



# BE ABSTRACT

BW Pryor brings fine art to downtown

BY FATIMA BUTT

**A**bstract art is art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of visual reality, but instead uses shapes, colors, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect. Abstract means to separate or withdraw something from something else. Abstract art could be based on a subject or may have no source at all in the external world. It can be applied to art that is based on an object, figure or landscape, where forms have been simplified or schematized to create an abstracted version of it.

Beth Williams Pryor, better known as BW Pryor, owns a beautiful fine art gallery which doubles as her personal studio in downtown Fayetteville. Beth is best known for her oversized abstract acrylics on canvas, capturing the impasto technique to impart an almost sculptural effect: all with a palette knife. Now Beth uses a regular putty knife, which allows a wider surface for the interplay of color, enabling the final result to be better appreciated by the viewer. Her *Mélange* series was created almost entirely using a putty knife or an extra

large house-painting paintbrush, rather than typical artist brushes. "I like taking an unconventional approach toward creating my art and that extends to the tools I use," said Beth. "I would first apply too little paint, leaving scratch marks on the bare canvas or, worse, on the carefully composed layer of paint beneath. To compensate, I would then apply too much, leaving a thick paste." She now refers to these happenings as "happy accidents." "I love the 3-D effect created by applying paint thickly," she said with a smile. To some, abstract art is what you make of it. You could start with a particular concept and end up with something entirely different.

Beth didn't always grow up thinking art would be her career choice. Initially, she chose a more traditional route. She pursued economics and earned her degree from Smith College in Massachusetts. Later, she went on to receive her master's degree in urban and regional planning. Even though Beth was a creative child, pursuing art never seemed like a practical career path. "I was relatively happy with the tradi-





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Photos by Matthew Wonderly

tional route I chose, but there was always this part of me that gravitated towards the arts," she said. She worked professionally for 20 years in city planning and then as a stay at home mom for ten years. But, "there was always this inner urge to create."

"It wasn't until the 1990s when I realized my inner urge was pulling at me." Beth took a calligraphy class at Georgetown University, but was mainly self-taught. She also was a member of the Washington Calligrapher's Guild while participating in paint classes at a local recreational center. "When you start to realize you're doing things on your own time, maybe you should start looking at that because that's what you truly love," said Beth. "I've read many, many times that if you do something you truly love, then it is not really work."

Beth's inspiration comes from countless sources. One summer while at Myrtle Beach her children were in the water and she noticed the way the sun was hitting the surface. She recalled it looked like little mirrors and she quickly took pictures so she could recreate that sparkle later in her studio.

She follows Pantone and keeps up with the "it" colors so she can generate ideas for her next series. "Abstract art allows me freedom. I don't get stressed out if doesn't come out the way I want," stressed Beth. "I enjoy doing representational art, but I would get stressed out if it wasn't just right. With abstract art, it can be whatever I want it to be."

Beth normally uses acrylics creating her work, even though she loves oils, but they take forever to dry. With acrylics, if she paints something today, it will be dry tomorrow. So as a busy mom, that works out really well. "Mommy duties never end," she said with a chuckle. Beth is thankful her family is behind her. "My husband was supportive even when I turned the guest room into my art studio. But then he decided to help me acquire an art studio and that's how my art gallery journey began."

With her daughter only a year away from college and a son in eighth grade, Beth is very supportive of their dreams. She doesn't necessarily push her artistic abilities onto them, but she does want them to explore all their options. She recognizes how blessed she is to be able to pursue what she absolutely loves and she's an advocate of people following their dreams. "I have several generations of doctors and lawyers and that was kind of the expectation when I went to college," she explained. She understands the concept of financial stability, but it is also important to "honor your passion."

"I think there's this idea of the starving artist, but there are a lot more opportunities for the artist, that we don't think about."

Beth's sweet demeanor not only radiated through her charming gallery, but also in all her advice. She wants to continue to make her gallery grow. "I hope to sell my work to commercial establishments here in Fayetteville and nationally, and to be able to continue what I love to do."

Her vision is beyond having a beautiful painting hanging in a house, she wants her work to be hanging in hospitals and is optimistic that it will build people up. Her little voice inside of her now is telling her to pick up horseback riding again. "Oh I love it!" she exclaimed. "That's my goal to fulfill all my passions and that is my advice for everyone else as well." 🐾



# CITYVIEW

October 2015

Fayetteville's Lifestyle Magazine | [www.CityViewNC.com](http://www.CityViewNC.com)

2015

*Food & Wine*  
ISSUE

