



Artist Sue Sommers' current show of her "contemporary" landscape paintings will hang at the Pinedale Library through June 21.

Sommers' show depicts landscapes of place, imagination

STORY & PHOTO BY JOY UFFORD

When artist Sue Sommers moved to Pinedale in 1992, she knew there would be few outlets for her creative endeavors.

"When I decided to live here I knew that opportunities locally would be almost nil," she said, while discussing her latest landscape paintings now on display in the Pinedale Library's Lovatt Room. "That isn't why I came here - I didn't come here to be a famous artist."

While she can visit and show in galleries and exhibits regionally that are open to "contemporary art" like Sommers', which is more abstract than representational, she feels that avoiding that competitive, commercial scene has helped her develop her own voice.

"I chose to live in a place where I could hear myself think and not be pressured by the gallery scene," Sommers said. "Whether I'm commercially successful has been way down on the list. If you get commercial, there's the devil to pay. Something you started out doing for love, you end up doing for money."

Sommers' transition from painting with oils to acrylics, the medium she uses in this series of landscape paintings along with some scraps of intriguing collage elements, has been satisfying for her in a number of ways.

"I started with oils; I got an MFA in oils," she said.

After spending several years exploring book art, Sommers thought about painting with oils again.

"When I picked up the brush, I felt like I had lost my voice," she said. "It was like the brush just wouldn't work for me - it was very frustrating."

Experimenting with acrylics brought her a release, though, and sent her in a new direction. The tendency of acrylics to dry quickly, especially in Wyoming's climate, actually became a useful tool once Sommers discovered a special palette that keeps paints moist.

"I can see what my results are instantly,"

she said.

A painting can be reworked much sooner than with oils, which create opaque layers that take weeks to dry instead of hours.

Acrylics are "so sophisticated" now that artists "can create a wash or stain like watercolors and go over it, but it won't pick up what's underneath," she said. "The colors have more depth."

Color and texture are two major elements in her show, which will be displayed at the library through June 21. Sommers uses both to depict a mood and suggest interesting thoughts that come to mind when she becomes immersed in experiencing a landscape.

Paper, plants, extra-thick paint and "fun little souvenir things" have added to Sommers' expression of how a particular landscape makes her feel, its "emanation," as she calls it. Taking a closer look at each painting is like an artistic travelogue, with landscapes inspired from favorite places in France and new settings explored in the Winds.

Stroud Peak is shown from a mini-series of perspectives, looking down from "monumental forms" into ravines and across natural stone dams that leak tiny mountain streams. Sommers first worked study sketches with watercolors and pen and ink, and she also took photographs of the landscapes.

When she works on the larger pieces, she strives to portray how a place makes her feel. The tiny collage details of plants, paper or text that she includes, sometimes hidden on first glance, lead the viewer's eye around a painting and provoke personal thoughts and associations, a result Sommers can relate to herself.

"I try to let the piece and my mood work together to tell me what is required or what would mean something," she said. "I want to make these pieces somewhat of an investigation for the viewer. I want it to be a journey for them so there is some discovery going on and they can explore the



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Taylor sentenced to six months of unsupervised probation and fined \$100, for a total sum due the court of \$230.

Michael O. Becker, 22, of Thermopolis was found guilty on May 30 of a March 16 citation for exceeding 70 mph on a primary or secondary highway, traveling at a rate of 82 mph in a 65-mph zone on Highway 191.

Timothy William Stanton, 34, of Idaho Falls, Idaho, forfeited \$410 on May 30 for an April 4 citation for taking a deer without a license. Stanton also forfeited \$410 on May 30 for an April 4 citation for taking big game/trophy game with a

running concurrently, and fined \$400 for each, for a total sum due the court of \$860.

Chiso A. Nenna, 22, of Big Piney was found guilty on May 31 of a March 15 charge of second or subsequent driving while license is cancelled, suspended or revoked. Nenna was sentenced to seven days in jail.

Steven D. Hodges, 27, of Farmington, N.M., was found guilty on May 31 of a Feb. 28 citation for driving while license is cancelled, suspended or revoked. Hodges was fined \$250, for a total sum due the court of \$280.

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painting, and maybe it will spark their own memories or take them somewhere that is interesting to them."

Sommers is generous in sharing her thoughts about several of her paintings' creation.

The bold and colorful "Stroud Peak 1" incorporates strips of encyclopedia pages to suggest depth in the sky. Sommers thought that the "grey patterning of text" reflected the fullness of the air and sky.

"What's fuller than encyclopedia text," she said.

"Stroud Peak 2" has the lightest collection of grey horses pasted across the sky.

That inspiration came from sitting up high in the mountains overlooking a gorge far below.

"You can't be up there with the wind blowing like crazy and not think of horses," she said.

In "Natural Bridge 1" Sommers pasted strips and layers of torn paper to her canvas to build up the painting before ever touching it with color. She admits that she

can be intimidated by a blank canvas and this helped her begin that piece.

"Sometimes I have to use tricks to start making marks," she confessed.

Without giving away any more of her artistic techniques and thoughts, visitors are free to examine and explore Sommers' landscapes and see what they discover hiding in the shadow of a mountain or under thick layers of paint and paper.

In that respect, Sommers said the library's room is a perfect place for an artist to hang a show of new work.

"I can put up my display any way I want," she said. "I don't have any curator nit-picking the work if you do have total freedom."

The library meeting room's busy schedule ensures Sommers' paintings will be seen by many more people than a big-city gallery, which might have a handful of visitors now and then.

"People are sitting here looking at my stuff while their boring meeting's going on," Sommers joked.

Rendezvous News



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