

Art Matters

# Sculpture bliss and a bit thank you to Tri-Lakes Views



By Janet Sellers

Luckily for each of us, our community has long had a focus on quality of life, good neighborliness, fine schools, and an aesthetic culture. We have come to have a high percentage of fine artists in our area, and monthly and weekly arts events as well.

Our very landscape creates its own weather patterns and separates the Arkansas River drainage to the south and the Platte River drainage to the north. I think that influences our community for our rugged individualism and the ongoing necessity to adapt literally to the winds of change and dramatic weather we always have going on. And it surely gives us the strong inclination to be creative and thereby enjoy the arts.

I met sculptor Jodie Bliss recently at the Art Walk planning group. Bliss has a lifelong history with Monument. Her mom started the High Country Feed and Tack on Washington Street back in the '70s, and Bliss first lived in our town as a child. After college and various travels and art adventures around the country, she told me she wanted to put down roots and chose Monument, bought her house and set up shop within walking distance. Bliss chose to have her studio at the warehouse area of the historic High Country building, and that is where she now creates her art.

"It's not a showroom, it's a working studio," Bliss said, as she showed me the large area for the metal welding equipment, blacksmithing forge, ceramics, and kiln space. Even so, the many side shelves holding the works in progress contain fascinating objets d'art that await their full completion.

A stickler on craftsmanship for her highly personal concepts that combine a variety of materials in the mixed media constructions, Bliss' current series is a group of wall dependant works—constructions—that are enconced as shrines that remind me of retablos with a tantric influence. The varied materials include wrought metal, ceramic, paint, and welded metals, and are cased in wood.

Bliss personally crafts all of the many parts of her art, using heavy equipment to work on the metals and ceramics, and keeping large storage areas for the works in progress and their components. Smaller shelves hold an array of metal hand-wrought jewelry and household functional art such as tongs, elaborate bottle openers, and decorative small works.

Bliss will be giving blacksmithing demos at her stu-

dio for the ongoing Art Walks on second Fridays each month. I asked her if people could drop by for a studio visit at other times, and she said that if the door is open, she is there and she'll be very happy to welcome visitors and show them around. It is really a treat to see.

### Monument Sculpture Park

Monument Sculpture Park has new pedestals and a plethora of new works are to be installed June 15 for the 2012-13 season. Tri-Lakes Views, a local arts group whose mission is to enrich our community by supporting activities that showcase the arts, juried the exhibit. By the way, pedestals can be paid for and donated to the park by anyone who would like to support the sculpture park, and many of the sculptures, if not in the town's permanent collection, are for sale.

Most recently, Elaine Dworak secured a memorial pedestal for her beloved husband, Lt. Col. John Dworak Sr., a West Point graduate who served his country from World War II until his retirement in 1973. Dworak loved deep sea fishing, so it is fitting that Monument's newly purchased Sailfish sculpture by Ivan Kosta will be atop that very pedestal.

Join me and give Tri-Lakes Views a big thank you for its efforts! The group also will have its handsome annual art map available for us at local merchants.

### Art Walks and the Art Hop

Our two official evening arts events are now in full glory.

The Art Walk, led by local artists and galleries to showcase their art venues, also helps to introduce new artists via the festive art booths placed around town, and takes place the second Friday of each month, 4 to 8 p.m. We've nicknamed the alley between Washington and Front Streets "Artist's Alley" in honor of the artists tents that give it an art festival feeling. Each tent showcases an artist or artist group, and is affiliated with the site-specific merchant.

The Art Hop is sponsored by the Historic Monument Merchants Association. On the third Thursday of each month, through September, the galleries, restaurants, and boutiques of historic downtown Monument stay open until 8 p.m. for a celebration featuring art openings, great food, live music, and other special events.

Both of these fun events are centered in the Old Town area of Monument at the moment, with the Art Walk reaching out to Palmer Lake and the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, while keeping an eye to expanding to more areas

of local artists' studios and venues.

Keep in mind, you can always visit our art al fresco any time you wish! Get the map, grab a friend and get out to see the art. As I like to say, in art, remember to "take it easel!"

*Janet Lee Sellers is an American painter and public art sculptor who works in paint, metal and concrete. Sellers lives in Woodmoor, Colorado. She can be reached at JanetSellers@OCN.me.*



**Above:** Jodie Bliss and her dog, Dakota, at Sculpture Bliss Studio, stand next to her wrought metalwork sculptures. Bliss will be doing blacksmithing demonstrations for the public while participating in the monthly Art Walks every second Friday in Monument. The studio is located directly behind the renewed High Country Homebrew (formerly High Country Store) at 243 Washington Street in Historic Downtown Monument, as part of what the Art Walk artists call "Artist's Alley". *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

## Snapshots of Our Community

### Earth day clean-up



**Above:** On April 23, as part of celebrating Earth day, the students of St. Peter Catholic School cleaned up local areas. Kindergarten, first, and second grade students cleaned up Limbaugh park. Third graders cleaned up a hiking trail. Fourth, fifth, and sixth graders cleaned up the Santa Fe trail. Pictured about are kindergarteners Dylan and Zack cleaning up Limbaugh park. *Photo provided by St. Peter Catholic School.*

### TLWC President get together



**Above (L to R):** At the Tri-Lakes Women's Club luncheon May 18, Donna Wagner and Mary Mills, 2012-13 Co-Presidents, receive leadership of the club from Sally Stephenson and Debbie Kessler, 2011-12 Co-Presidents. *Photo provided by the Tri-Lakes Women's Club.*