

# Artist Christiane Buell flourishes at the artist's refuge in Basin



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**CHRISTIANE BUELL** proudly displays her contemporary artwork.

BY MARYANNE DAVIS SILVE  
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BASIN — Christiane Buell's travels have taken her around the world, but while staying at the Artist's Refuge in Basin, Montana, since last September, she has found what all artists need: solace and silence.

"I never planned to be a painter," she said. "I started to dance when I was a child. At 15 I had a full professional education as a ballet dancer. I did everything, modern dance, tap, ballet and more. When I was 22, I spent almost a year in New York with a professional dance group."

While Buell was in New York a tragic twist of fate changed her life forever. Though even now she has the slender, graceful physique of a dancer, her career took a sudden and drastic turn.

"I got hit by a car and never fully recovered so I quit dancing," Buell said.

"When I was 25, I became a fashion stylist and display artist in Europe for about five

years. I designed sets for big windows in department stores like Sax Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus.

"During this job we worked with machinery and tools; plexiglas, wood, concrete, stone and glass. In the window we worked with the mannequins and the fashion. I learned a lot there. Then I went to fine arts school in Europe. It was all about drawing and technical things because this was a requirement in my profession."

Though Buell had not yet discovered her passion for painting, the foundations were being laid for the future as she advanced from the career of dancing, to fashion design, then on to fine art.

"When I went to the fine arts school in Europe we only had to do drawings," Buell remarked. "For one assignment we had to do a still life painting, like a pair of shoes. I did the painting and even though I knew it was not good, I had this sensation inside which I had never felt since I gave up my dancing.

"It was a soulful feeling. I went home and I

thought, 'This is really what I want to do for the rest of my life.' But I knew I couldn't then because I had to earn a living, so I put it aside for five more years."

Buell met a California man and married. "Then the feeling about my painting came back to me," she said.

"I lived in San Louis Obispo on the coast for five years, then five years in San Francisco Bay area. I went to college in San Francisco and in Oakland. I went to the California College of arts and crafts. In California I went to the community college to learn English. They told me I needed more units because I was there on a student visa. Then I took some painting classes. I did some sculpture and paintings for two years.

"The college in Oakland was a professional fine arts college. I realized very quickly that painting was my medium. I love painting very much on canvas and on paper. So I had to go to the Bay Area because only there could I accomplish and develop the way I needed to.

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