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Reno's Marcia Neese has lived a life in art

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Art fills Marcia Neese's Sommerset home. There are women's figures painted in bright primary colors, their wardrobes completed by elegant hats. Smokey earth tones infuse a cluster of paintings of jazz musicians on the living room wall. A snow leopard, a frog, a cowboy painted on stretched leather -- the list goes on. Then there's a wall of photos. And then there's her studio.

After a career in advertising art and illustration and the production of 10 children's books, Neese has settled into the world of fine art, with work showing at a local gallery and in several restaurants. She works with oils and acrylics, copper and gourds and photography.

While she first ventured into art as a child, working as a fine artist was not an early career goal.

"As a little girl, I was always coloring and drawing," Neese said in an interview in her home.

Her second-grade art teacher in Lebanon, Ind., Joyce Dazey, gave early encouragement to her artistic talents.

"I was a quiet kid; I did not have a great home life. She started to encourage me," Neese said.

Neese earned her college degree in advertising art and illustration, moving to Indianapolis after graduation. She went to work for an advertising publishing company. In the morning, she worked in sales; in the afternoon, she completed magazine sketches. From there, she moved to a printing company where she managed the typesetting operation and did paste-up and design.

Next, she worked for Allied Grocers' of Indiana, where she designed full-page advertisements

"At 27, I started my own ad agency in Indianapolis," Neese said. "I did that for 18 years, and also began writing and illustrating children's books. I did 10 books."

Meanwhile, her elementary school art teacher had moved to Iowa. Neese tracked her down and together they appeared on a CBS morning show segment called "The Teacher that Changed My Life."

After going through a divorce, Neese moved to Phoenix, selling her ad agency after 18 years in business.

"I was there six years and got back into my art while I was there," she said.

Her next move was working for a Sacramento interior designer, then on to San Francisco to work for an ad agency. More work in Sacramento led to an offer in Reno where she worked several jobs, including a yearlong stint at the Reno Gazette-Journal.

"Now I'm just doing art," Neese said. "It's been very cathartic to be in the studio. It's the only thing keeping me from getting depressed in this market. I've grown a lot as an artist since I have the time to put into it. I have seen some sales."

The art in her house reflects her many interests in many media -- acrylic and oil painting on canvas, burned and dyed gourds, running from \$250 to \$12,500 in price.

"I like to stretch," she said. "In advertising, you have to know all media."

Additional Facts

Want to see Marcia Neese's art?

Right now, Neese is showing work at the River Gallery in downtown Reno, at the Bistro at Sommerset in northwest Reno and at the Grill at Quail Corners in southwest Reno. Information on her work is available on her Web site, www.maneese.com.
