

ARTIST STATEMENT

Helen Kleczynski

Although most of my current work is architectural, I have always appreciated nature. I teach drawing and painting at my studio in Vicksburg, where I also spend many hours gardening and sketching outdoors. Most of my plein air works are created in my watercolor journal. My studio works are usually pastels, sometimes over a watercolor painting.

Porch Song

One day, I observed a robin building a nest on my studio porch railing, nearly hidden by the climbing hydrangea. Although she complained every time I walked through the door, we came to an agreement that we would share the space. Every day, I checked on the nest and enjoyed watching the baby birds grow until they took flight. I selected Elizabeth Kerlikowske's poem "Birds of the 21st Century", because it pointed out the antithesis of my own experience with nature, and I hoped to also bring more awareness to the importance of our human interaction with nature.

Family Tree

I chose to respond to Linda Rzoska's poem "November Sunset" with the painting "Family Tree" because I find it peaceful to watch the changing colors of the evening sky. I used a reference photograph (taken by Byron Moser) of a beautiful sky with light glancing through the trees along his country driveway. The two larger trees represent Byron and his wife Bonnie, and the smaller trees their children, with future generations represented by even smaller trees fading into the distance.

“Transformations: Metamorphosis” and “Transformations: Release”

During the recent years in which travel was limited, I picked a branch from one of the milkweed plants in my studio garden. Only after I began drawing the dry curled leaves and pods in various stages of releasing their seeds, I noticed the abandoned monarch chrysalis hanging precariously from the stalk. I also had the opportunity to sketch and photograph a monarch as it went through various stages, and decided to include these images in the “Transformation” project for the current Photosynthesis 2 exhibit at the Richmond Center for the Arts. The project depicts the life cycles of the monarch, milkweed and our role in helping to provide a more harmonious environment for pollinators.