



July 2013

meet the artist

Robi Sallee, an artist in the country

By Gerri Young • Photos by Teri Hoover

When Roberta (Robi) Sallee was five years old she told her mother she wanted to be an artist. By the time she entered Virginia Tech, she wasn't so sure any more.

"I started out with a major in chemistry," laughed Sallee. "Then it was art, geology, art, education and, not surprisingly, art! In the end I had a degree in art."

Today, Sallee is the president of the Blacksburg Regional Art Association (BRAA), and well known for her paintings of frogs most often on OSB—oriented strand board.

Sallee's high school sweetheart and now husband, Eric, is part owner of Progress Street Builders in Blacksburg. "In the building business, there is an incredible amount of waste material," said Sallee. "When I was in college I didn't have the money to buy canvas for painting so I used left over OSB or substrate which became my favorite surface, but one my professors didn't approve of it!"

Customers of the Pita Vera restaurant in Blacksburg's downtown recently had a chance to see many of Sallee's acrylic frogs on display on these unusual surfaces and, before road construction got underway, a parking meter near the Lyric Theater



Teri Hoover

The red wall in the living room of Robi Sallee's farmhouse is a perfect backdrop for her red and green acrylic frog painting.

■ Upcoming

July 19

Delight Exhibit Opening Reception
VTLS, Inc., Corporate Research Center
5-7 p.m.

Don't miss the reception for this joyful, BRAA-sponsored exhibit of paintings representing artists' interpretations of delight.

July 20

Art on the Market
Downtown Blacksburg, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

This event is sponsored by Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., and is in conjunction with the annual Breakfast at the Farmers Market.

July 25

Watercolor and Wax Workshop
Christiansburg Presbyterian Church
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Robin Poteet leads this fun workshop where participants will combine layers of melted wax and watercolor washes to create batik-like paintings. Class benefits Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Arts Center.

August 24

Heritage Day
Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Art Center, Christiansburg, 10 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

This event includes antiques, activities, art, food, and live music. Admission is free.

October 18

New River Art Reception
Perspective Gallery, Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech Campus, 5-9 p.m.

Enjoy the winning entries in this biennial juried show.

October 19

What a Relief: How Prints are Made
Mary Holland, from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts will be conducting a participative demo. Cost is \$10. Contact Nancy Norton (nancynorton@comcast.net) to register.

Sallee *continued from page 1*

sported her frog touch as well. She often inks and paints detailed elevation renderings of houses her husband's company is building.

Over the years, Sallee concentrated mostly on raising her family of five children and working occasional jobs. She dabbled in various creative pursuits like making jewelry and sometimes "getting manic about it." Lots of beads and craft fairs fulfilled her creative needs.

Friendly and soft spoken, Sallee can easily be considered just a little edgy or offbeat with occasional spikey hair in a mix of colors, not to mention her penchant for painting frogs. About 14 years ago, her mother in law gave them a dining table. With her family's approval, she painted the table with a tableau featuring the favorite meal



Robi Sallee's life is one of constant happenings, as depicted here at the main door to her country home. Standing with her is daughter Sarah, 15, while daughter, Grace, 11, entertains one of the four family dogs. Somehow it seems fitting that frog paintings should be added to the mix.

of each family member. When she got the urge to change the painting, the table became the scene of a picnic complete with ants. Scraping off the paint in between each edition, the final artwork became graffiti added to by anyone with a paintbrush and the inspiration.

That table is still in Sallee's possession and will soon have

the perfect home. In January of this year, the Sallee family moved to the country off Price's Fork Road in Blacksburg. An old garage building on their land is earmarked to become an art studio and the new home for the old table.

The story of this move to the country is worth telling. Thirty years ago Sallee's husband saw the big white farmhouse of his dreams. He knew if it ever came on the market he would love to live there. His dreams would come true in 2013.

"Eric invested in a house in Austin, Texas, and rented it out for several years," said Robi. "Early this year, the realtor handling it called and said Robert Plant, lead vocalist and lyricist of the rock band Led Zeppelin, wanted the Austin house. At first he rented it and later said he wanted to buy it. We received his deposit check on a Wednesday.

"That Saturday, my husband heard about a house and 20 acres for sale. As he listened to the description of the place, he just knew it was the house he had fallen in love with so many years before. On Sunday, we looked at it and, on Monday, made an offer!" said Robi.

The Sallee family moved from a house on a small lot in a development to the rolling 20 acres with main house, five outbuildings, beautiful gardens, a spring and a view. The Sallee family has five children, four dogs and three parakeets. Grace, twins Caroline and Sarah, and Anna, ages 11-18, live at home and quickly adjusted to the country place. The four dogs like it so much they don't want to come inside. Sallee spent much of her growing years in the country outside of Roanoke, so she was thrilled to move as well.

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■ Exhibit Opportunities

Art on the Market

July 20

Downtown Blacksburg

This annual event is sponsored by Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., and is offered in conjunction with Breakfast at the Farmers Market. Applications to exhibit are available at www.downtownblacksburg.com.

Steppin' Out 2013

August 2-3

Downtown Blacksburg

This street festival fills the downtown historic district with artists and craftspeople and three stages of music and entertainment. 16' x 10' spaces are \$150. For more information, visit www.BlacksburgSteppinOut.com.

Heritage Day

August 24

Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center, Christiansburg

Artists are invited to bring work to show and also work on site. The museum is also seeking donations of works for a silent auction. For more information, contact Sue Farrar at director@montgomerymuseum.org.

