

A love for art

Cami Thompson's affection for the west has always been entwined with painting

Cami Thompson's love of the west began when she was young and her family would travel from Michigan to visit her grandparents in Denver. Once in a while, they'd take a tourist visit to Taos. One such trip really changed her life.

That was in 1987 when she and her family were at the Fechin House. Thompson said she was chatting with Eya Fechin and telling her about an article she had saved about Eya's father, the famed Russian painter Nicolai Fechin, written by one of his students. Little did she know that the writer of that article, Joe Nordman, happened to be leaning against the doorway right at that very moment.

According to Thompson, they really hit it off. In fact, he followed her to Colorado and gave her and a group of her friends two days worth of art lessons. "I adored painting outdoors the very first second of my very first stroke," she said. "I really couldn't believe it and then to top it off, he gave me three of his paintings."



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Betsy Caray

As a child, Thompson said, she was always interested in art and spent hours drawing and painting. Lucky for her, the Grand Rapids Art Museum had classes available on Saturdays and her parents took turns with a friend's parents driving their children 35 miles each way. She loved it that her parents would allow her to make a mess when she made art, and later, when she became a teacher she would encourage the same for the parents of her students.

At Hope College in Holland, Mich. she majored in fine art and was particularly influenced by two professors, Del Michaels and Harrington. "Two invaluable lessons that I remember are how to do an outstanding under-painting from Harrington and how to destroy a piece of art and then bring it back from Michaels and I still use them both," Thompson said.

After her sophomore year she left for New York City where she worked for Herman Miller before returning to Michigan for commercial art training at the Kendall School of Design. This was another good school, according to Thompson, but the



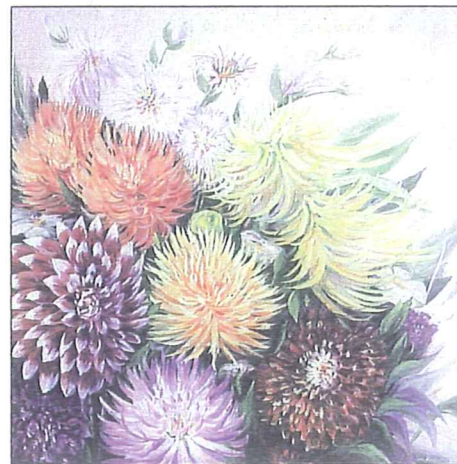
"Acequia Aglow," oil on linen by Cami Thompson

days in class were eight hours long and the homework always took five hours or more. She said that she made it her business to learn every medium she could find and it has served her well as an artist and teacher.

Her career as an artist did not start out as she might have thought it would as a young woman living in Boulder, Colo. At the time, she was into needlepoint and her designs were big huge hit. "I ended up with five painters who worked for me and my designs were carried by the finest shops all over the country," she said. "I left Boulder in 1979 and moved to Aspen where I started my own clothing business in 1983, using a proprietary process I developed gorgeous art to wear; an elegant women's line of clothing."

By the time she shut the business down in 1994, it had grown to 10 employees. "We sold well all over the world for all those years. I was the designer, sales person, organizer and boss for a long time. It was time to get back to what I needed to do for myself and that was to paint full time."

Since moving to Taos in 2001, Thompson and her husband, John Reisser have spent a lot of time caring for her father who died last year. She



"Dahlia Fandangle," oil on canvas by Thompson

said her dad gave her good business advice right up until the very end of his life because he was always in business for himself.

She and John have never doubted their decision to move to Taos. However, what concerns her is all the silent unheard young artists and newcomers to the area. She said the various arts councils in Colorado would help their memberships with lists of artists to call, networking ideas, painting workshops and classes on marketing. She thinks that sort of thing would be helpful in Taos.

Thompson paints full-time today and said that her paintings have evolved so much during the past years. She said she is looking forward to the response to her first one person show planned Sept. 15 at Chimayó Trading del Norte in Ranchos de Taos. A reception to which the public is invited is planned from 5-7 p.m. that day.

The work will span four decades to show Taosños what came before and is part of what she is doing now. The show will have fresh landscapes focusing on trees, rivers, mountains and skies.