

Decorative artist's career was born in a trunk

Pricilla Hauser's admiration for an old camelback trunk, included with a set of bedroom furniture covered with hand-painted roses that was given to a friend, has led her to national fame and to making a presentation to Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

Her fascination with the trunk began at the age of 12 in Oklahoma. Now Hauser has become a leading authority in decorative painting and has authored more than 40 books on the subject. In 1972 she founded the National Society of Tole and Decorative Painters, to which more than 23,000 members now belong.

DECORATIVE PAINTING can be easy to learn, Hauser believes. Her students have included the elderly, handicapped and blind.

"Painting is no different from cooking, sewing or playing a musical instrument," she said. "By step-by-step methods or 'recipes' you can make anyone an expert in decorative painting."

"You don't need to have talent," Hauser continued. "There are actually fewer brush strokes than there are letters in the alphabet. And they're much easier for you to learn than it was for you to learn how to write and sign your name."

Hauser was so beguiled by her friend's bedroom set, especially the trunk, that her parents gave her an unfinished, antique trunk of her own. She began gathering as much information on decorative painting as she could, so she could paint the trunk herself, but couldn't find anyone to teach her.

It wasn't until after her marriage that Hauser found decorative painting

classes at the YWCA. She began teaching her neighbors. Soon she started her own teaching and warehouse businesses on the subject, and her reputation grew.

HAUSER'S SERIES, "The Magic of Decorative Painting," was shown in Detroit on public television's Channel 56. Her second series, "The Magic of Decorative Painting II," is scheduled to be shown on Channel 56 in January.

Hauser has appeared on talk shows around the country, including Sonya Friedman's and Richard Simmons' programs. And her fame has spread beyond the United States.

Recently, Hauser was one of 12 artists chosen from 12 different countries to participate in the making of a calendar for the Worldwide Wildlife Federation. Hauser, selected to represent the United States, presented her work to the federation's president, Prince Bernhard in Amsterdam.

"I believe it is an artist's responsibility to share art and communicate it to others, to reach out and let people know that painting is easy and fun, and to teach others just how much respect and self-confidence you gain in having these skills," Hauser said.

"When we are painting and enjoying, we don't think about our troubles. As artists, we're taking the time to study the beauty of the objects we are painting. And this awareness brings happiness that will last a lifetime," she said. "And think of how good it will feel to give loved ones something you actually made yourself, or tell people you made it when they compliment one of your pieces."

Decorative painting dates back to the 17th century. It started in the Orient and spread to France, where the word "tole" was derived from the French word meaning "tin" or "metal." (Painting on metal is called "tole" while painting on other surfaces is called "decorative").

THE ART FORM swept through England and Wales, and across the Atlantic Ocean to New England, where early American settlers decorated tinware and beams in houses and churches with this type of painting.

In her television series, Hauser shows how to paint such designs as daisies, lemons, lilacs, strawberries and roses with both oils and acrylics on a variety of surfaces, including wood, canvas, furniture, fabric and glass.

Viewers learn how to create new decorative accessories for their homes as well as to rejuvenate old pieces. A decorative project is made in each of the 13 30-minute programs. An instructional book was specially designed to accompany the series.

"Each time you paint something, you will improve," Hauser said. "Everything you learn in life is like that. I simply want to emphasize that it doesn't take any talent at all to paint. It's not something you must learn in childhood or something you must be born with. You really can learn to paint if you want to. If I did it, I know anybody can."



Pricilla Hauser, at work on one of her favorite decorative painting to a camelback trunk she discovered in a childhood friend's bedroom set.

down to earth
Alice Burlingame

National Arboretum ranks as treasure

Tomorrow is the day. Those tulip bulbs must be planted. By this time, I hope the squirrels think they have stolen enough tulip bulbs so mine won't be so desirable.

I have that box of human hair from my hairdresser which I am going to spread over the earth where the bulbs have been planted. It is a gimmick I heard about which is supposed to scare away the squirrels.

I just have to tell you more about the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. It all began in 1927 when Congress passed an act creating it.

It is in the intermediate climatic zone and has nine miles of paved roads. It has an immense collection of azaleas (the most extensive in the United States), the largest collection of aquatic plantings, the National Bonsai collection, including the superb collection from the Emperor of Japan, a collection of Oriental plants from the Garden Club of America.

The dogwood collection from National Farm and Garden, Fern Valley sponsored by the Federation Garden Clubs, National Herb Garden sponsored by the Herb Society, and many more specialized plantings.

THE ARBORETUM occupies 444 acres in the Mount Hamilton area on the road to Maryland. While on the "mountain" you can see the Capitol and the Washington Monument and down to the Anacostia River on the east.

The underbrush has been cleared away from their prized trees. This same endeavor has recently been undertaken at Cranbrook.

The arboretum is a research center. There is a plant and seed exchange throughout the world. More than one million dogwood/cherry seeds were exchanged. Japanese children sent more than one million ornamental cherry seeds to the United States.

In 1983, Roland Jefferson returned to Japan with 1.2 million dogwood seeds. Ambassador Mansfield presented them to Japanese children at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

A new bird garden was given by Carl Buchholster. The landscaping detail is very outstanding throughout the entire National Arboretum.

In the past migrants have carefully carried along their herbal plants and seeds, valued for the medicine, savory, aromatic and economic qualities.

The two acre herb garden includes the Dioscorides Garden. Herbs mentioned in A.D. 60 by the physician Dioscorides are still common in the 20th century. Anise, cardamom, garlic, oregano, and chamomile are among them.

The other herb gardens are: The Early American Garden, Herbs Around the World, Culinary Garden, Industrial Garden (plants which are used in modern industry such as fuel, oil, pesticides, fibers and other essentials in modern industry).

There is a fragrant herb garden, Oriental Herb Garden with the Oriental onion, lemon, common ginger, and the Beverage Garden, with herbs used for flavoring teas and liquors.

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