

Elizabeth Bonnett

I was born in Winnipeg, and grew up surrounded by family who liked working with their hands, supporting creative endeavours, and encouraging exploration in new areas. With this in my background, you should not be surprised to see that I do not stay with one creative outlet. My parents believed that 'store-bought' wasn't always best, and that 'handmade' meant quality. My family believes in craftsmanship: if it's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

After learning to draw from Jon Gnagy's TV show, 'how to' books, and paint-by-number kits (using the leftover paints for my own creations), my path eventually led me to study Fine Arts, where I learned how to really *see*, and honed my drawing skills.

Through the years, I've explored various types of artistic expression: stained glass, wood carving, ceramics, weaving, drawing, painting, photography ... you name it. Embroidery, however, was for my grandmother; it was pillow cases and aprons. Then I met Jo. She started me on my first creative embroidery, and I had discovered a new medium to delve into.

Embroidery lead me to off-loom bead weaving. I mainly like to create on the fly, using peyote stitch, and adding various materials as embellishments.

Several years ago I somehow discovered piano key ivory and became a *scrimshander*. I first started with simple drawings, but as I became more comfortable with the material and tools, my drawings gained more detail. I like to portray nature, mainly endangered animals, but especially elephants (as a tribute, I suppose), and to create musically themed scrimshaw to reflect where the ivory comes from.

As a Manitoba native, the sights and colours of the prairies influence my work. I spent summer vacation at my grandparents' farm in southern Saskatchewan as a child; later, my parents built a cottage on Lake Manitoba which became my weekend home. My memories of the farm, and experiences traveling the Interlake, have become the subjects of much of my artwork. I want to capture the instants of light and atmosphere that I remember and somehow make it concrete, so others can experience it.

Much of my art is painted in a pointillistic style, with pen and ink (or liquid acrylics for colour). In 2000, I began working in egg tempera: mixing the pure dry pigments with egg. In this medium, my technique seems to remain pointillistic, as I layer small brushstrokes over each other to build up colours and modeling. On reflection, my style of choice in all of the media I work with is representational, landscapes and prairie architecture being the subjects. I guess being based on memories, it's somewhat of a romanticized view of reality.

I also work with fibres. I believe that an artist should not be limited to the traditional media: painting with fibres is as valid an art form as painting with oils. My fibre works are not realistic; they allow me freedom that painting doesn't, to express with line, texture, and colour. The common theme is still nature. The colours, textures, and forms found in the igneous rocks of the Canadian Shield, for instance, I could never capture in my pointillistic style. However, fibres lend themselves beautifully to this subject.

I simply want to capture the beauty of God's creation that I see around me, in all aspects of nature, and I hope that other people can sense it from my art.