

Artist of the Month: Bright speaks of ‘seeing the extraordinary within the ordinary’

Written by By Chrissy Largo Sun Correspondent
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Rossi Bright knows she was destined to be an artist. She knew when she was a child growing

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up in the Midwest. And she credits her parents who she says were good about taking her to art museums.

“It just seemed to be a natural instinct I had,” she said. “My head seemed to have an imagination for such things.”

With no specific category, time frame, nor explanation, and sometimes she likes to throw in a title or two to describe her artwork, Bright opened up about the process of how she develops her work as a stream of consciousness.

“I just do it because I have to do it,” she said. “I just kind of do whatever is coming through to me at any given time. Being a clear channel for creative work to come through me, kind of like meditative practices.”

Before moving to Gallup in 1997, she lived in Brooklyn, New York and did what most starving artists and musicians did — work in the city and partake in odd food service jobs.

However, before landing herself a position with Village Voice newspaper in the display advertising department, she was part of rock band.

“I was a part of an alternative rock band called Frank’s Museum, for about 10 years,” she said. “We were part of a collective of bands, called Brooklyn Beat, that rebelled against the music industry. We were producing and recording our own music at that time.”

She recalls her life in New York as inspiring as there was a limitless energy, and people were doing countless things at one time. Since moving to Gallup, she finds that there is a whole different kind of energy that she describes as “more grounded, earthy, and raw.”

Today, she is the manager of the Open Studio/Outsider Gallery, formerly Gallery 211, located in downtown Gallup, which has been in existence since 2011 and has downsized due to cuts in

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arts funding. Funding for the Open Studio/Outsider Gallery was once supported by DSI/Disability Services Inc., from 2001 to Feb. 2015, but it is now funded by Dungarvin, Inc.

The Open Studio/Outsider Gallery is an inclusive gallery that features artwork of various talented and local artists, which includes Bright’s artwork.

“I have portfolios with different things in it,” she said. “I try to do various series of work to keep my creative juices and imagination going, and also, expansiveness and exploration because I think artists are ever evolving. It is a growing thing.”

One of her portfolios, titled “Dia de Muertos” offers a kaleidoscopic view of illustrations that hold a certain resonance with her as she speaks of the holiday, honoring those that have passed on.

“To me everything is alive,” she said. “Even though you may not be able to see it that way or perceive it that way, I think there is a very thin veil about what is really going on this planet plane of existence. The seen and the unseen.”

Her ink drawing series often includes feline characters, which are not the usual furry creatures. They are meant to imply more of a metaphor for mysticism and humor.

“These little entities that are around, they are kind of like the mystic observer,” she said. “Giving people some kind of guidance, message or having some kind of exchange between the dimensions of what may or may not be happening.”

She explains that colors are a crucial aspect to her artwork because not only do certain colors work together but they possess certain vibrations together.

“It may be a little esoteric for people [the viewer], but for me that is part of what is speaking, in a piece of work is color, the composition, and the subject matter, if there is a subject matter,” she said.

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Even though she’s had a mix of “some academic training”, and pays homage to the teacher that allowed her to take her artistic abilities to new heights, she was also self taught.

In her own words, “self taught in the sense that most artists continue to teach themselves and expand their craft after their academic foundations, it’s a life-long process in evolving artistically.”

When asked who inspires her, she says that many artists inspire her locally, nationally, internationally and historically.

Rossi says she feels much of her work relates to the communication between and existence of various dimensions/realms, seen and unseen, conscious or unconscious, all facilitating our growth on this plane of existence.

Bill Keeler, of Gallup Jewelry and Pawn, who has known Bright for over 17 years, added that her work is the kind of work you can’t just look at and walk away.

“It gives you pause for thought,” he said. “You really have to look at her work. There’s so much in there and a lot of stuff isn’t apparent at first glance. You wonder what she is thinking.”

Not only that, but she is fearless.

“She puts it out there for people to see,” he said. “She isn’t afraid to put her art on the wall.”

For Bright, she feels that art is more than just imagination – it is about mediation and perceiving life, people, or situations in a more expansive way.

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She hopes the viewer will bring their own perception or story to the piece they are viewing, something that resonates with their own spirit or psyche.

“It is about seeing the extraordinary within the ordinary,” she said. “And ordinary life isn’t just ordinary. In fact, there is so much going on all the time, all around, within and within out of you.”

For more information call: (505) 863-0389.