

The Artist Julie-Keaten-Reed  
Her views, life and story  
By RKR

When Julie was a child in Wyoming, her favorite refuge was the quiet expanse of the Wyoming landscape, wide open and full of stories. There she found a source of wonder and a connection with nature, riding the rugged hills and the lonely meadows. “My mother would take us on long trail rides into the mountains with everything we would need for a week. There we were free to explore the world and create our own reality.” They were great times and opened the door to an unusual way of looking at life.

After spending 35 years absorbing the things around her, she finally started finding ways to express her visions. A five year stay in Japan was the tipping point. Full of ideas and desire, Julie picked up a brush and began to paint her world.

As a child Julie was surrounded with art and artists because of her grandmother, Carley Craig. A life-long artist, Carley started in fashion design when she was still a teenager. In the 1930’s she worked at Paramount Studio under Edith Head. Moving on from there she produced and taught art for the rest of her life. She eventually came to Atlanta and became a well-respected and collected fine artist up until her death in 1990. Like any child, Julie didn’t always appreciate the array of modern art that her grandmother both produced and collected. Seeing all this fine art inhibited her from trying to create her own works. “It was very intimidating to see all of my grandmother’s work and feel like whatever I could do would look silly in comparison.” As time went on, though, and with more trips to gallery openings and museums, Julie developed a skill that is difficult to teach, an eye for beauty through composition.

“We all create our own reality. I choose to see beauty and paint it. I don’t necessarily paint what I have seen but instead what I want to see.” This simple theme comes through while looking at Julie’s pieces. It brings a wave of calm to the viewer. The art is open and clean and lets you step into the pieces as if you yourself are creating the story of the painting.

Julie works are on both paper and canvas with traditional sumi ink and either watercolor or oil paints for color accents. She came upon her style though a selfish desire to not be restricted by conventional sumie rules. This allows her to use an ancient brush and ink style and bend it with her mind and desires. The pieces can be described as soulful, calming, stunning. Julie has done something uncommon: she has taken an ancient painting technique from Asia, filtered it through her exposure to so many different modern and European genres, and created a body of work that brings together a contemporary Western sensibility with traditional Asian minimalism.

“Trees at Dawn” 2011 Sumi ink and watercolor painted on canvas 5’ x 3.5’

The simplicity in this piece is hard to achieve. A credit to Julie’s artistry is her ability to not paint, to stop before the image fully emerges, allowing viewers to enter each piece, adding their own embellishments, completing their own stories.

Using one color and seldom more, each painting has a truthfulness that you often see in black & white photography. The images stand off the canvas and the color makes you feel as if you’ve found the secret of each painting.

Julie is currently showing at special events and seldom chooses to use galleries. The works are her personal accomplishments and she enjoys seeing where they are going and meeting her collectors. Many a night has been spent installing art works and enjoying wine with her new friends.