

DEL CAJON GAZETTE

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Local artist discovers new art technique



Star Bales showing her new art technique.

by Nancy Lewis

Artist Star Bales of El Cajon had the honor of being the first of a series of artists to demonstrate their art styles and techniques before the public this year in the Fine Arts Exhibit Hall of the San Diego County Fair in Del Mar on June 11. Assisted by her family and myself, Star demonstrated a new and unique textural style that she discovered quite by accident.

Over a year ago, Bales was "playing" with her paints and discovered some interesting textures. As she experimented

with various methods to find out how and why the textures occurred, she pressed the flat bottom of a drinking glass on a blob of paint. The result was a precursor of her current style, which combines delicate textural lines reminiscent of the veins on a leaf or the delicate pattern of fan coral and an endless variety of shapes and colors.

Using acrylic paints of varying consistencies, she eventually discovered that a combination of acrylic pigments mixed with minimal amounts of water would give her the textures she desired. Using a slick, non-porous surface, such as glass or

Plexiglas as a work surface, she applies the paint using lines of varying thickness until the desired pattern is achieved. After carefully laying a piece of clear glass or acrylic over the design, Bales very gently applies pressure to spread the paint out and creates an entirely new design. The pressure is what creates the textures. When the top piece is carefully lifted, it contains the design, which can then be transferred by placing the "master" on a sheet of watercolor paper or canvas or left to dry. Bales often transfers several small designs onto a single large canvas to achieve a specific result.

The coordinator of the live fine art demonstrations was amazed by the number of people who took advantage of Bales' "hands-on" demonstration, saying that most of the time the demos don't draw much of a crowd. Young and old were smiling and having fun, usually making a "print" to take home. One woman created a design in red and green and said she was going to have it copied for her Christmas cards.

Youngsters were fearlessly using color to create a kaleidoscope of patterns, and usually had to be encouraged by their parents to move on. One gentleman told Bales that he had entered several paintings for this year's exhibit but didn't have any accepted, said he was going to use her technique to create an entry for next year! A white-haired couple stood for a while watching some children creating their own art. When asked if he'd like to give it a try, the man first shook his head "no", but then said he would give it a try. Picking up the jar of black, he made a hesitant shape on the table. When offered a sheet of Plexiglas to put over it, he said "No, thank you," and picked up another color. Several minutes and

four or five colors later, he was smiling from ear to ear. "Now, I'm ready!" he said. He placed the Plexiglas over the paint, intently watching the paint move around as he gently applied pressure with his fingers. When he lifted the Plexiglas, his face lit up as if he'd just discovered buried treasure. He proudly held it up for his wife to see, before requesting paper prints. He would have stayed until the demonstration time was up, except that his wife reminded him that they had other exhibits to see.

Star Bales is a long time member of the East County Art Association. Her murals can be seen at several locations in East County, including the lobby of the East County Gazette, Mangia Bene Italian Restaurant, Mama Rosa's Italian Restaurant and the Greek Town Buffet.