



Anna Paige / The Forum

Ellen Diederich is pictured in her home studio in south Fargo on Nov. 8.

Traveling compositions

Artist Ellen Diederich's lifelong love affair with color, music and movement

BY LONNA WHITING
The Arts Partnership

Ellen Diederich loves a good road trip, but passengers beware: her vehicle makes frequent stops.

"I just can't hardly drive without stopping all the time. I start composing and I can't stop myself," she said of driving and long-distance journeys, which is a favorite creative ritual for the award-winning, nationally recognized watercolor and acrylic artist. "I start seeing images take shape while moving in the car. I love painting shelter belts, animals, florals."

Like many artists, inspiration can strike at any time, and for Diederich the drive started young with her mother, a piano teacher who encouraged art immersion in their daily lives.

"My mom always had us do a little painting for our recitals," she said. Diederich and her siblings were surrounded by music, art and expression. "She always supported me in the arts."

Driven to give

That same inspiration recently led to Diederich and her husband Paul Diederich offering a significant philanthropic gift to Minnesota State University's School of Art. As a result, the university honored their contribution by naming a gallery in the Roland Dille Center for the Arts after them.

Diederich earned her bachelor of arts painting and an art education in 1983.

"Ellen has been a steadfast supporter of the School of Art at MSUM through student scholarships, conducting workshops and now her support through a significant gallery naming gift," said Brad Bachmeier, program director and professor of art education at MSUM. "This significant gift will ensure that the gallery is able to meet its potential of being a cultural hub



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Ellen Diederich shows her favorite painting, "Starry Fields," which hangs in her home in south Fargo. "I got so frustrated, I thought I should cut my ear off," said the artist, who then decided to pay homage to Vincent van Gogh by incorporating elements of his famous painting, "The Starry Night."



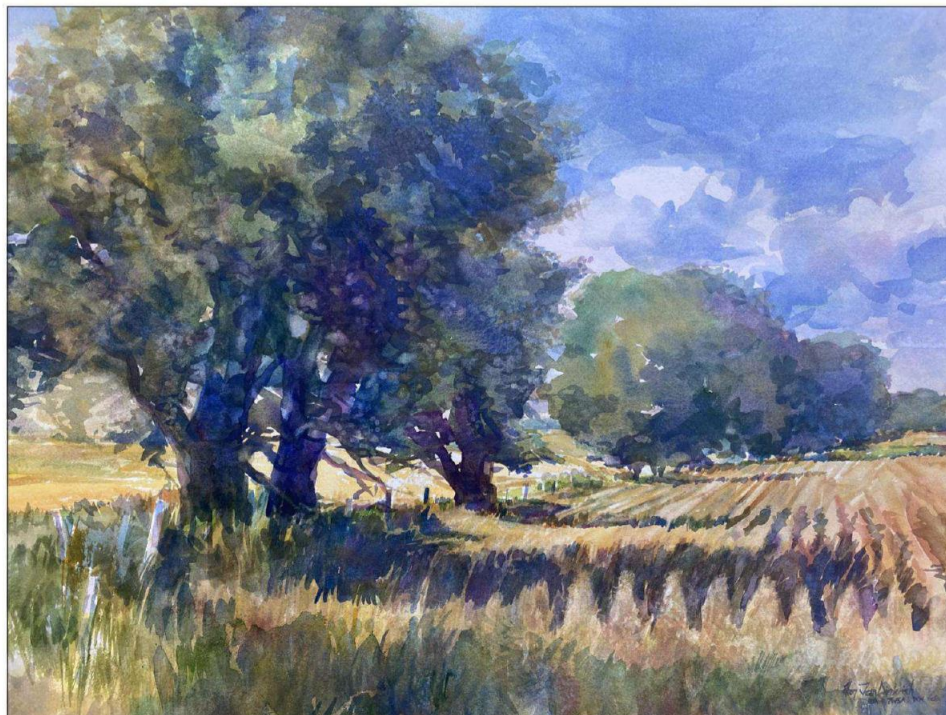
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Ellen Diederich shares some of her work while in her home studio.

where students, artists and community members come together to experience and celebrate artistic innovation and contribution to society."

If that wasn't enough inspiration, additional organizations such as the Fargo-Moorhead Visual

Artists and the Red River Watercolor Society recently recognized Diederich with lifetime awards for her contributions to the visual arts community in Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo.



Contributed / Ellen Diederich

Ellen Diederich painted "Shade and Shelter" while in California, and said her piano practice and warm-ups influenced the creation of the international award-winning piece.

Family boundaries and paths to healing

Dear Annie: I have a very toxic and narcissistic sister-in-law. Despite years of unpleasant family problems caused by her, my husband and his brother (her siblings) feel obligated to stay in contact with her. Now that their parents have passed away, I had hoped we could reduce this contact even further.



ANNIE LANE
Dear Annie

some level of family connection without disrupting the celebration. Focus on clear, calm communication, and emphasize that this is about supporting your daughter's happiness.

Dear Annie: Thank you so much for recommending Al-Anon to your readers who are struggling with the devastating effects of alcoholism. This program has been a lifeline for me, offering a safe space to untangle the confusion, pain and helplessness that often comes from loving someone who struggles with drinking. Al-Anon is not just about coping; it's about transforming how we live, think and love.

Before Al-Anon, I spent so much energy trying to control the uncontrollable — desperately trying to “fix” my alcoholic loved one and believing that their sobriety was the key to my happiness. It was exhausting and heartbreaking. The program gently taught me that my happiness, peace and serenity don't depend on someone else's choices. Instead, they come from within me.

