

Art Matters

Our local, artful life



Above: From left, poets Jessie Randall and Sarah Nance, artist Pam Aloisa, and poet Tom McGuire share their creativity in poetry and painting at the last Art Hop event of the season on Sept. 16. Dr. McGuire explained the ideas behind the three poets’ ekphrastic poetry, which is a tradition in describing a visual work of art in poetry. Each poet read their poems and were available along with the painter to discuss their works with visitors throughout the evening. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

By Janet Sellers

The Art Hop completed its 2021 season on Sept. 16 with beautiful music, artists, poets, and visual art throughout the town. Our community is restoring its conviviality and enjoying our outdoors and local places, and indeed our autumn arts enjoyment will continue with monthly events around town.

At Bella Art and Frame Gallery, poets Tom McGuire, Jessie Randall, and Sarah Nance joined artist Pam Aloisa in the ancient Greek tradition of ekphrasis. Ekphrasis, from the Greek meanings of “telling out,” “recount,” and “description” can focus on an artifact or a poem describing a visual work of art that could be real or imaginary.

Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield in Book 18 of *The Iliad* stands at the beginning of the ekphrastic tradition. We are close to ekphrasis in our contemporary culture with lyrics such as those in Don McLean’s song *Vincent* (also known as *Starry Starry Night*), where McLean describes many of Van Gogh’s paintings with lyrics about the colors and seasons of flowers, harvests, and snow.

Such intimate descriptions of seasons as McLean creates in *Vincent*, without actually saying the season, is also indicative of Japanese haiku poems. Often, friends will make haiku poems at a gathering, or create a small painting together with a haiku poem written in calligraphy. This is

called “shikishi” haiku painting. I did this with artist friends in Japan. Of course, they helped correct my Japanese, but we had a lot of good times making them. It’s also a fun school project for kids, since haiku are simple and fun to create.

Our rich artful culture is strongly influenced by the ancients in visual art, poetry, song, and more. While much of our thinking in Western education is rooted in ancient Greco-Roman influence, locally we also have our indigenous influences and nature, and these are close by for the discovering, no museum needed.

In the times when few people could read and write, art was an important means of communication. Just as we take photos today to remember special events, the arts of our ancients helped record events in ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome. Our local indigenous culture has recorded special communications through a prolific number of bent trees, known as culturally modified trees, prayer trees, or spirit trees, and rock formations and sacred sites.

One of the biggest and hugely fascinating works of indigenous art we have close by and visible is the Elephant Rock we can see from Highway 105 between Monument and Palmer Lake. Upon close examination, we can see details of the elephant anatomy including the neck, head shape, eyes and eyelids, mouth and more.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, and speaker living in the Tri Lakes area. Reach her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Annual Monu-Palooza draws hundreds, Sept. 4



Above and below: The fifth annual Monu-Palooza was held Sept. 4 at Limbach Park in Monument. According to Charlie Searle, who helped plan and organize the festivities, about 500 people turned out for the eight-hour event. Six bands

performed, including local groups Ashtonz, Eighty3, Skin & Bones, and Mosquito Pass. Vendors were on hand to provide food and other services. Mark your calendar for Sept. 4, 2022 for the sixth annual Monu-Palooza. *Photos by Steve Pate.*

