

Naturally 'InZpired'

Linda Van Beck connects with Karl Zerbe in exhibit

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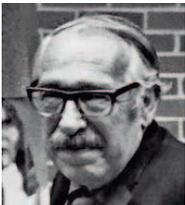
"I would like people to feel a oneness with nature," says artist Linda Van Beck. "That's the inner core of it. We don't exist without nature."

Van Beck's "Springtime" is an expansive, topographical meadow that brims with deep reflection and untapped possibility. The ruts along the painting's landscape are flooded with blue waters and bright lavender brushstrokes.

This particular Van Beck piece can be found in the "InZpired by Nature" exhibit at the Council on Culture & Arts' Artport Gallery this spring.



Van Beck PROVIDED



Zerbe

In partnership with LeMoyne Arts, the Council on Culture & Arts will show Van Beck's works alongside Karl Zerbe's, the subject of the citywide Zerbe Zelebration which kicks off the 2021 Chain of Parks Art Festival. This multi-exhibit event celebrates Zerbe, an internationally recognized expressionist painter, and the 50th anniversary of his retirement from FSU.

Van Beck remembers the first time she heard Zerbe's name come up at a party in Winter Park, Florida. Later, when she and her husband moved to Tallahassee, Zerbe coincidentally lived next door to the only other people they knew in the area.

Van Beck was heavily involved in the junior women's club and LeMoyne Arts at the time. She attended exhibit openings and co-mingled with local artists. Her art was shown in the gallery as well. One day, while seated at the end of LeMoyne's staircase, a long-legged and

imposing man grabbed her arm and took her over to her painting.

"He put his finger on this piece and said, 'what's that?'" recalls Van Beck. "And I looked at him and I said, 'I don't know, it needed something.' From then on we were friends."

Both Zerbe and Van Beck were fascinated with nature. While Zerbe created bird serigraphs with an attention to their humanistic qualities, Van Beck immersed herself in expansive landscapes of seasonal flora and fauna. She often misses the changing of seasons that she witnessed in her childhood home in Ontario, Canada.

Once she arrived in Tallahassee, she took some lessons from prominent local artist George Milton, but she is mainly a self-taught painter, and credits her father with surrounding her with art as a child. She grew up with art on her walls and a grandmother who was an art teacher at the local high school. Van Beck still has blissful memories of Canadian fir trees and walking near the creek on her way to school.

"All those things soak into you," says Van Beck. "And being fearless doesn't hurt."

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Linda Van Beck's "Bouquet." SPECIAL TO THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

If you go

What: InZpired by Nature: works by Karl Zerbe and Linda Van Beck

When: 8 a.m.-11:30 p.m., daily from April 7-June 14

Where: Artport Gallery, 3300 Capital Circle SW

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, call 850-224-2500 or visit coca.tallahasseearts.org. To see a digital version of this exhibit, visit COCA'S Online Gallery at cocaonlinegallery.zenfolio.com/.

Exhibit

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In her workspace, Van Beck reads off words that describe the hallmarks of her Japanese-inspired style and artistic approach. She always aims to incorporate elegance, simplicity and vitality, as well as a compactness that uses primary colors and graphics. These words continue to be her guide even as she has dabbled in watercolor and screen-printing.

“I think everybody has to find their voice,” says Van Beck. “I have a habit of rearranging land to some extent. You like to have a product that’s a little different and you want to know it is a Van Beck. That’s all I try to achieve.”

Many of her works feel driven by memory. Van Beck recalls losing her shoe once in the muck of a half-winter day. Living near Lake Erie, she noted how the waters changed so rapidly when the creeks were overrun with melted snow. The resulting noise and blossoming flowers all serve as fodder for her work.

Even today, miles away in her Tallahassee home, she wakes up to a view with water, birds and a beaver that was released on her property.

“The further north you go, spring has a lot of strength to it,” says Van Beck. “It’s a clearing out of winter and getting rid of all the sticks and dead limbs and scouring. We don’t see much of that here, but that is what I was trying to get at. The river is carrying this stuff off, and the background is the same one I’ve used over and over again. It’s the horizon line across the lake.”

Aside from painting, Van Beck has had a robust and vested interest in curation—specifically gathering and building a collection of Zerbe’s works.

Her relationship with Zerbe the artist ended after he died in 1972, but her continued relationship with his daughter has ensured that his legacy lives on. Van Beck promised Zerbe’s wife on her deathbed that there would always be a public collection of Zerbe’s work. Thus far, she has kept true to that promise.

In tandem with his daughter’s drive and generosity, Van Beck gifted numerous Zerbe artworks to LeMoyné Arts. She has continued to advocate for Zerbe’s works to be part of permanent collections. One such piece was hung at Tallahassee Community College, where Van Beck says she is proud to know that every student who graduates from the school will know his name.

This year, his legacy is at the center of LeMoyné’s Chain of Parks Art Festival, which will feature eight never-before-seen pieces along with lectures and round table discussions on Zerbe’s art journey.

“I look back and feel very lucky that I could be a part of all of it,” says Van Beck. “I really did admire him. It was something natural to collect Zerbe’s work given his stature, nationally and internationally, and I won’t be happy until we get more of it up.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).