



God's Creatures

A COVID inspired collection of 91 animal portraits from across the globe

PRESS RELEASE :

When the art shows, galleries and most means of making a living for artists dried up because of the impact of the pandemic in March, 2020, the challenge for full time artist Kristi Abbott was simply "how to survive". To add to the COVID-19 woes, Kristi's art gallery in Elliot Park was boarded up and closed when the riots following George Floyd's death effectively claimed downtown Minneapolis as a war zone, which then quickly seemed to merge into a ghost town.

Kristi is a native Australian, but has dual American citizenship. Kristi moved to Minnesota in 2012 and following executive roles in corporate Australian businesses, gave it up to pursue a full time art career. She quickly became recognized for her fresh vibrant approach to the canvas when she broke away from traditional methods of painting and developed her own unique collage techniques. Her Prince portraits of 2015 shot her into the spot light. This was followed by a sellout exhibition of Warrior Women, and Kristi becoming the 2018 Minnesota State Fair Commemorative Artist. Kristi was flying high until the closure of the gallery, and the economic impact of COVID took hold.

Not to be perturbed however, Kristi drew inspiration from an article she read which suggested using the COVID period to push yourself technically, produce an artwork a day for a set period of time, and use a limited color palette. Never being one for half measures, the very next week Kristi announced that she would take on a new project on the first of September. It would be to create a new artwork every day for three months, ninety one days in total, use a small collection of papers as her limited palette and because the pandemic was affecting every country in the world, it would focus on animals that spanned the seven continents of the globe. Thus, "God's Creatures" was conceived.

In her words, it was a daunting task! *"When I embarked on this project I had no idea quite how much it would take over my studio and my life! Now spread across the gallery in White Bear Lake, the boarded up downtown gallery and studio, 91 animal portraits hang out, waiting tentatively for their 'coming-out' exhibition!"*

"With this series I have travelled to seven continents - Australia, North America, Asia, South America, Europe, Antarctica and Africa - selecting known and lesser-known animals to create from layers of paper. Each day a new piece is created, some taking 2-3 hours while others have taken up to 14!"

Before any animal portrait is created in paper, there are hours put into preparation. Firstly, the birch wood panels are transformed. From raw wood every panel of various sizes are treated to a green, orange and blue alcohol ink wash, highlighted with gold splashes then overlaid in various ways with an orange glitter and translucent blue stencil design. Every panel is different but carries the same DNA ... This forms the link for the animals from all continents.

Step two is the animal image itself. Choosing the animal, the pose and the composition requires hours of research and design work. The common denominator for selecting the images according to Kristi, was finding animals that "speak to you through their eyes".

"God's Creatures" to date have been made available through Facebook and Instagram. Over two thirds of the art work has been sold, many within seconds of posting. The full original collection is going to be hung for ten short days in December at Kristi's downtown Minneapolis gallery before the work will be shipped to their new owners. Prints will be available from Kristi's website. The big question for animal lovers will be: "how much wall space do you have?"