



## Artistic Explorations

# The Abstract Art of Cathy Bible

By Madeline Maser

Your local hardware store is not the first place to come to mind when thinking of art. However, for abstract artist Cathy Bible a visit to Home Depot can be as inspiring as a visit to a museum. She sees potential in tools and materials that other artists might overlook. She realizes, for example, she can get a deep, dark, and textured hue from roofing tar. Here is a new and exciting medium that allows for an abstract form that is not easily created with standard studio practices.

Cathy's work is driven by excitement in exploration and discovery. She explored nature as a child, searching for arrowheads, dinosaur bones, and camping in the wild. The themes and aesthetic of her art are influenced by those experiences.

Cathy's love of art runs deep, with origins in her family tree. The artist's paternal grandfather was the well-known designer of over 25 Ukrainian church altars in northern Alberta, Can-



*Beyond* | Mixed Media | 48" x 24"

ada. His work is archived and displayed in the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton. Cathy's father also loved the arts and was particularly enthralled by The Group of Seven, a famous collective of Canadian painters, as well as the works of Rose Leonard. Cathy's older brother, Barry, was a talented artist in his own right.

In spite of these family connections to creative endeavors, Cathy initially pursued a career in education. She worked as a teacher, and then, after ten years in the classroom, she was encouraged to pursue leadership-driven roles, which led her to work as a mathematics instructor at the University of Alberta and a mathematics consultant, vice-principal, and finally, principal.

Cathy found that artistic projects were a fantastic way to engage students. While serving as

principal, she implemented an "Artist in Residence" program that emphasized the importance of self-expression and let students see how creativity can be an excellent tool in work and life. These projects helped students develop the artistic "right side" of their brain, creating space for students to showcase their work in both short-term and permanent exhibits, and taught them to take pride in their abilities and artistic creations.

Theo Harasymiw, an established visual artist, was one of the artists that took part in these in-school artist residencies. Watching Theo work with the students and build them up as artists was inspiring and reminded her of the well of creativity inside of her.

This creative energy carried into Cathy's retirement, when she was finally able to focus on



her artistic abilities. She studied oil landscape painting with the late Joe Novak, and she shared an art studio with other photorealist landscape painters. A creative outlet that would allow for more exploration and open interpretation is what Cathy was really looking for.

The way she was able to express herself through painting in broad strokes and bold movements over large canvases was the most exciting aspect of abstract painting, which was the art form she found to be most compelling to her.

Cathy employs her training and experimentation to create new techniques and methods. She has a passion for creating large abstract works, despite her rheumatoid arthritis. She finds that painting with her hands and using unconventional art tools brings power and energy to life in her work.

Although experimentation is a large part of her work, Cathy has also trained with many established artists, including esteemed Australian sculptor Jen Mallinson, who taught Cathy the beauty and importance of texture. Danielle Bartlett, a fellow abstract artist, encouraged Cathy to follow her intuition, trust her inner voice, and allow the energy of the universe to influence her when painting.

While in the throes of her newfound creative path, Cathy was inspired by fellow artist Michael Huyzer, owner of A+ Gallery, to open her own exhibition space, Lyrical Art Gallery, in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. She created the space to complement her work, and she loved designing and “choreographing” the space during its four-year run.

Cathy has also recently worked in other media,



*Duende* | Mixed Media | 24" x 48"





*Sacrosanct* | Mixed Media | 40" x 30"

including bronze sculpture, mosaics, and jewelry design. Although the tools and methods of these art forms vastly differ, Cathy's nature-inspired aesthetic shines throughout all her work, as she creates pieces that dance between ruggedness, rigidity, flow, and effervescence.

From her home studio in Edmonton, Cathy's creative practice continues to grow and trans-

form as naturally as the seasons turn. Her joy for art and discovery go hand in hand, and you can see through her artwork that Cathy is not afraid of taking chances. Which coincides brilliantly with Cathy's life motto, a quote via author Yobi Kasado: "What do you do with a chance? You take it...because it just might be the start of something incredible."

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Website: <https://www.cathybible.art/>  
Phone: 780 983 4931  
Email: [cathybible.art@gmail.com](mailto:cathybible.art@gmail.com)  
Face book: [cathybible.art](https://www.facebook.com/cathybible.art)  
Instagram: [cathybibleart](https://www.instagram.com/cathybibleart)