

Martha Sechler Reflects Whimsy and Fantasy in Watercolor and Gourds

“Inspiration comes through stories,” says watercolorist and gourd artist Martha Sechler. “I’m drawn to fantasy and the whimsical.”

As a retired school librarian who now works part time at the Brown County Public Library, Ms. Sechler has been surrounded most of her life by stories, and she taps into them when approaching her visual art.

“One of my favorite activities as a librarian is telling stories,” she says.

She often includes the children in her “shadow spinning,” a term sometimes used for the telling of tales. Ms. Sechler easily describes the connection between these stories and her art.

“In my art I’m also telling a story,” she explains. “But I think of it as searching for the perfect light and color, so I call it ‘light spinning.’ I think there is much more to each painting than I understand, so people viewing a piece spin their own interpretations.”

The stories of other cultures have also influenced Ms. Sechler’s art. Following her undergraduate work, she lived and taught on the Hopi Indian Reservation in northern Arizona, and later spent two years in Jamaica, West Indies while in the Peace Corps.

The idea of stories came full circle when she used the profits from the sale of paintings made in Jamaica to purchase books for the preschools in which she worked.

Ms. Sechler’s art training began as a child.



“My father was a printer,” she says. “He taught me a great deal about colors, their origins and combinations.”

She began watercolor painting while pursuing her undergraduate degree.

“I was drawn to its freshness and spontaneity,” she explains. “It can be difficult to control, but I

find that making so-called ‘mistakes’ work in the piece is one of the challenges I most enjoy.”

But while she revels in the looseness and spontaneity of working in watercolors, Ms. Sechler has also recently been attracted to the intensity and precision of using pyrography, or wood burning techniques, on gourds.

“I prefer to create with them in a way that enhances the unique shapes and mottled textures of the gourds,” she says.

The gourds are also getting her out into the garden. She and her husband have built a trellis and are growing their own gourds.

“I’m planning to try out ideas to encourage unique growth patterns that will work well with my art,” she says.

Ms. Sechler has been making art for years, but only recently has begun seriously exhibiting it.

Ms. Sechler’s home studio on Helmsburg Road is open by appointment, and is one of the studios participating in the Brown County Studio and Garden Tour happening the last weekend of June each year.

More information about Martha Sechler and her work can also be found on the Art Alliance Brown County website at www.artalliancebrowncounty.com or www.BrownCountyStudioTour.com.



by Michele Heather Pollock