

Nancy Kravetz: Not slowing down

 azjewishlife.com/nancy-kravetz-not-slowng-down/

Leni Reiss

November 30,
2017



“Arizona was a revelation to me,” says New England native Nancy Kravetz, describing her reaction the first time she saw “a palo verde tree, exotic cacti, the desert colors, sunsets and rock formations – the whole visual landscape.” She and her husband, Bob, a semi-retired gastroenterologist, and their three sons have lived in the Valley since the mid-’60s.

A woman of many talents (keep reading!) Nancy’s artistic bent manifested itself early on. Her parents, recognizing her budding aptitude, arranged for instruction in oil painting. Nonetheless, and typical of the times, Nancy majored in education (a path “strongly suggested” by family members), in anticipation of becoming a teacher or working in the field of fashion design. At that point, she says painting was not a priority.

But after attending Simmons College in Boston and earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Temple University in Philadelphia, getting married, starting a family and moving to Arizona, she returned to art, studying with local artists Don Ruffin and Dorothy Fratt, and attending calligraphy classes at Arizona State University. Gaining expertise in a variety of

different media, Nancy “settled in,” finding her own voice in contemporary art. “Abstraction,” she explains, “is the way I express myself simply by using color and form. I can look at something and see the essence of design. My colors relate to what I see and feel.”

Encouraged by her instructors to exhibit, Nancy’s entries were accepted for showing at local festivals. “That was the time I had to determine a monetary value for my work,” she recalls. “Until then I never even thought of putting a price on anything!” Her first sale, at a Phoenix Art Museum biennial, was to a local bank – and after that, she says with a smile, “I entered everything!” Along the way she earned numerous ribbons at the Maricopa County Fairs and exhibited statewide, eventually converting a sun-filled section of the family’s north central home patio “into my space,” she says. “It’s small and perfect for me – with air-conditioning!” Not long ago, a piece was purchased by U.S. Bank for its private collection.

“Much of my output is rooted in nature and comes from visual and emotional reactions to what I see and feel. And the subtle and impressive changes in light, shadows and colors related to the time of day, seasons and weather add to the elements that find expression in many of my paintings, watercolors and collages.”

“I try to choose general titles,” Nancy explains, “so that viewers will feel free to experience the art with their own interpretations.”

Most recently Nancy’s work was highlighted in an early autumn one-woman show, “Inspired by Nature,” at the Shemer Art Center on Camelback Road. “My family nudged me,” she acknowledges, “and I thought, ‘if not now – when?’”



Nancy at the easel in her home studio.

The Shemer board approved the show after seeing samples of her work. According to Shemer program manager Pamela Coste, “Nancy’s works exude peace and calm and are wonderful. It was special to have her show here – especially in conjunction with a celebration of her 80th birthday. We loved working with her.”

“My husband initially wasn’t a fan of modern art,” Nancy shares. “He preferred realism. It took him time to come around, but now he is my best advocate. And my three boys, Michael, Jeffrey and David, and my daughters-in-law all are proud of their mom!”

David credits his mother as the inspiration for his very successful Fairytale Brownie enterprise. It is her recipe that is used for the kosher delicacies that have become an international favorite. "They always are in my freezer," Nancy says. (Full disclosure: I took some home with me after our visit!)

The Kravetzes are members of Beth El Congregation and longtime supporters of the Bureau of Jewish Education and Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

For the past 10 years a cabin in Prescott "surrounded by national forest land and abundant Ponderosa pines" provides "lots of quality time with our children and six grandchildren," Nancy says.

Several years ago, Nancy recalls, she took a break from her easel and wrote a family history, *Remember Me to the Little Ones*. And she and Bob have traveled extensively, always with sketch pad and watercolors at hand, to sites that continue to inspire her. Now, she says, she is painting full time while doing more reading, traveling and updating the family history.

"Emerging" is a hot word in the art world, according to a recent article in AARP magazine, so artists "of a certain age" who continue to produce interesting work are being referred to as "re-emerging." This surely defines Nancy Kravetz.