New River Art Entries Accepted Until August 29

October 2 – November 7

Perspective Gallery, Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech

If you only apply for one juried show in 2013, make this the one!

There's still time to enter this biennial show that now features a fully automated online submission process at www.callforentry.org.

The opening reception is 5-9 p.m. on Oct. 18.



Sallee *continued from page 2*

"I can hardly believe we live here," said Robi. "It's beautiful and quiet and came with established gardens and renovation already completed. All we've done is paint the roof, refinish the wooden floors and install a new furnace."

Sallee's favorite place to paint is outdoors, en plein air, and now her "studio" is just steps away, inspiring her already to do some watercolor sketches. Because she has multiple sclerosis, long periods in hot weather are not good for her. "Here I can come inside to cool off whenever I want and BRAA artists are welcome to set up on our land to paint. Just call or email me first, please!"

Sallee has had multiple sclerosis since 1998, about a year after the birth of her twins. "I used to be a runner and swimmer when I was in school," said Sallee. "Having MS has made me a better person. I am more observant now and really appreciate the good things in my life."

Besides the beautiful new home to appreciate, she and her family members all appreciate that one of her children went through a big health scare since moving to the new home and is recovering very well. "It has been a very eventful year," said Sallee. "Maybe now I'll have time to learn more about framing my work and photographing it better. And I plan to step down from the BRAA position in November to concentrate more on my family and my art." ■

Lunch, art spot and board meeting

The June BRAA art spot featured the prolific artist, Steven "Sketchy" White (*right*) who shared his oil painting pochade box and set-up for plein air landscapes as well as examples of his work (*lower right*).

The **July 12** luncheon is at 11:30 a.m. at Famous Anthony's in Blacksburg. The art talk begins at 12:15 and features Diane Relf, who will discuss fun things you can do with rust!

The board meeting follows at 12:30 p.m. Please send agenda items to Robi Sallee at robisallee@hotmail.com.



BRAA still needs you

Within just a few months, BRAA will be electing officers for 2014. New leadership will be key to our continuing existence and vitality. Please seriously consider this and let Robi Sallee (robisallee@hotmail.com) know if you are willing to have your name placed in nomination for any of the offices— president, vice-president (president-elect and program coordinator), recording secretary, or treasurer.

■ Now Showing

July 15 – October 15, 2013
(except where indicated otherwise)

Denisse Bento, See Mark Optical,
2401 S. Main Street, Blacksburg

Riley Chan, Real Life Dental Care, 202
South Main Street, Blacksburg

Leslye Bloom, Warm Hearth Village,
Blacksburg and Signature Nine Gallery,
Roanoke

Charlotte Chan, Zeppoli's, 810
University City Blvd., Blacksburg

Carol McNamee, Holtzman Alumni
Center, Virginia Tech campus (until
September)

Nancy Norton, StellarOne, Arbor
Drive, Christiansburg

Diane Relf, Brown Insurance,
100 Hubbard Street, Blacksburg and
ICTAS, Virginia Tech campus (until
mid-November)

Cecilia Riegert, ICTAS, Virginia Tech
Campus (until mid-December)

Gerri Young, Mill Mountain Coffee
and Tea, 700 N. Main Street,
Blacksburg

*"Painting is easy
when you don't
know how, but
very difficult when
you do."*

~Edgar Degas



Kaluszka Watercolor Workshop

Several BRAA members attended and enjoyed the June 28-29 watercolor workshop by Sidra Kaluszka (left). Her technique was practiced by participants with beautiful results (bottom left).

photos by Gerri Young



Upcoming Shows at The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery Inc. (318 N. Main St., Blacksburg)

Wednesday, July 17

Burgeoning Artists

- Chris Cartwright
- Christie Cordiano, Photography
- Nathalie Graham
- Andrew Hill
- John McLain II
- Michael Mortimer, Photography
- Jackie Pontious, Conscious Creative Works
- Caleb Smith
- Nick Vitelli
- Emily Williamson
- Student work from the "Drugs Erase Dreams" contest sponsored by Montgomery County Prevention Partners

- Becca Imbur, Bimbur Books
- Franchell Mack Brown Fibers, Fran-MackArt
- Lisa Plummer
- Starroot
- Wendy Wrenn, Wrenn Pottery
- Artists from The NRV Weavers' Guild

Wednesday, October 16

A World of Color

- Denisse Bento, DenBento Art & Design
- Kanta Bosniak

Upcoming Figure Drawing Classes at the Artful Place

(107 Faculty St., Blacksburg)
July 21 • August 4 • August 18
For more information, contact diana@creekmorelaw.com.

The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Tide Table" (left, acrylic and textured joint compound on cradled hardwood, 12x12x2") by Leslye Bloom. This work is now showing at Signature Nine gallery in Roanoke.



BRAA Officers

- Robi Sallee**, president
- Nancy Norton**, co-vice president
- Danie Janov**, co-vice president
- Tom Barnhart**, membership
- Vikki King**, treasurer



www.facebook.com/BlacksburgArt

Send Facebook news postings to:

- Gerri Young** at younggerri@googlemail.com
- or **Nancy Norton** at nancyphorton@comcast.net

Twitter @BlacksburgArt1

<http://www.blacksburgart.org/>

Send news, photos, comments, or newsletter suggestions to Lois Stephens (stephens1@pentel.net)

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