

Tonya Bottomley: The Personal Side of Painting Alta Vista Gallery hosts reception Aug. 22

By Frank Ruggiero

To Tonya Bottomley, painting is personal.

With the oil on canvas, she infuses her unique vision, memories from childhood, and hopes for the future.

Bottomley's paintings may expose her innermost thoughts and feelings, but that, she feels, is what attracts people.

"It's much more spirited, because it is so personal," Bottomley said. "It's my personal vision; it's how I interpret things."

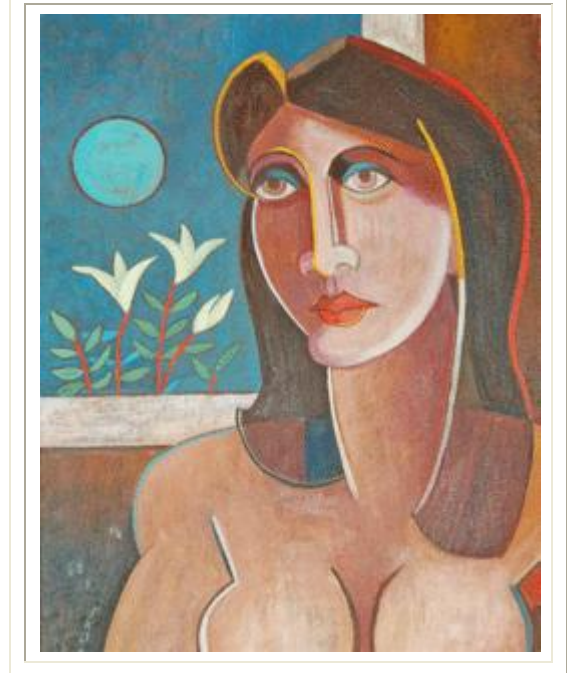
The Ashe County artist's interpretations were recently hailed by ArtSync Magazine, which selected her in the Top 10 of 12,000 artists in a juried competition, and Alta Vista Gallery in Valle Crucis, one of several galleries representing Bottomley's work, will host a celebration and reception Saturday, Aug. 22

Alta Vista owner Maria Santomasso-Hyde encouraged Bottomley to enter the contest, the results of which surprised them both.

"I was more surprised when I found out there were 12,000 entries," Bottomley said. "You never know what the judges are looking for."

Bottomley seems to know what art lovers look for, though. Some have likened her oil paintings to stained glass, while others say it bears a retro resemblance to artwork from the 1940s and '50s. Bottomley, admittedly not an art critic, hesitates to put a label on her work, instead describing it as more contemporary and focused on shapes and lines, plane changes and flattening images.

Her landscapes are familiar, yet abstract, offering a contemporary take on a classic theme. In



fact, Bottomley painted traditional, impressionistic landscapes for several years, “but it got to be routine and wasn’t nearly as joyful as painting had been,” she said.

To break this perceived tedium, Bottomley would occasionally paint a more abstract take on landscape. She brought between six and eight of those pieces to a gallery in West Jefferson, and within a week or two, they were already selling.

“They were selling quicker than I could paint them,” Bottomley said.

Fortunately, her home in the Buffalo Creek community offers plenty of inspiration. She typically starts with a thumbnail sketch of area scenery and takes it from there.

“Once I get an idea, it kind of leads in, and it becomes about design,” Bottomley said. “Then I start thinking about color contrasts and repetition.”

Color has played a part in her life since she can remember. While other little girls played with dolls, Bottomley said, she preferred crayons, paper and paint. Development as an artist, though, is a lifetime adventure, from classes to observation to simply admiring art.

“I think your life experiences will dictate how you paint,” she said, “and you get to a point in life where you’re bolder with what you’re doing. I stopped painting to please other people and started painting to please myself.”

To Bottomley, painting is almost like putting together a puzzle, each element a different piece.

“I see one tree, one mountain, or a bend in the river,” she said. “I may put that tree with another part of another mountain. These are all pieces in my head put together with others.”

Some puzzles are easygoing, taking about a week to complete, while others are more complicated, sometimes taking a month.

“Painting in this style is more about creativity, imagination and a gut feeling,” Bottomley said. “I know these paintings are finished when they feel right.”

And to Bottomley, feeling right is not about the money.

“I think it’s the satisfaction of knowing that someone can relate to my personal vision, that they see and feel the joy I felt when painting it,” she said. “I’m pretty happy with what I’m doing right now.”

Recently, Bottomley has been painting a series of figurative pieces, again based on combined elements. The figures themselves are based on photographs, with Bottomley imagining and creating everything surrounding.

According to Santomasso-Hyde, Bottomley's vibrant and colorful paintings have been remarkably popular with her clientele.

"It's fun to hear customer reactions to Bottomley's work," she said. "Some say her new style has a retro feel, and all say it's energizing. Also, it's a fun way to see our beautiful High Country landscapes – unexpectedly bold, vibrant, colorful and maybe even chic."

Bottomley is also represented at Ashe Custom Framing and Gallery in West Jefferson, Wilkes Art Gallery in North Wilkesboro, and The Fat Cat Ltd. in Oak Ridge, though this Saturday, Aug. 22, Alta Vista Gallery is hosting a reception from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. to celebrate her most recent accolade.

Visitors can meet Bottomley and enjoy her work, while also sampling wines from Shelton Vineyards. The reception is part of the Tour de Art gallery crawl held on the fourth Saturday of each month, maps for which will be available at Alta Vista, located at 2839 Broadstone Road in Valle Crucis and online at www.altavistagallery.com.

For more information on Tonya Bottomley, visit www.tonyabottomleyart.com.

Taken from the Mountain Times:

<http://www.mountaintimes.com/mtweekly/2009/0820/painting.php3>