

## Evolution of an Artist

Cheryl Piperberg started as an illustrator. Today, she sees art everywhere, in everything.

Lawrance Binda



An artist and her work: Cheryl Piperberg with an array of her brightly colored, fanciful objects.

It may be no great insight to say that, in general, the work of artists reflects their personalities.

For Cheryl Piperberg, that observation is clearly true. Her art is colorful, varied and spirited, as is her character. Her creations emit an engagement with life that is both uplifting and experimental.

"I think that my work is always about inspiring people," she said. "Everything I do is made for people to enjoy."

Piperberg is the resident artist at Arts at 510, a gallery directly across N. 3rd Street from the Capitol complex that has become a key link in Harrisburg's emerging arts scene.

"I knew Cheryl for years because

she used to show her work at my in-laws' gallery (the former William Ris Gallery in Camp Hill)," said Susan Schreckengaust, owner of Arts at 510. "So, when I opened my own business, she was an obvious choice to become my resident artist."

Walking into the gallery, one immediately notices a wide variety of high-quality art: from jewelry to stained glass, from paintings

to sculpture and more. It's a good bet that, when you see something that's a bit whimsical, a bit different and brilliantly colored, it will have been crafted by Piperberg.

A Harrisburg native, Piperberg has been surrounded by art all her life. Her parents owned a frame shop in Lancaster, and, after earning a fine arts degree, she became an illustrator, eventually starting the Children's Poster Company, which became a commercial success.

She still sells her posters (in fact, she was startled recently to learn that two of her posters were clearly visible in a recent scene from the TV sitcom "The Office"). Today, though, she has mostly moved away from



One of Piperberg's brilliantly detailed mandalas.

creates fine art prints from a digital source, such as an ink-jet printer. A mandala is an art object in a circular or concentric design, inspired by Buddhist philosophy. Notably, one of her commissioned mandalas—an illustration of the Book of Genesis—now hangs in Temple Ohev Sholom, a synagogue on N. Front Street.

But, as she thinks about it some more, she realizes that those aren't *really* her only loves these days. She also loves creating painted furniture and portraits and collages and dolls and drawings, examples of which can be found at Arts at 510. She moves fluidly from one medium to another, going wherever her curiosity, restlessness and endless imagination take her.

Her work does tend to share one feature—it often is spiritual in nature (even if not specifically religious) and a celebration of life. In addition to mandalas, Piperberg lately has been creating blessing bowls—terra cotta bowls that she hand paints, into which one can place messages, prayers and blessings. She also has been making magic wands, which she paints, embroiders and otherwise decorates according to her fancy.

So how has she come to do so many different types of work in so many different styles and media?

"It's hard to say where the ideas come from," she said. "They just come."

poster art and on to—well, just about everything else.

Recently, she explains, she has two main loves: giclée and mandalas. Giclée is a relatively new process that



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It was March 2009. The stock market was crashing. The world seemed poised for another Great Depression. And what was happening in Midtown Harrisburg?

Businesses were opening. One year ago this month, two enterprising souls cast aside the gut-wrenching gloom and opened shop a few blocks from each other on N. 3rd Street.

Christina Heintzelman-Jones unlocked the doors to her snug, well-appointed art gallery, Gallery Blu, while John Traynor brought the first acts up onto Stage on Herr at his Midtown Arts Center.

And that was just the beginning. All year long, businesses opened in Midtown, mostly along the reviving 3rd Street corridor: Midtown Scholar Bookstore, the HodgePodgery, Blue Horse Denim, Café di Luna, breads 'n spreads, The Soup Spot. Even HACC moved its main administrative offices to the area, while GreenWorks Development continued its march of high-end renovation up and down the avenue.

As importantly, each of these new businesses brought an elevated sense of quality and style. In just a year or so, they've upped the level of what we can expect in Harrisburg, whether it's in the realm of art, food, music, coffee, apparel or just a well-made cocktail. They've delivered a degree of excellence and sophistication that, until now, has too often been reserved for larger, more cosmopolitan areas.

So, please take a moment to digest just how incredible this past year has been. For the country, it's been a time to lock down, draw the curtains and pray for better. A few locals took the other side of that bet, and, as a result, things haven't been this good in Midtown in years.

Happy Anniversary, Christina and John. And thanks to all the farsighted merchants who are transforming this neighborhood into something truly special.

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