

Artists unite in outdoor painting challenge to paint the Poudre River

By Kenneth Jessen For the Reporter-Herald Loveland Reporter-Herald

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"Paint the Poudre Plein Air" drew 40 artists from near and far. In a compressed time frame of just eight days, the challenge was for artists to paint scenes along the Cache la Poudre River followed by a show and sale at the AANC Gallery, 148 W. Oak St. in Fort Collins.

The show starts Friday with a reception at 5 p.m. and runs through Sunday -- call 970-222-1652 for more information.

Part of the proceeds benefit a nonprofit organization called Save the Poudre.

With such a limited time to capture this wild and scenic river, artists had to work hard at selected locations.

Carol Hartman drove from Bozeman, Mont., to participate in this "paint out" and has done a number of these events. She loves to work out of doors in a form of art called *en plein air*, French for "in the open air."

In Hartman's own words, "Painting on location allows me to capture the essence of my memories -- the colors of my surroundings. This type of art is also a social event where I meet people."

Her bachelor in fine art degree is from Montana State University in Bozeman followed by a masters in fine art from California State University in Fresno. She stayed in Fresno where she taught art for 17 years and at the same time, managed three on-campus galleries. After retirement, she returned to Bozeman.

She calls her art "Pockets of Memories" and it is sold through selected galleries.

Mary Harnett is from Fort Collins and is quite familiar with the Cache la Poudre River corridor. She is a plein air painter on occasion, but does most of her work in her studio.

She has been painting for some 40 years and started out by taking a Greyhound bus to San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art. Her formal education earned her a bachelor of fine art degree from the California College of Arts and Crafts.

She was part of the recent studio tour in Fort Collins where she sold a number of her works. Adding to her credentials, she was selected as artist in residence at Mesa Verde National Park. She is well traveled in the American West producing both watercolors and oils of the landscape.

Harnett emphasizes the need for artists to start by learning how to draw. Her advice is, "Values first, color second" for if the values are wrong, no amount of color selection can fix a painting.

Diane Fechenbach's education is certainly not typical for most artists. She holds both a bachelor and a masters degree in business administration. Her career was for a Fortune 500 company, but during the last six years, has made her living as an artist and teacher. With a studio in Highlands Ranch, she has sold her paintings through a number of galleries.

Her work has been selected for a long list of juried exhibitions all over the country. Of her sales, she says, "It is a most amazing thing -- the biggest thrill when people like my art. When you ring a bell with someone after using some art supplies and have someone else enjoy it, this is the best of the best."

Her students learn from her specific steps and cover subjects such as mastering shadows, color study, refining the edges and adding detail.