



Megan Jones in studio.

Photo credit Paul Jacus

Studio Tour Features Diverse Artists

BY SUSAN KERN-FLEISCHER

This year's Hidden in the Hills Artist Studio Tour features 164 diverse artists, including two artists who are inspired by nature.

Wild About Welding

Susan Canasi is an accomplished printmaker, painter, and sculptor, but her true passion is creating bold, radiant metal sculptures using copper, brass, aluminum and steel to capture the beauty of the desert.

A professional artist, she also worked as an art instructor at Mesa Community College (MCC) for more than two decades. In 2002, she discovered her passion for metal sculpture after a student suggested she see what they were doing in the welding lab.

"I fell in love with copper immediately," she said. "I have always immersed myself in my art and I like the challenge and energy of creating metal sculpture. It took me about a year to get over the fear of working with a hot torch and other dangerous elements. It's so exciting to create two-dimensional metal sculptures or textural, iridescent wall pieces. And I really enjoy experimenting to create beautiful patterns and colors."

Inspired by the desert landscape and foliage, Canasi creates her designs for her metal sculptures at her Tempe home studio. She does all the fabrication processes requiring torches, heat and flame at Mesa Community College's welding lab. The hand-held plasma cutter conducts over 10,000 degrees to cut the metal, a combination of electricity and compressed air.

Canasi is a guest artist at painter and gourd artist Dena Johnson's Tree Loft Studio No. 8 during the studio tour.

"This is my 16th year participating in Hidden in the Hills, and I love it because I get the chance to share my passion for

metal sculpture," she said. "I have a large display of art, and I bring some of my tools and a binder with photos. I really enjoy meeting the guests and explaining the process step by step."

Salt River Wild Horses Inspire Painter

This is the first year that acrylic painter Megan Jones will participate in Hidden in the Hills. A Cave Creek resident, Jones is an equestrian who is passionate about painting the Salt River wild horses.

"My interest began in Montana the summer after my college years. I was hired as a nanny and ranch hand for a family who lived way up in the Pryor Mountain Gap outside Bridger," Jones said.

During a tent camping trip, Jones was awakened with a startle and then quickly in awe, by a large herd of wild horses galloping nearby.

"The ground was shaking. It has stayed with me always. When I learned of the herds here in Arizona, I wanted to learn more, and then I began to paint them," she said.

Jones said she is drawn to paint what she is drawn to in her life.

"I have always been a horse girl. I have always loved nature with its organic, soft flow. Sometimes I will focus on the female form for its undulating curves or the arch of a horse's side, waves in the ocean or a mountain's outline. I am drawn to beauty, introspection and a sense of calm," she said.

During the studio tour, Jones will be a guest artist at Michele Malone's Kind Rocks Studio No. 29 in Cave Creek. Jones will also donate a portion of her proceeds to a charity that helps the horses.

"I admire and respect all the work people put into caring for the herds and preserving their history," she said.

For details, visit www.HiddenInTheHills.org.

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