

# VISUAL PUNS WITH JOAN HOLLNAGEL

For over 60 years, Joan Hollnagel has been crafting visual puns with paint by creating anthropomorphic animals and insects and personified natural elements. In Cedarburg Art Museum's Humor exhibition, Hollnagel explores what it is to be human and our relationship with nature in a comical and lighthearted manner.

As an introspective child, Hollnagel created artwork to both entertain herself and as a mode of self-expression. "Producing art can really reveal your inner self, which you may have never discovered before," she says. She continued to explore her artistic side even when she and her husband had a swimming pool business in Freistadt for forty years. She would stay home answering the phone and paint. Hollnagel was further stimulated when she took adult mixed media classes under artist John Tryba at Cardinal Stritch University with well-known Port Washington artist friend Shirley Schanen Gruen in the 1980s.



By 1986, Hollnagel became further involved in the local artistic community when she became a member of the Cedarburg Artist Guild (remaining an active member today) and one year later, joined Studio 6 with twelve other artists. She moved to downtown Cedarburg in 2003 after the death of her husband, yearning to be closer to downtown shops, restaurants, and volunteer opportunities.

With a kiln in her garage, Hollnagel now enjoys sculpting and painting at her quirky 1940s stone home. Her clay sculpture is formed into character faces, animals, yard art, and trolls using techniques she gained after taking an independent study class at UWM West Bend. Her acrylic paintings which are featured in this exhibition are created with the same joy and humor, completed with high detail, and often embellished with pen and ink.

"I like to paint with a fantasy or ridiculous theme," she says. Inspired by classic fairy tales and drawings by illustrator Arthur Rackham, Joan also relates her creative process to that of an author. Often authors don't know their story's conclusion before they begin to write. Joan will get a funny idea and simply start, not knowing exactly what will become of it. "My art usually involves ridiculous things that wouldn't happen, but they do kind of make sense".

Always on the lookout for new material, Hollnagel is motivated to explore her surroundings. She frequently researches her subjects to gain a better understanding of their traits and how they relate to humans. "I guess you never know what fantasy or ridiculous theme you can come up with until you explore your existing reality".

Source: Poirier, Joe. "An eye for the fantastic." Transitions: An Ozaukee Press Magazine for Seniors, January - February 2019: 4-8.