment in time but tell it with paint in such a way that the viewer is invited to become involved in the story!”

A recent painting from a trip to Acadia National Park, in Maine.

