

## **Augusta M. Asberry**

Augusta M. Asberry's love of art was evident when as a student at Sacred Heart Grammar School in Lake Charles, LA; she would draw pictures during class instead of completing her assignments. Her earliest influences began in the thirties with first grade readers, children's books, paper dolls, and magazine illustrations. In high school, the source of influence shifted to her high school teachers, and all of the books she could get her hands on; and in college she fell under the spell of artists Paul Klee, Monet and Miró.

Augusta began college at San Francisco Junior College in 1949. She later attended San Francisco State, but left to get married and raise her family. In the early fifties she attended nursing school, and subsequently worked as a nurse for 38 years. In the 'sixties, Augusta returned to college at Peralta College in Oakland, CA, where she took classes in fashion design, fashion illustration and basic design. She began her professional career as a landscape painter in 1971. She later moved to Bremerton, WA with her family, where she began creating an historical documentation of old houses and farms in pastels. This mode of expression continued until 1992 when she created her first African Dancers.

The artist has this to say about her Dancers: "When I created my first Dancers they were patterned after the crude figures found on the rocks and cave walls of Africa. My own animated style has evolved but it is still inspired by the spirits of the Ancestral Artists.

The Dancers are clothed in my original fabric and costume designs. Ten years ago I began an on-going independent study of African fabrics and designs and how they related to celebrations of the African rituals and dance. As a result of this study my Dancers have taken on a life of their own but they do not stray far from the basic concepts of African Art and Design.

My favorite concept is the arrangement of elements. The non-uniform variation of traditional designs remains off balance, yet it is pleasing. Their method of staggering motifs on cloth, and the juxtaposition of color and line can be compared to the offbeat phrasing in music and dance. I use this off-beat concept in my paintings by not establishing a focal point. This is like my Ancestor would say hearing a beat that is never sounded. An illusion of motion is created as your eye travels from one point to another seeking that elusive focal point. Just as an individual personalizes his or her garment to distinguish it from others, so does the African Artist who creates the cloth. Variations in traditional design give each piece a singular character and make it personal to the one who produces it.

It is my hope that the spirits of the Ancestors will walk with me as I showcase my own 'off-beat' cloth."

Augusta's studio is home-based, and her work schedule is arranged just like a job away from home. A very disciplined artist, she creates 8 hours a day, with time off for lunch and breaks. She arises at 5:30 AM for an hour and a half of researching and planning.

Augusta M. Asberry's work appears in the following collections: Roslyn Woodhouse of the Urban League, Harborview Medical Center Cultural Collection, Seattle, WA; Kitsap Regional Library, Bremerton, WA; YWCA, Bremerton, WA; West Park Community Center, Bremerton, WA; OB GYN Clinic, Port Orchard, WA; Leanin' Tree Art Museum, Boulder, CO; Healthsouth Surgery Center, Bremerton, WA; 11 x 10 metal terrace enclosure (A Woman's Mark) for CADA project.

Augusta has been told that her work is a "mood-lifter". Her viewers say they enjoy her work for its simplicity and lack of hidden messages. They see the Dancers in their bright, beautiful colors and want to join the dance. "My paintings constantly dance around in my head; they even wake me at 4:00 AM. They are all but finished in my head before they hit the paper. What I like about creating art is that I get to do what no one else can do. I alone get to interpret my ideas, visions and dreams and then present them on paper. To me this is the ultimate rush."

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