

Julie Hall Rocke

Painter, printer, pioneer



Born in southern California in 1943, Julie Hall Rocke remembers art was always something she had to do. It was a way to communicate, and she was always drawing (when she wasn't throwing herself off of things—even after a disastrous accident in third grade she became a competitive high diver, gymnast and “boomerang” as she put it). After high school she earned an MFA which led to a career in the fashion industry during the 1960's, when fashion drawings for publication were the style rather than photographs.

What she really wanted to do was paint full time, but life presented the usual joyful and challenging events of marriage and children, as well as financial necessities, all of which she adapted to creatively in order to continue with her artwork. According to Julie, the biggest problem is just “getting through the studio door ... its hard. I had a baby at 40. There is always something. I try to go every day. When I don't work, I really have problems, I am not a happy person. I married a man who is a Buddhist and a teacher..he is very busy which is great because I am very busy too . We have a house we've lived in for 30 years and it's still only half done! Which is ok, really, because we're both doing what we want to do.”

As one of the founding members of the Shelburne Arts Cooperative, Julie recalls that at the time she wouldn't have been at all surprised that the store didn't last longer than six months. That didn't deter her from devoting countless hours to fixing up the physical space : “we did our own electric. ...everything we did, we learned something with the place. I remember taking the ceiling tiles out to paint them. There was the sound of kids running up upstairs and then all of a sudden there was this huge thing of dust, you couldn't see anything! By the time you got down, you were just black it was so dirty behind the tiles. I was doing the bookkeeping for a while, and I'm a dyslexic, for god's sake!” Another thing Julie really enjoys about the Coop is working at the store. “I get more bang selling somebody else's work than my own!”



The biggest draw of all—and the secret to surviving 15 years in a town where galleries come and go annually—are the members. “The people I have worked with are so phenomenal. Having a curator has made a big difference as well as jurying as a group. We have really good craft now, I am so proud. It's just wonderful to see these young minds taking over.”



On the Move

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