Artist of the month Tasha Nez on family influence

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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Tasha Nez, of Vanderwagen, has been crafting jewelry and beadwork since she was a child, but just recently decided to transition to portraiture and showcase her work with other artists.

“I decided I like landscapes and abstract art,” she said, which led to her decision to begin painting.

STARTING OUT

Nez, originally from Arizona and from Vanderwagen as of 2011, said she became committed to her artwork in 2013. The first creations that she shared with others were handmade two-and-a-half by three-and-a-half inch trading cards that she traded through the mail.

While she has no formal art training, aside from a drawing course taken at UNM-Gallup, Nez said she learned about various forms of art by observing others and then asking them questions about their processes.

In particular, Nez spoke about the influence her parents, who have done beadwork and pottery since Nez was a child, have had on her path as an artist.

“Growing up, they encouraged [me to explore] all forms of art,” she said. “They let me explore things I wanted to do, which was helpful.”

Nez said a challenge that many artists face is having restrictions on what they can make, so the encouragement from her parents to experiment and find something she enjoyed was a source of inspiration for her.

SHOWCASING HER WORK

The first time Nez showcased her art for the public in Gallup was in August 2017, which was when she also met Rose Eason, executive director of gallupARTS, and eventually got to create promo materials for Art123 and the monthly ArtsCrawl events.

“For an artist, the hardest thing [at first] is getting people to see your art, and letting them see your art,” Nez said. “If you want to branch out and have people notice you and your work, it’s important they see it.”

The support of gallupARTS has allowed Nez to do that, she said. She added that events like ArtsCrawl are beneficial because you will meet artists who have not shown off their creations before.

“I am inspired by those people thinking you have the courage to share your work,” Nez said.

Nez said that each piece she makes is different, and that they reflect who she is as an artist. In particular, she shared a couple of paintings she made in 2017, but has held onto because they hold sentimental value for her.

The paintings Nez showed the *Sun* were of her mother, father, and grandmother. Each piece also included random items she found that she could associate with the family member in the painting.

According to Nez, her father is proficient in woodwork and helped her create the frames that hold each painting.

The portrait of her grandmother is Nez’s most popular piece, she said, and it was even awarded first place in the portrait category during the art exhibit at the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial in 2018.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Nez said she has been able to meet a lot of artists since she began working with gallupARTS. She said her art has been featured all over the world in private collections through trading. She added that her stock of work tends to sell out pretty quickly.

When asked how she started trading her work, Nez said social media was a good foundation.

“I got to show my art around the world, and create a fanbase,” she said. “Social media is a place to document the things I’ve done.”

The path to get to where she is now has definitely been rewarding, Nez said.

“You incorporate what you learn into other things,” she said. “You learn to experiment and not be afraid of experimentation.”

“The most important thing is you have fun,” she added.

SHOW WHO YOU ARE

Another important note for Nez is that each piece means something to her personally. While she appreciates people who want to buy her work, selling is not her main goal.

“I don’t like to create something just to sell it,” she said. “I want to show an integral part of where

I am and where I come from.

Nez said that while a lot of things could be scary at first, it is important to take that first step, especially when it comes to sharing your creations.

“It is really important to experiment and find what you love to do,” she said. “It’ll be a reflection of you and your stories.”

To see more of Tasha Nez’s work, visit her Instagram page at: https://www.instagram.com/pacotacorox/

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