Through the wisdom of Al-Anon, I've learned to let go of resentment, unrealistic expectations and the illusion of control. I've found a new way to love — one that is rooted in compassion and respect, whether my alcoholic loved one is drinking or not. That doesn't mean it's always easy, but it does mean that I now have tools to navigate the hard moments without losing myself in the process.

The serenity I've gained is beyond measure. It's allowed me to find joy in my own life, no matter the chaos or uncertainty around me. I've learned to trust in something greater than myself and to lean on a community of people who truly understand what it means to walk this path. I'm forever grateful for Al-Anon. If you're struggling, I can't recommend it enough. You're not alone, and there is a way to find peace. — Love Al-Anon

Dear Love: Thank you for your heartfelt letter. I am so glad that you found so much perspective, freedom and comfort from Al-Anon, which, as you know, is an organization that I recommend regularly. They are great, and so are you! Thanks again for writing.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



MAGI HELENA
Your Daily Horoscope

Instead of arguing, this could be a chance to determine what each of you can gain by cooperating. Discover where your goals overlap and how you may be able to help each other win.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Adopt a levelheaded attitude and outlook. You might get what you want if you remember to be diplomatic and go through the proper channels. Remember to have patience if tackling tasks that have been given to you on short notice.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): In today's social media influenced and fame-driven culture, success may seem temporary. You might find it challenging to avoid the judgement of public opinion. Be generous with your compliments learned from criticisms.

IF DECEMBER 2 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: You may be filled with optimism and confidence this week as you look forward to upcoming holiday events and gatherings. A lot might be accomplished as the countdown to the to the holiday season and the New Year begins. You may be filled with enthusiasm and eager to share your joy with others. Consider waiting until January to make final decisions that involve business, career, or financial concerns. The contacts you make in January through groups and organizations could help you develop a viable support system and useful social network. Early March may possibly be a good time to explore new ideas, travel or study, consider making plans while your judgement and vision may feel enhanced.

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People can mature and change and their idea of fun may change, too. You might look at your own changing viewpoint and interests as a sign of growth.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Your attitude may shape your destiny. The kind of day you have could depend on your outlook and mindset. You may embrace good fortune by staying upbeat, positive, and optimistic despite bad news or gloomy forecasts and negativity.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Deadlines may be challenging, especially if your tasks could be inspected for errors. People without proper understanding might try to explain what you are doing wrong. Take advice from those who can determine if you're on the right track.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Sometimes, regardless of your words or tone, people might only hear what they want to hear. You could make the choice whether to keep on trying or wait for things to cool down. Consider taking a step back and being more objective.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Working to achieve your ambitions when you're under someone's watchful eye may be challenging. Don't let important things go undone. Use your time wisely to ensure that every part of your life gets what it needs to succeed.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Not every partnership flows as expected right away.



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Ellen Diederich flips through some of her artwork in process in her home studio in south Fargo on Nov. 8.



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Ellen Diederich shows one of her paintings in her home studio in south Fargo on Nov. 8.



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DIEDERICH

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Artist Michelle Roise, a former student of Diederich's, honored her with the FMVA's 2024 Member of the Year. Roise said she credits Diederich for welcoming her to the community in the early 2000s when she was new to the area and looking for mentorships.

"I eventually became a member of both Red River Watercolor Society and FMVA, and already a fan [of Diederich's], I signed up for a five-day watercolor workshop. It was only the beginning," Roise said of the impact Diederich has had on her own life's work ever since.

Driven to share

Diederich runs her studio, Ellen Jean Diederich Studio, from her homes in Fargo and Rancho Mirage, Calif., where she and her family split their time. They sometimes drive between locations, another long drive for Diederich to stretch out her creative muscles.

Diederich sometimes refers to her studio as "Givinity," a nod to her belief that giving and divinity are interchangeable aspects of her purpose as an artist.

"I want to be a giving as an artist and as a company," Diederich said, reflecting on how her early years as a student artist taught her the importance of sharing knowledge and other



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Ellen Diederich shows some of the photos she works from to create her artwork, pictured in her home studio in south Fargo on Nov. 8.

types of wealth. "But that self-taught stuff is BS. Inspiration is everywhere."

Other than driving around seeking it, Diederich also finds inspiration in playing piano. "My mother greatly influences my art and my love of music. I feel her presence when I play today, and I believe it has improved my art to continue playing."

Both piano and painting give her something nothing else does, too, which she said is a desire to share her expression as much as she can. Diederich is a keen self-promoter, with a popular "Painting of the Week" blog series on her website and a healthy social media following.

"One thing that sets Ellen apart from other artists is her willingness to promote her talents and skills," The Arts Partnership Executive Director Tania Blanche said of Diederich's successful marketing efforts. "Artists who put themselves out there more actively tend to be more successful, not just personally, but professionally, too."

Diederich also enjoys teaching workshops and classes, and offers them on a regular basis.

"I know that I need to market because I want to paint," Diederich said. "So I'm very motivated to get it out. And I keep track of my paintings, who owns them, and I keep track of my

customers, and that's the best part. I really enjoy seeing them."

Driven to move

This winter, Diederich and her family plan to migrate to California eventually, though it's uncertain whether they'll fly or drive.

For Diederich, the journey is all about gradual change, perhaps in slow motion, but it's a movement nonetheless, which is perhaps a good way to describe the artist's work, too: deep, thoughtful.

"Things can take three years to come to fruition," on canvas, she said. "But it's like a rhythm, a style, that is in me all the time, especially if I'm really painting well."

Stay in touch with artist Ellen Diederich on



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Instagram or her blog.

This article is part of a content partnership with The Arts Partnership, a nonprofit organization cultivating the

arts in Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo. For more information, visit <http://theartspartnership.net>.