

“Hands” Series Artist Statement:

To this artist, hands are a beautiful thing. Hands nurture; they toil, they bless - they strive. Beyond prayer, hands empower the soul. They also tell every story under the sun. Trial to triumph, compassion to crucifixion--these hands are filled with every line of life.

My works convey an underlying spiritual theme; with overtones of societal issues. The element of 'hands' depicted are an important vehicle to deliver an expression of emotions that need no face to convey, no voice to tell. To the spiritually sensitive, rich meaning can be drawn; while the rest may find themselves moved by the emotional tone of the piece, depiction, or left with a hunger to discover 'why?' .

I use an earthen palette which holds a feeling of age... history, treasured memory. Mixing media helps me flow with what is best for the piece. Focal points needing depth and opacity while inherent darkness to a work is often used to convey a dreamlike 'state of thought' or as an 'underline' to the deeper spiritual message I am intending to convey. Dimensional objects are often inserted; that element of texture is an important means that brings 'physicality', --that drawing sense of 'Touch'.

Through such uses, my desire is to pull the viewer into empathy; fusing personal life experience with the message and emotion that the painting exudes.

The 'Hands' tell the story. I have found that if I cover the artwork and leave only the hands showing, that there must be a story, an emotion -- a sense. If it's not there, it's not 'Hands'.

- **Hands in Nature** - ...is a graft within the hands series but contains interaction with nature (animals). “Over the past few years I have had quite uncanny opportunities to fuse my endearing focus of 'Hands' with nature. My subjects were animals in need of help, rescue or resuscitation. These St. Francis of Assisi moments became such commonplace that I began to always have my phone with me for such opportunities.” “Hands in Nature”, consists of photo transfers on copper; with subjects such as cardinals, an owl, a raccoon.

“Freedom” Artist’s Series Statement:

Birds are content creatures. In all the business they do in a day, they do so with playful: awareness, determination and daring. It is through their tireless model I find inspiration.

‘Freedom’ is a series of works that express, through the form of birds, my struggle as wife, mother and artist. Unorthodox inspiration from M.C. Escher explores confined spaces, while symbolic expressions of waiting and/or suppression, and passages of ‘breaking free’ fill my work.

The element of color saturation and material play a subtle, expressive part to my work. Wood or fiber=present reality, gold or silver=hope of the future, resin or wax=containment; degree of color saturation=degree of freedom. This series is primarily expressed through encaustic collage or watercolor.

“Classic” Artist’s Series Statement:

Nature, structure and classical techniques, sum up my landscape, still-life and portraiture.

Artistically, I find heavy influence from the likes of John Singer Sargent, but God's marvelous creation provides all the rest. I spend a lot of time ‘thinking’ on our farm as I’m weeding the garden or doing chores... caring for the animals. Negative space is just as important to me as positive space between objects so in this 'thinking' I am always ‘sketching’ in my mind and then later, shaping all references to fit that 'sketch'. Seeing that everything has purpose, it is then that I can go further and add elements that tell a story (the 'Illustrator' in me), because I want people to linger, to look and discover.

Watercolors untainted with corrective opacities and oils built up from value studies, inspired of old masters, is structure that I enjoy in this series of work.

Artist Bio:

Growing up on a 'dead end' road in the county; Ohio-native artist, Jennifer Sowders, grew up spending a lot of time studying nature. Fossils hunts in a creek bed... watching the barn swallows dive for insects... lying atop a round hay bale and pondering the fields and sky; all became an inspiration in need of an expressive outlet in which the creative arts fulfilled. In recent years... Jennifer, husband Gary and 3 children have pushed back to those nature loving roots and are working toward self sustainability on their farm in Fostoria, Ohio.

Jennifer credits her interest in art fanned by a high school art teacher who fueled the talent from within... earning her scholarship to the Columbus College of Art and Design where she graduated with a major in illustration and minor in advertising; Cum Laude in 1994. Trips to art museums eventually brought forth an insatiable desire to return to the creative freedom of the fine arts after a career in the printing industry and freelance illustration. In 2003 she began a fine arts discipline and 2 yrs later landed a 4th place award in a National Competition.

Jennifer works on several different-styled series with vastly differing mediums, techniques and themes because she enjoys many and finds no room for 'artist's rut' in doing so. She emphasizes, "It works to my advantage because I don't get a chance to 'get tired' or stagnate. I am excited every single day for 'What's new?' In the 'Hands' series I have a spiritual theme with drawing, oils and mixed media in earth tones with a reflective, somber feel... In the 'Freedom' series it's either bright watercolor or muted encaustic collage but the unifying theme of birds is unmistakable."

Although some series make use of mixed media, she classically respects traditional mediums and techniques found in oil and watercolors. Working in layers with value studies in oil; keeping highlights pure in watercolors. "Whether carefully designed or plein air, I spend quite a bit of time planning before I ever create. Structure is important to me... I don't like to frost a 'messy cake'."