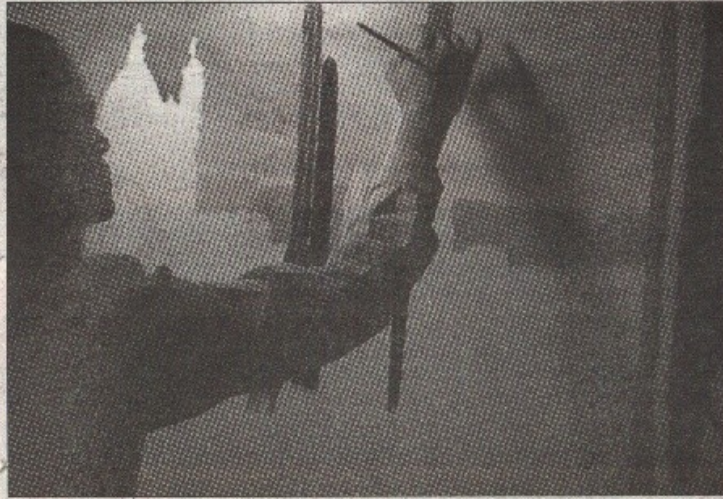


TRI-CITY ARTS

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Art teacher showcasing students' work



Artist Evelia Espinosa worked in her Coquitlam studio Monday afternoon while getting her students, aged six to 14, ready for their first art show at the Port Moody Galleria June 23 and 24.

By Sarah Payne
 THE TRI-CITY NEWS

When Evelia Espinosa's husband came home one day and said he wanted to move the family from their Mexico City home to Canada, the mother of two young girls admits she was a bit panicked.

"But Hector, what am I going to do?" Espinosa recalled.

"You are a teacher, and you are an artist," her husband replied that day about four years ago. "You can combine the two."

The family moved to Coquitlam and Espinosa soon set up her studio and, for the past two years, she's been teaching both kids and adults to paint.

She admits that her younger students are somewhat easier to teach — kids pick up on the subtleties of

blending colour more easily and are more open to instruction, she said with a smile.

Of Espinosa's 20 students aged six to 14, 16 will be showing a total of 40 artworks in the first Children's Art Festival, June 23 and 24 at the Port Moody city hall Galleria.

The paintings range in subject from landscapes to animals and flowers, to still lifes and cartoons, but they are all done in oil.

Espinosa said she always starts by teaching her students to paint with oil, despite its challenges, because the training provides a better grounding from which to branch out to watercolour or acrylics. Oil, she added, can be difficult to blend but, once students learned the technique, their paintings are more natural and realistic looking, she added.

In a stack of students'

paintings she picked up one of a tiger by an 11-year-old girl. The background and half the body were painted in but the pencil drawing of the upper half of the tiger was still blank.

Espinosa explained that she starts out by drawing the picture herself to focus on teaching kids to paint — which brushes to use when, how to distinguish between primary and secondary colours, how to paint with a knife and blend colours together.

"At first it's hard to do, drawing and painting," she said. "Later I separate the two and teach them the drawing and painting."

Many of Espinosa's own drawing and painting reflect her memories of Mexico. On a recent visit to her studio Espinosa was working

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Mexico is influence in teacher's painting

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on a large piece depicting a church in Guerrero, near Acapulco, with a variety of cacti in the foreground.

"Mexico is amazing, but it's a big, big city," she said of their home in the bustling — and polluted — Mexico City. "It's better here."

Espinosa and her husband moved here to provide a better life for their children, now aged nine and 11, but the change also offered her an opportunity to take her painting in a new direction. (Her husband, Hector Cervantes, opened the Mayan Art Cafe in Port Coquitlam, which has since closed down; his coffee and chocolate are available online at www.alux.ca.)

On a wall in the front hall hangs a large-scale piece depicting a view of Vancouver from Stanley Park; sometimes she'll mix elements of her two homes into one painting.

"The sky in Mexico City is so grey, but here there is

so much colour... The sky is blue, pink and orange," Espinosa said enthusiastically. "Sometimes I use the sky in Canada with a building in Mexico," or an element of Mexico in a distinctly Canadian scene.

All her painting is influenced by a long-time passion for the art and her formal training.

Espinosa was introduced to painting as part of her studies to become a teacher in Mexico; later, she developed material for the Mexican Ministry of Education in which she mixed oil, watercolour and acrylic techniques.

In the late 1990s Espinosa took her skills to the professional level when she studied for four years at the Abugaber's Art School in Mexico City.

She has taught seminars to special education teachers based on the fundamental techniques of oil painting, and has participated in a Mexican Ministry of Education program that fo-

cused on child development.

Since settling in Coquitlam in August 2003 Espinosa has joined the Port Moody Art Association, ArtsConnect and the Federation of Canadian Artists (in order to display her work at Granville Island). She has a permanent exhibition in the Mexico Arte store in Vancouver.

This summer she'll set up her easel in Rocky Point Park as part of the Artists in the Park series, as she's done for the last few years.

"It's an excellent program because I can talk with people about the painting," Espinosa said, noting that feedback is often better than actually selling a painting.

"It's the best when people come up and say, 'I love your painting,'" she said with a wide smile. "It's the reason I paint."

The Children's Art Festival can be viewed at the Port Moody Galleria in city hall June 23 and 24 from 1 to 5 p.m. Visit www.evelia.ca for more information.

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Artist Evelia Espinosa stands in her Coquitlam studio with some of the work from her adult students. Her younger students, aged six to 14, are showing their work June 23 and 24.

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