

Arts & Entertainment

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Visions: Through Paintings, Poetry and Prose

by Shelby Smithey



Margaret Biggs / Courtesy Photo

One look at her works of art, and feelings of calmness and peacefulness instantly wash over you. That's what local artist Margaret Biggs says most people tell her about her work.

Biggs said that fact isn't by coincidence. She reflects her inner peace and spirituality through every brush stroke.

"Living a spiritual life, one devoted to the development of one's relationship with a higher power, is reflected in my work," she said.

Margaret Biggs' solo exhibition, "Visions: Through Paintings, Poetry, and Prose," will be shown from September 25 through November 14 at the Pensacola Museum of Art.

Her exhibition celebrates and explores Gulf Coast inspired landscapes, seascapes, still life and holistic pieces within a stylized manner, which borders between the elements of abstraction and realism. Her oil on canvas works are paired with the artist's own poetry to guide

visitors toward a sense of peace and connectedness that is inherent everywhere.

Before working professionally as an artist, Biggs was an international model for 10 years where she was exposed to art in museums and galleries in Milan, New York City, Chicago and Paris. Biggs was introduced to conceptual art while she was attending the University of Illinois in Chicago, where she received a degree in Fine Arts.

"I learned that a self-portrait didn't have to look anything like you," she said.

After her modeling days, Biggs started a family but then changed career paths and started working in real estate after going through a divorce.

"I remember I was living in this tiny rental on the North Shore in Chicago with my two sons, my youngest was only 4 years old at the time," she said.

She started painting seriously in a small space in her kitchen.

"I just kept at it," she said. "I knew I had to paint to be a happy human being."

Biggs' earliest works depicted nostalgic scenery from home on the Gulf Coast, even though she was still living in Chicago at the time.

"My first painting was a big seashell," she said. "The vast majority of the subject matter had to do with the coastal South."

Biggs said that it wasn't until moving back to the Gulf Coast six years ago that she began her professional career as an artist.

"I came home under very difficult circumstances," Biggs said. "I filed for bankruptcy and lost everything. I decided I was going to do it. I lived frugally and modestly."

Biggs said that she began showing her art at several festivals, and three years ago she started selling her art to the State of Florida for new medical facilities.

Around 2008, Biggs said that poetry started to come to her when she painted.

"I always begin each morning with a quiet mind and meditation, and it's reflected in my painting," Biggs said. "I paint in silence or with classical music. I find peace through the act of painting. Although it was subconscious, I would find myself through the meditation."

Biggs said that she paints what moves her at the time.

"I pour so much of myself into my art," Biggs said. "If I paint something that I think will sell, that's not from the heart."

Biggs said that she uses photographs she's taken, usually from her favorite stomping grounds--Fort Pickens--to reference when she's painting.

"I have an idea of what will work and try to find the perfect shot that speaks to me," Biggs said. "I then make a graph with the same dimensions as the photograph to paint."

Biggs said that people often find her art very peaceful and calming, including a doctor who found her work in Chicago and purchased more than 25 pieces for her home and office. Hospitals have also purchased her art.

"Evidence-based healing art is becoming popular in hospitals and doctors' offices," she said.

Her artwork is held in numerous private and corporate art collections, including a Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota. She is currently working on a commission for a home in Key Biscayne.

The exhibit's opening reception will be held Friday from 5:30-7 p.m. Biggs will also be doing a meet and greet, an artist talk and book signing on Gallery Night, October 16.

The majority of Biggs' works will be for sale at the exhibit, except for the pieces on loan from private collections. Prices can be found on her website—MargaretBiggs.com.

The exhibit will also include an interactive installation. Items including matted prints, cards, gift boxes and greeting cards will be available in the museum gift shop.

Her book, "Visions II: Paintings and Poetry" is also available for purchase in the gift shop and on Amazon.

"I'm really happy to be doing this in my hometown," Biggs said. **{in}**

"I knew I had to paint to be a happy human being." Margaret Biggs

VISIONS: THROUGH PAINTING, POETRY, AND PROSE

WHAT: Margaret Biggs Solo Exhibition

WHEN: Sept. 25-Nov. 14

WHERE: Pensacola Museum of Art, 407 S. Jefferson St.

COST: General Admission, \$7

DETAILS: pensacolamuseum.org

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