

Wang: Local native has gone from world of furniture to art

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Next month is the beginning of the ninth year of my Art = Life column in the Rantoul Press.

During the last eight years I had physically met all the artists and reviewed their artwork I featured in my column. Also in the same period, because of the rapid development of communication technology such as the Internet, cellular phones and computers, our art world and our way of life are also changing.

As it so happened, a couple of weeks ago, our Press editor received an email from a New York art gallery announcing its upcoming new exhibition and asking if I would be interested in featuring the exhibition because one of the exhibiting artists grew up in Rantoul and studied art at RTHS.

So I e-communicated with the art gallery and viewed the art exhibition at its website. This e-communication demonstrated that through the e-version of the Rantoul Press, my column has reached readers way beyond our local subscribers.

On the other hand, by virtue of galleries and online e-exhibitions, you can visit and view an e-exhibition anywhere in the world, anytime as long as you have access to the Internet.

To utilize some of these new technological developments, I am rather excited to begin my new chapter of this column by trying a new way of life: the e-way.

Here is the e-meeting with the New York Agora Gallery PR Assistant Nikki Fraser, and you can view our former Rantoul resident's artwork in the exhibition "The Influence of Color" at <http://www.agora-gallery.com>

"It is lovely to "e-meet" you. I am very impressed by what you have done with the Art = Life column, and I am really looking forward to getting you and Bethany together.

Bethany Mabee was born in Rantoul, where she took one art class offered at her high school and immediately had the desire to find the ability to truly express herself uninhibited.

She earned her BA from Bradley University in Peoria, with an emphasis in graphic design and art history and could never shake the artistic bug. Upon graduation, as she worked privately on her art, a series of jobs led to a career in furniture procurement within the interior design industry.

While directing furniture installations for some of Chicago's premier residences, she saw firsthand how artwork can transform a space. This experience furthered her enthusiasm for art and for interiors, which became a stepping stone in her development as



Photo by: Provided

"When painting, I feel guided by improvisation," artist Bethany Mabee says. "What usually starts as something non-representational becomes a study of inner exploration."

Image



an artist.

Mabee still sees the necessary marriage between art and a living space; however, her focus has evolved toward an emphasis in process over final product. The result is a fulfilling and spontaneous pattern of works.

“When painting, I feel guided by improvisation,” Mabee said. “What usually starts as something non-representational becomes a study of inner exploration.”

Through her skill as a colorist, her strong compositions and her juxtaposition of textures, the artist creates images that transform those inner explorations into vividly dramatic experiences. Working in acrylic and ink on canvas, she conjures up a physical sense of space and movement in her images, resulting in environments that come across as abstract, yet thoroughly real.

Mabee works out of her studio in Peoria, where she is a resident artist at the Studios on Sheridan.

Mabee has said of her work:

“When painting, I feel guided by improvisation. What usually starts as something nonrepresentational becomes a study of inner exploration. My inspiration comes mostly from the human experience: its layers, contrasts and cycles.

“I find great interest in our emotional, mental and physical layers and in how each evolves from the other to form our experiences. I’m interested by what layers we choose to reveal or conceal, by our response to contrasts and our cyclical perceptions of the world around us.

“My titles hint towards my own personal meaning or experience in the piece, and it is my hope that each work will spark a personal feeling or experience in the viewer.

“Painting has been a regular part of my life for over 15 years, but I can honestly say that it wasn’t until this last year that I confidently called myself an artist. I found trust in my creative intuition like I’d never had before. The works that I have created since have been so rewarding and are authentic expressions of my new observations.”

Fraser said Mabee’s artwork is something spectacular that the gallery is excited to share with not only its own New York and international market, but also the readers of the Rantoul Press.

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