

Margaret Biggs

VISIONS OF THE GULF COAST



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Though an artist who is often in seclusion with her work, Margaret Biggs welcomed *Pensacola Magazine* to her studio to discuss her background and motivation behind her Gulf Coast inspired exhibit entitled *Visions: Through Painting, Poetry and Prose*, which will go on display at the Pensacola Museum of Art starting with an artist reception on Sept. 25 from 5:30 to 7 pm. The artist's book by the same name, which houses her collection of paintings accompanied by poetry and prose, can be purchased through Amazon or her official website. Margaret will also be at the museum for an artist lecture, as well as a meet and greet and book signing on Oct. 16 from 6 to 7 pm. For the chance to see Margaret in her element, you may visit her at 1801 E. La Rua St. for her open studios on Oct. 10, Nov. 21, and Dec. 12 from 11 am to 4 pm. To learn more about the artist or browse her many works, visit margaretbiggs.com.



Tell me about your roots and how they influenced your art.

I was born and raised in Pensacola as were both my parents. They had a passion for the outdoors, which they shared with their children through endless summer days spent on our small boat in Pensacola Bay, Santa Rosa Island and Perdido Key. Leisure time was spent in the woods of northwest Florida and Alabama during the cooler months. We were raised Catholic and I am very grateful to my mother for instilling in me a deep belief in a higher power and in prayer. This cultivated the inspiration for my art—nature's beauty, spiritual texts and my inner life.

You're somewhat of a world traveler. How have the places you visited influenced your work?

I have lived and worked in eight major cities including NYC, Paris, Hamburg and Milan as an international model for Ford Models. As a professional model, advertising had an influence on my art and can be seen in the graphic quality of much of my work. Exposure to the masters in the many museums I frequented greatly matured my artistic eye. An excellent education at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Fine Arts exposed me to conceptual art. This fostered my use of familiar natural landscapes and using objects as metaphors to communicate deeper meanings. Twenty-three years of study under an exceptionally kind and wise yoga and spiritual teacher in Chicago is at the root of the continued themes of self reflection, inner peace, forgiveness, acceptance and love that permeates both my paintings and poetry.

What does a "comprehensive approach" to art mean to you?

A comprehensive approach has to do with the willingness to delve deeper into life's meaning and to communicate this inner life through my work. With the use of familiar imagery, I have the ability to communicate so much more. It was a long time before I shared my poetry with others but I found that when I did, somehow it had a healing effect on people. There is a movement called "evidence based healing art" whereby the medical establishment has recognized the healing power of art and, hence, many doctors and medical facilities are drawn to my strong, peaceful imagery. I have the ability to put into words what others feel but cannot say. I have the ability to paint on canvas a vision of my world that helps to open the eyes of others.

Guide us through your creative process.

I am very careful to enter my studio with a quiet mind and my desire

is to paint the inner strength and beauty that comes with this state of mind. I have spent countless hours walking alone on various beaches, especially Ft. Pickens, taking pictures that I refer to when I paint. A simple grid is drawn on the photo and the canvas, which I use to transfer the outline of the image. I sketch as well and, most importantly, I quiet my mind through meditation before I begin to paint or write. I also read spiritual texts each day from *The Bible* to *The Tao* to the teachings of Buddha. Either I paint while listening to calm, classical music or I paint in silence.

What comes first, the painting or the poetry and prose?

More often than not I would say the painting comes first. Often the poetry and prose comes to me when I am painting. It is as though it just falls into my head. I realize it is the result of 30 years of spiritual practice and study. When we have a quiet mind, we give ourselves a chance to "hear" what I would call the voice of the divine but there are several different names for it—intuition, inspiration, the voice of God.

What can viewers expect at your exhibit at the Pensacola Museum of Art in September?

I am taking my art further through the use of a short video installation and a new medium. Mixed media installations will be included in the show, as well as an interactive thought piece along with poetry and prose. I will be looking to invite the audience to participate and reflect.

Where else can we see your work?

Numerous doctors have decorated their offices with my work including one in Chicago with over 25 of my originals. The State of Florida and University of Alabama hospitals have also purchased both my visual art and poetry for their new facilities. But I'm most excited to display my work at The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota.

Visions: Through Painting, Poetry, and Prose by Margaret Biggs

Sept. 25 – Nov. 14

Pensacola Museum of Art, Opening Reception: Sept. 25, 5:30 – 7 pm