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Camano Island Studio Tour

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by Bev Crichfield

The right impression: Tour poster artist Dianna Shyne puts New World spin on Old World technique

Drama, intensity, passion – it was love at first sight.

The moment young Dianna Shyne laid eyes on the large, colorful works of Sergei Bongart in 1981, she felt the pitter-patter of her heartbeat.

“I said, ‘I want to paint like that!’” she remembers thinking, as she traced the bold lines and brushstrokes of Bongart’s works on display at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle.

Even the passing years of marriage, motherhood, career and art haven’t diminished the memory of seeing Bongart’s art for the first time.

“I would have a life just filled with that much power and passion – I knew I had to paint like that,” she said.

That passionate spark would smolder and later explode into a successful, award-winning art career based on some of Bongart’s unique methods.

Shyne is one of the more than 60 artists who will be displaying their works and demonstrating their techniques during the 12th annual Camano Arts Association’s Camano Island Studio Tour that continues this weekend May 15-16 at 35 studios and galleries across Camano Island and Stanwood.

Shyne is also this year’s poster artist for the event.

The tour, traditionally held during Mother’s Day weekend, has become so popular in recent years that the association decided to extend it from one weekend to two and give the more than 4,000 people who attend more opportunity to enjoy the art, said Heidi Happonen, event spokeswoman.

“It’s one of the biggest – if not THE biggest – events to take place on Camano all year long,”



Dianna Shyne's painting "Bay Road" was selected as the poster art for the 12th annual Camano Island Studio Tour May 7-9 and 15-16.

Happonen said. “People come because it’s a way to experience art in a fashion that you don’t really get the opportunity to do in other venues.”

As part of the event, artists open their studios to visitors and demonstrate their crafts. Visitors not only see how the art happens, but why, Happonen said.

“The story oftentimes is what can bring meaning to a piece of art that you buy,” she said. “It makes it much more of an intimate experience and engages people.”

Shyne, 53, enjoys sharing her art with visitors.

A native of the Pacific Northwest, Shyne was interested in art growing up, but she’d never seriously pursued any artistic efforts until she experienced Bongart’s art.

Shyne immediately began searching out teachers who had learned from Russian Impressionist masters – including Bongart – to learn how to paint.

She experimented with drawing and then painting with oils. But the oils were too toxic for her, and she switched to acrylics – a move that bolstered Shyne’s artistic development.

“That medium helped me become much more expressive,” Shyne said. “It was a critical change that helped me paint big and more expressive; helped me focus on the body of work that I did for a long time.”

It wasn’t until 1994 that Shyne decided she wanted to devote her life to her art. She quit her job operating a Montessori school in Woodinville and moved to Seattle, where she continued building her art skills and art career.

As she developed her technique and individual style, people began to take notice. She began showing in galleries and other venues and entering as many national competitions as she could.

She continued to define her style and look for different ways of painting. Much of her technique came from “what-ifs” – what if she made everything more abstract? What if she added different kinds of textures and made the paint more transparent?

Eventually, her works were in demand. Many of them focus on landscapes and everyday scenes framed with bright, contrasting colors and thick lines of colors.

It’s the lighting and her use of shadow that attract people to her works, said Gayle Picken, owner of Gallery By the Bay in Stanwood, where Shyne teaches painting classes and has shown her works.

“The comments I’ve heard from people are, ‘Wow! That painting jumps; it’s alive, it has so much depth, and the light is incredible,’” Picken said.

“She does such a wonderful variety of art, too.”

Shyne also created plenty of series of paintings based on her travels around the world, including to China, where she focused on the famous terra cotta warriors as her subjects for a series of paintings.

Although she’s hoping to travel more, she’s been enjoying the beauty of Camano Island, where she’s lived for 31/2 years. Its local surroundings are increasingly featured in her works, including the

Madrona trees that dot the island and overhang the bluffs by the beaches.

“I can see the bay from our house, and whales from my bedroom,” Shyne said. “It really gives me the serenity I need to work.”

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The 12th annual Camano Island Studio Tour:

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, May 15-16

Where: 35 studios and galleries across Camano Island and Stanwood

Features: Glass, wood, jewelry, metal, tapestry, painting and sculpture works of some 60 artists

Download a map at <http://www.camanoarts.org>, or contact 425-239-6921 or camanoartists@gmail.com

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