



PAT BUTCHART

Adding Fire to Ice with Intuitive Art

By Lorraine Payette

As winter deepens, driving temperatures down and covering everything in white, one woman has a mission to bring joyous colour and spontaneous bursts of happiness to all through her paintings. An elfin sprite with a sparkling sense of humour, Pat Butchart of Gananoque can't help spreading her zest for life through the beauty of her art.

"I can't draw," Butchart says. "But when I do this, my spirit feels free to soar!"



Looking at the work, you feel yourself soaring with it. No staid and constricted lines here, no following the rules, no starting from a known point and ending at a preset destination. Instead, the medium takes control, dancing and splashing its way across the canvas; pouring light, movement and every level of emotion into the world for all to see.

She pours and drips, laying down and taking off colour, brushing and scrubbing in wild abandon. The colours run, flow, mix and blend to create a surface filled with depth and illusion. Then she gets out a piece of chalk and begins to sketch, picking up line and shadow to define what is "already there".

"It's like when you were a child and lay on the hillside to watch the clouds. Do you remember the pictures you'd see? That's what I find in the paint."

Real estate agent by day, when she gets home, the artist comes out. All of her work is an expression of herself, and you feel her spirituality when you speak to her. At no times overwhelming or off putting, it is a sense of joy and wonder that passes through her to flow out into the work.

Life hasn't always been happy, however. She's been married twice, raised six kids, worked as a mail girl at Sun Life in Montreal and now is a real estate agent. Sometimes life was so hard she was sure she was going to shatter.

Then, she discovered painting and the wonderful, therapeutic effect it had on her. She enrolled in classes at Langara, following it up with the bachelor of fine arts program at Emily Carr and a goal to go on to do art therapy.

"Anyone can learn to do this," she says. "It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from – just dive in and paint. In no time, you'll open up and find the magic inside you."

Her "doodle workshops" invite students to embrace the medium and see where it takes them. Over time she has helped all kinds of people – Alzheimer's sufferers, newcomers to Canada, school children, even the blind – to reach inside and free themselves, to discover joy and contentment, to inhale life in great gleeful gulps and scatter it across canvas and paper.

"It's so wonderful to see," she says. "People start with fear, not wanting to spoil the canvas. But you can't spoil it! There are no mistakes in painting – only joyful discoveries, and before they know it, they're creating beautiful art and letting out all that wonderful light they keep inside."

Butchart's art can be seen at The Wolfe Island Bakery, 311 Queen Street in Kingston, and in various places throughout the region wherever art is displayed for sale. To learn more about her, her program, or to purchase a painting to warm up your winter, please contact her at patcandoit@yahoo.com. The magic awaits. LH