

Refuge artist finds painting later in life

Montana Artist Refuge resident's art on display

BY HENRY GONSHAK
for *The Montana Standard*

A friend commented that the paintings of artist Christiane Buell combine the traditions of Europe with the freshness and brightness of the United States.

Such a combination is understandable since Buell, while born and raised in Switzerland, has lived in the United States for the last 11 years. A resident at the Montana Artist Refuge in Basin, she'll exhibit several of her latest paintings on Monday, April 18, as part of a refuge fund-raiser at the Uptown Café. (See sidebar.)

Buell turned to painting rather late in life. When she first came to the United States in 1987, she performed as a dancer in New York City for Alvin Ailey's celebrated troupe. After working as a fashion stylist in Switzerland, she returned to the U.S. in 1994, and since then she's been an active painter in the Bay Area, putting on solo shows in both San Francisco and Zurich.

Buell's work is strictly non-representational. Her art isn't political, nor does it incorporate text. Instead, she defines it as an attempt to "translate" or "decode" her environment, turning the things she sees around her into abstract forms. Her canvasses tend to be large, usually 60 to 70 inches square, although her more recent paintings have shrunk slightly due to the more confined space of her Basin studio.

Rather than painting with a brush, Buell scrapes on her oil paints using various plastic tools upon a canvas that's laid on a table or the floor. She will spend as long as two to three

Jazz, art, food combine for fund-raiser

An evening of jazz, art and food to raise money for the Montana Artists Refuge is planned from 5 to 10 p.m. Monday, April 18, at the Uptown Café, 47 E. Broadway, in Uptown Butte.

The refuge, located in the historic town of Basin, north of Butte, brings artists from across the country and around the world to live and work.

Music is provided by MJ Williams, jazz vocalist and trombone player, Butte's own George Grosbeck on piano, and Dave Heidt on bass.

Admission is \$10 and is 100 percent tax-deductible. Ticket-holders will receive a \$5 coupon for the 2005 Jazz Brunch and Basin City Jazz and Art Experience in Basin on June 12, and door prizes. The Uptown Café will also donate a percentage of the evening's dinner sales to the refuge.

For reservations, call the Uptown Café at 723-4735. For more information, visit our Web site www.montanarefuge.org or call 225-3500.

weeks building the thick surface of her paintings.

The painters Buell most admires (all men, she confesses) are the abstract expressionist Robert Rauschenberg, the graffiti-artist-turned-painter Jean Michel Basquiat and the Anglo-Irish painter Francis Bacon. But as much as Buell loves these artists' works, she doesn't cite them as influences. Rather, she sees herself as a painter who follows her own instincts rather than the latest artistic trends.

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