

Kim Snyder: Santa Barbara Arts

Birds of a Feather

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

IN CAPTURING THE RAW BEAUTY OF WILD HUNTING BIRDS, artist Kim Snyder combines her experience painting portraits with her love of the local landscape. A collection of Snyder's wildlife paintings including herons, egrets, pelicans, and others opens at Santa Barbara Arts during September's 1st Thursday event.



Kim Snyder

"I love the challenge of painting. I love the process of learning about the different birds I see," said Snyder. "As I start looking at my photographs, I see that one has a different coloring, and I open my books and learn why. That's the fun part."

Snyder was encouraged to enjoy art from an early age. Her mother had an interest in art and encouraged Snyder and her brother away from coloring books toward creating their own artwork. While in middle school, Snyder was fortunate to spend six months in Europe with her family, touring major European museums and learning about art, history, and visual communication as part of her school lessons. "Walking around all those museums, I remember thinking either 'I could do that' or 'Help! How did they do that?' I was humbled when I tried."

The experience seems to have had a lasting effect: Snyder went on to become a full-time

artist while her brother is an Emmy-award winning director.

When her parents moved to the Santa Barbara area from Palos Verdes, Snyder decided to attend Santa Barbara City College and studied art with Robert Frame and Ron Robertson. She went on to complete a Certificate in Commercial Art through the UCSB extension program.

A full-time painter for over 30 years, Snyder, paints from her home studio, Chaparral Design Studio, in Carpinteria, where she lives with her husband. "When the weather is nice, I work out of my studio – a little room off the garage – but in winter I like to move indoors where it's cozy. I float around the house and often end up working at the dining room table," she said. Snyder is a recent empty-nester, as one son is in the Marines while the other is off to UC Berkeley to study art history.

A founding member and past President of SCAPE

(Southern California Artists Painting for the Environment), Snyder enjoys sketching outdoors, but often paints from photographs. "Early morning or just as the sun goes down is the best time to see the birds. That's when they do their hunting," she said. "I use a simple camera, but one that zooms, so I don't scare off the wildlife." Snyder is also active with the Santa Barbara Art Association and the Carpinteria Valley Arts Council.

Many of Snyder's paintings are done on linen, which she stretches herself. "I like the irregularity of it, the waviness," she said. "I start with the raw linen, glue it down, and sand it out." Snyder then builds the colors, starting with dark blues, so one can see the layers of color underneath.

"With painting, it's important not only to invite the viewer to see the final product, but to invite them into the process or journey of the painting itself – down to the very brush strokes," she said. To achieve the affect, Snyder starts with acrylic and white or clear gesso, before moving onto oil. She cites Jessie Arms Botke and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec as models for her own work and likes the flat, Japanese-style backgrounds that bring the focus to the subject. For Snyder, the birds become the focus of the portrait where a person's face might have been before.



Great Blue Heron at the Creek (16 x 20), oil canvas, by Kim Snyder



Great Blue Heron (18 x 24), acrylic on linen, by Kim Snyder

"The role of art, for me, is the visual communication of emotion," said Snyder. "I remember what it was like for me to be there and see these birds, but I like the idea that art doesn't have to be defined by what I think. Hopefully, my paintings touch people and remind people to stop and notice the beauty of our surroundings."

Santa Barbara Arts is located at 1114 State St, Ste #26. Hours are 11-5pm, Tues through Sun. For more information, call 884-1938.