

# Energy flows on artist's canvas

Karen Lorena Parker brings nature to life through visual arts

Michelle Hopkins, Richmond News.  
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There's a beautiful breeze flowing through Karen Lorena Parker's Burkeville home.

That same sense of movement is evident in the artist's large landscape canvases that adorn just about every wall -- trees swaying in a summer breeze, clouds moving in the sky.

Parker has also captured the night in swirling, flowing lines that appear to be rustling in a gentle, wavy movement.

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There's a palpable energy going on in her paintings.

"I want the energy to come through, the flowers moving in the wind or the storm clouds shifting," Parker says.

"I'm really inspired to capture the mood of light ... how light filters through clouds and trees and the romanticism of it inspires me as well," Parker explains.

"There's also the random patterns and the halo of light going through trees that is so beautiful.

"I'm also preserving the B.C. coastline, the bright flowers and lush green grass."

Recently, Parker donated one of her

large acrylic paintings called Dan McIvor's Martin Mars to Richmond Fire-Rescue.

The painting was a tribute to McIvor (1911-2005).

The 2003 Order of Canada recipient and local volunteer fire fighter was known as the father of the water bomber. (He was also inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame in 2002).

"I knew Dan quite well, he was a real encyclopedia, a real character," Parker says. "The magnitude of his invention, and how he and his friends would test those water bombers, it's amazing.

"I wanted to honour him."

After toying with a number of ideas, Parker decided the forest fires with the Martin Mars water bomber visible high above in the clouds was the best composition.

Her interest in aviation comes naturally -- her parents met as pilots in Chile and her husband, is a pilot with China Air.

"Pilots get a 180-degree view of the coastline and mountains," says Parker, who prior to 9/11 visited the cockpit of the plane her husband flew.

The 1989 graduate of the Alberta College of Art and Design explains that her work is most often abstract and/or contemporary -- graphic, expressive, with lots of depth and range.

"My style can best be described as bold, evocative, dramatic, inspiring and sophisticated," Parker adds.

"I want to create energy in my painting ... I hope that when someone buys one of my paintings it becomes like a best friend they would miss (if it was gone). Then I have achieved what I set out to do."

One of her large paintings can take anywhere from 24 hours to a month to create.



"The planning alone takes a month because I'll do a draft, and then I'll look at it and sit on it for awhile," says Parker, whose works hang in a New York art gallery, locally at Novo Furniture Gallery, Rendezvous Gallery and others, as well as in many corporate and private collections.

During the rough draft, Parker allows herself to be as dramatic as she wants.

"I'll start painting and I add layer after layer of paint, as many layers as possible," says Parker.

"That gives the painting a three-dimensional effect, which can be looked at from different angles so the viewer will see something different.

"As the colours flesh out, then I need to concentrate on the finished painting."

Parker brushes on at least 20 layers of acrylic paint, then finishes off with oils, which gives richness and depth to her work, she says.

When asked who or what inspires her, Parker gets thoughtful.

"It's people that inspire me... talking with people about their interests in life, their memories, something that inspired them, or touched them," Parker says, adding she typically spends five hours a day on her paintings -- some of which fetch

\$10,000.

The Group of Seven and their "illustrative sense of design and composition" have always moved Parker as well.

Then there's the sheer genius of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890).

"It's incredible that his work still energizes," Parker says with passion. "I saw his painting, Cypress Trees at the Vancouver Art Gallery; it's brilliant that after so many years it still vibrates with creative energy.

"That's what makes it a masterpiece."

Parker grew up in Calgary. In Grade 9 she discovered she had a real penchant for painting.

"I took an art class and I was consumed by it," recalls the 34-year-old Chilean transplant and mother of two young sons.

"By Grade 11, I spent most of my time in the art room.

"After I graduated from high school I headed to New York (for a visit), and every morning I woke up and headed to the art galleries."

In New York, Parker says she knew the artistic path was her calling.

"I belonged in those art galleries and I knew there was nothing else for me."