

CLAUDETTE

Claudette comes from a large family that is filled with artistic talent. Claudette, the ninth out of 11 children, says she held a paintbrush in her hand from the time she could walk. "I got an early start," she said.

Her father was a graphic artist and a painter, and she says her mother was equally talented. When the family was young, Claudette remembers her mother sewing all of the children's clothing, baking bread and being very resourceful.

Today all five of Claudette's brothers are musicians, and her three older sisters are unusually artistic. One is a bookmaker, one is an architect/sculptor, and one is a textile maker/buyer.

Claudette says an art instructor in junior high school influenced her, and, as a result, "I was directed on my painting at an early age," she said. He offered the students a lot of freedom to experiment artistically, and she says that was very refreshing.

High school was a challenge, and Claudette opted to follow an independent study program. She graduated at 17 and left the rural Northern California life she had always known to move to Marin City, Calif. For the next three years, she worked in a fabric store before returning to school. She began her upper-level studies on a scholarship at the College of Marin in Kentfield, Calif., and won a full scholarship for her last two years at the San Francisco Art Institute. "It was a great experience," she said.

Claudette had never lived in an art community before, and she says the level of intensity of the students was inspirational. To add to the experience for one year, she and her younger brother, Gabe, who plays the fiddle, lived in Holland as exchange students, and the siblings shared an apartment.

Claudette attended the Gerrit Reitveld Art Academy in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She says that the old architecture of the city was an education in itself, and she learned to mix the old with contemporary.

The Amsterdam school was very modernistic and the experience was artistically broadening for Claudette. She says she spent a lot of time at museums looking at Old Dutch masters' work. She has a preference for realism and says she was "blown away" by their art.

Claudette returned from Europe to finish her studies at the Art Institute and graduated from there. However, she very quickly found herself with the same problem many young artists face: the need to supplement her income. She waited

tables in San Francisco two days a week, while living a very simple life in a remote cabin with no power the rest of the time.

“It was just me and my dog,” she said, and she describes it as one of the happiest times in her life. The cabin was also her studio, and when there she was able to work on her painting continuously.

For three years Claudette lived this cabin lifestyle until a friend convinced her to move to a more metropolitan area in the Southwest. She decided she'd had enough of the restaurant business and was determined to find a job in the art world. Soon enough she was painting Native American vases and making puppets, delighted to spend all of her working hours in the arts.

A year later a friend made her aware of RFA Decor. Claudette says it seemed like a good time to change, and she is very happy she did. “I like the high quality of work (RFA Decor) fosters in (their) artists,” she said.

Claudette’s beautiful, acrylic paintings use a soft palette to look as if they could have been created 100 years ago. Claudette says she feels the strength in her work is “to see the reflections of the past, and remember the present.”

Although the colors are muted, Claudette uses over 85 colors in each of her paintings. She enjoys people as her subject because she feels they are the most difficult and provide a narrative quality to her work. Even when she paints a pattern, she says there is a story behind it.

To add some modern qualities to her paintings, Claudette says she paints more loosely or clumsily in some areas of the painting while other areas may be more tightly representational. Sometimes she uses unexpected subject matter such as the circus.

In the future, Claudette plans to live in a rural area where she can enjoy the simple life, and paint, and paint, and paint.