

Sara Muender: An Artist in Many Forms

By Kay Krans

Walking through the doors of Moondeer and Friends Gallery, one is immediately introduced to more than an art gallery as the objects of art and craft begin to rush into your visual consciousness. Sara Muender welcomes her guests with a warm smile while they look from painting to print, from antique to batik, or maybe from handmade jewelry to a Curtis photogravure. There are books about the Northwoods, woodcut prints and oil paintings on aluminum. But my favorites are always works that are created by Sara herself.

From a little girl on, Sara has always wanted to be an artist. The youngest child in her family by many years, Sara grew up on a dairy farm in Boscobel, Wisconsin, where she spent many hours alone while the family worked the farm. She became an avid reader and spent hours drawing and creating art. Her mother told her that she would be an artist when she grew up, so Sara never had any doubt about which direction to take.

All through school, she took as many art classes as she could and won honors in art in high school. As a junior, she won best of show in the school's annual art competition and at graduation won the art award. She moved to Madison in 1971 to attend college at Madison Area Technical College (MATC). Unable to get into the commercial art program, she took a medical secretary course and began work at University Hospitals. In 1973, she was accepted into the commercial art program at MATC and graduated with honors in 1975. The emphasis of her studies was graphic design and photography, but she also excelled in pen and ink sketches in the contour or "blind" drawing style (looking at the object or scene and not at the paper).

From Madison, she moved to Minneapolis and began in the art department of a printing firm, Watt-Peterson Printing. She became a free-lance designer for several small independent design firms.

In 1976, she married Tom Folsom, who she had met in 1973 in Madison, and moved to Manitowish Waters where the Northwoods became a wondrous new palette for her work. She began taking adult workshops at Dillman's Resort in Lac du Flambeau where she added watercolor and other painting forms to her skills. In later years, she took an interest in printmaking, and most of her recent work is in the form of monotypes, etchings and other printmaking methods.

Sara has found inspiration for her art in her life spent in rural southwestern and northern Wisconsin. Much inspiration has come from her many years spent wintering in the Caribbean islands of St. Martin and Saba. She has a unique style that immediately catches the eye, whether it be in pen and ink, watercolor or printmaking, graphic design, or photography. She has used her artwork to support our community and created the first logo for the North Lakeland Discovery Center, and before that, she designed a logo for the town of Manitowish Waters. Regionally, her artwork was used for the inaugural poster for the Cranberry Blossom Festival in Wisconsin Rapids. Recently, one of her watercolors was used as the Christmas card of Senator Tammy Baldwin.

In 2001, after many years of exhibiting in other people's galleries and co-ops, she decided to open her own gallery in a rental space in Boulder Junction, and it has been a thriving business ever since. In 2008, she and Tom purchased property on Main Street in Boulder Junction where she built Moondeer and Friends Gallery. Today, the gallery features not only her own work but also represents the work of over 100 regional and local artists.

Sara has been featured in invitational and juried exhibitions in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In the Caribbean, her work has been featured in exhibitions at the Musee de Marigot, St. Martin French Indies, and at Breadfruit Gallery (now known as Fivesquare Gallery), Saba, Netherlands Antilles. Some of her illustrations can be seen in publications such as *Wisconsin Trails*, *Epicurean* and *Tropical Fish* magazines. Her work has also been published in several watercolor instruction books by her late friend and mentor, Karlyn Holman, who introduced Sara to watercolor. Juried shows include "Culture and Agriculture" in Marshfield, Wisconsin. In an article about that show, Sara was quoted, "Art is my life. I can't think of anything I'd rather do. I feel like I'm touching people. It's nice to think that someone has my work in their house, and they look at it every day."