

https://www.thenewsenterprise.com/features/wednesdays_woman/local-artist-creates-extraordinary-from-the-ordinary/article_853b127f-7cb6-5e64-a15b-64eb60e67592.html

Local artist creates extraordinary from the ordinary

By AMY SMITH THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE
Jan 3, 2024

1 of 6



Regina Williams' home is filled with creations she has fashioned from discarded or recycled accessories, garments and memorabilia. Here, she is pictured with a horse head she created from the pages of a cherished book from her childhood.

AMY SMITH/The News-Enterprise

Getting to know Regina Williams

Family: Regina Williams and her late husband, Gary, have three children and nine grandchildren.

Favorite movie: "To Kill a Mockingbird"

Favorite season: Fall

Favorite vacation spot: Western U.S.

Favorite genre of music: '70s

Favorite color: Combination of red and turquoise

Favorite Christmas gift as a child: A rag doll her mother made.

Favorite food: Chinese at Green Bamboo

Countless children and teenagers in our community have been inspired by the artistry of one woman, Regina Williams.

Hosting art classes in her quaint cottage studio in Glendale for the past 20 years, Williams seems to possess an endless supply of ideas and creativity.

"It's been amazing; I see 124 students weekly," Williams said. "The little ones just go and aren't afraid of anything. The older they get; they want their project to be perfect. I tell them nobody's art is perfect. We're all created different."

Using everything from worn out belts and discarded zippers to second-hand toys and cigar boxes, Williams creates a prototype then gives the instructions for her students to follow.

"It's pretty amazing to watch," she said. "They can have my example, but every one of theirs is different. They always inspire me. That's what I love so much about them."

Williams and her late husband, Gary, opened the studio when they retired from Fort Knox after working as illustrators for the U.S. Army.

Nominate a Wednesday's Woman

To submit a nomination for a Wednesday's Woman, email asmith@thenewsenterprise.com.

Williams had just completed college when she heard about an opening for an artist on post.

"I went to Western (Kentucky University) in 1971 and majored in art education to teach," she said. "I graduated in May of 1975 and got a call from a good friend who was an artist at Fort Knox."

Williams said that was the time when equal rights for women in the workplace was a major social issue.

"My friend asked me if I had a portfolio and explained that the government had been told they needed to hire more women," she said. "He told me they didn't have any women illustrators there at Fort Knox."

Williams went for an interview the following Monday and was hired on Tuesday.

"I was surrounded by men and military," she said. "It took me about six years to be able to prove that I had a right to be there. Even in the middle of equal rights, this was no place for me. There weren't very many women in the military then.

"But it was wonderful," she continued. "I was there for 28 years, and I met my husband there."

Williams was amazed and often overwhelmed by the tasks she was assigned.

"We were model makers of the inside of tanks, and we illustrated books about being on the range," Williams said. "We created maps of topography for soldiers' missions. And it didn't just stay there, it went all around the country for training."

At its peak, Williams' department employed 35 artists in two shops.

"It was an amazing job. We just inspired each other," she said.

After retiring, Williams felt a bit lost at first.

"We had always said we wanted to have an art studio," she said. "Our good friend, Mike Miller, told us he had a little house in Glendale that would make a great art studio. We rented it and ended up buying it."

In addition to weekly art classes, each year Williams offers an 8-week summer art camp.

"This summer was our 18th year for art camp in the summer," she said. "We saw 320 children last summer."

Williams always posts her students' creations on her Facebook page, Art Lessons by Regina.

Anna Rose Patterson first met Williams at summer art camp when she was 7 years old.

"Tuesday has always been my favorite day of the week, because that was the day I went to weekly art lessons," Patterson said. "To this day, I still anticipate 4 p.m. on Tuesday afternoons. This is a testament to Mrs. Regina. She welcomes her students as they are and loves them unconditionally regardless of their differences."

Patterson said Williams is a "God-fearing woman and wholeheartedly embodies his word."

"I don't know what I would do without them," is a phrase so oftentimes thrown around, but I can genuinely say I don't know what I would do without Mrs. Regina. She is arguably my biggest blessing," Patterson said.

Angela Carter attends church with Williams at Gilead Baptist Church and expressed much the same sentiment.

"Regina is tireless," she said. "She does so much for so many people and seldom complains about any of it. I truly have never seen anyone like her, in that respect. But the thing I love most about her is, she's not perfect. She comes close, but she's still human. If she weren't, I don't think I'd feel like I should even associate with her; she's that good."

Williams said her time as an illustrator at Fort Knox enhanced her teaching ability.

"My time there influenced the way I look at things," she said. "We did so many three-dimensional projects building the models and such, the tanks and then the stress and high pressure and how I approached it."

Seeing something extraordinary in the ordinary, after a rigorous application and selection process, Williams was selected to participate in the Art of Goodwill competition.

"75% of our project had to be found at Goodwill or other thrift stores," Williams said. "Eight of us were chosen, and we created two pieces. They were displayed at the Speed Museum. I said that I guess it was my 15 minutes of fame."

During the auction that followed the opening, Williams' entry, an American Doll horse covered in marbled paper and zippers, fetched the highest bid of \$900.

Turning trash to treasures, Williams also won an impressive award at the Kentucky State Fair using the same technique on a discarded doll's head.

"We are all inspired by someone," Williams said. "God is the master artist, and he inspired all of us."

Amy Smith can be reached at 270-505-1416 or asmith@thenewsenterprise.com.

AmySmith