

Quick sketches add up to super art

By LYNN WELBURN
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If you're in a store and you notice an attractive blonde busily scribbling a picture of a vase or some interesting piece of furniture, never fear.

It's simply artist Chrissandra Neustaedter making a quick sketch to use in a future painting.

"Right now I'm working on a series of interiors, still lifes in different rooms, and I like to work from real objects," says Neustaedter. "So when I'm out shopping I look at the chairs and vases and things I might use and draw thumbnail sketches in the tiny notebook I carry everywhere."

Luckily, from years of studying music, Neustaedter also has an excellent memory so when she finds herself without the notebook or someplace it might not be right to start drawing, she can still file away a piece of furniture in her mind and recall it almost exactly when she needs it for a painting.

Neustaedter currently has many of her acrylic studies of fruits, flowers and musical instruments on display at the Nanaimo Art Gallery downtown, and quite a few

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NEUSTAEDTER



CHRISSANDRA NEUSTAEDTER relaxes in front of some of her art work. The Nanoose woman has built a studio above

her garage. Over the years she has had a number of group and solo showings. (Glenn Olsen/Daily News)

of her works have been sold or rented through the gallery's art rental program. She lives in Nanoose and has built a studio over her garage. There she both paints and teaches art as well as playing the piano and teaching piano lessons.

"My painting is doing well now so I don't really need to have the students (for the income) but they're a good link to the rest of

the world for me," says Neustaedter.

"It's easy to get cut off just working in the studio. In Calgary I had more than 50 students but I'm glad to keep the numbers down now because it means I have more time to paint.

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Neustaedter has always loved both music and art, but while she studied piano and was always sketching, she never thought of either as possible professions.

Then, a few years ago while working with a law firm in downtown Vancouver, she was hit by a vehicle and seriously injured.

"That's when I really thought about how life is too short not to be doing the things you want to do

Spotlight on Art

most.

Other people do what they want most and they manage, so I thought it was time to do the same."

So Neustaedter headed off to the Emily Carr Institute where she studied for three years then struck out into the art world.

She's had a number of group and solo showings in Calgary and Vancouver and is now part of a show at the Nanaimo Art Gallery downtown.

Neustaedter paints in acrylics and uses a plaster mixed with the paint to create highly textured effects. Often she'll put a thick layer of plaster, mixed with black paint, on the surface and sketch in the objects in the paints, almost sculpting them in with a knife.

Then she paints over the various objects in whatever colours are appropriate. This leaves a very three-dimensional look to her work and the objects appear to have been outlined in black which makes them stand out even more from the canvas.

And while playing piano and painting pictures might seem to be very different types of work, the two have a lot in common, says Neustaedter.

"They both have composition, rhythm, texture, harmonies, colour... in these elements they're tied together but one is a visual expression and one is an aural expression."