

arts

**Maribel
Villalva**



Ex-El Pasoan speaks on art with passion

To have lunch with El Paso artist Ann James Massey, who now makes her home in Paris, is to get a quick, yet thorough, lesson in art.

The first time we met for lunch a year ago, she brought with her what was the beginning of her newest painting, "The Marionette Theatre." It was then that she first told me of her disdain for painting leaves, because they are so time-consuming. Yet, from what I could tell, this new painting would be full of them.

A year later, she brought the updated version of her painting, and she's still working on those leaves, but she's got a good sense of humor about it. In a letter in December, she said, "Sometimes, I feel (like) Sisyphus when I return to the easel, and there always seems to be as many leaves to paint as the day before."

On our newest lunch date, Massey also brought a book with her she wanted me to see, "Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters" by contemporary artist David Hockney. She is fascinated by this book, but not because she agrees with it. Instead, she's infuriated by it and wants to share her thoughts with El Pasoans.

In his book, Hockney claims that most of the old masters used tracing techniques to obtain their almost-perfect portraits or paintings. Massey said Hockney goes as far as to say such work cannot be done freehand.

So there we were, having quiche at the Pike Street Market, when Massey begins to convincingly dispute Hockney's claims.

During a recent visit to the Adair Margo Gallery, Massey began sharing her thoughts with Margo, who then offered her an opportunity to give a talk on the issue. In the gallery talk, Massey will also discuss her own techniques in art, the same techniques used by such artists as Jan Van Eyck and Jan Vermeer. She will illustrate the drawing process, the materials she uses and the application of paint and the final varnishing.

Massey's talk will be from noon to 1 p.m. Feb. 26 at the gallery, 415 E. Yandell. The event is open to the public.

She also has very strong opinions of "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown, but those thoughts won't be part of her lecture. However, I'm sure she'll share them with anyone who is interested. She'll include her thoughts on the subject in a future version of her newsletter she sends out.

Massey also announced that the Adair Margo Gallery will now represent her work internationally. While she doesn't have any exhibits on display now, she said it will help her tremendously to have the gallery be the contact point in the United States for her work. The gallery not only could sell her work but also could take care of the shipping. Her mom, who lives in Northeast El Paso, used to do that for her, but Massey said she wants to give her a break.

Information: 533-0048.