

BIOGRAPHY

Tanya Pixie Johnson

I was born in Kenya in the middle of the Mau Mau uprising. We moved to South Africa when I was a young girl.

I have been captivated by mark-making for as long as I can remember. As a child I attended the Frank Joubert Art School where I took classes in painting, clay, drawing and weaving. I grew up drawing under my mother's weaving loom.

I attended the Michaelis School of Art at the University of Cape Town, where I received an honours degree in fine art, majoring in painting.

I lived and worked with Brett Bailey (one of South Africa's most notable playwrights). In one production, "the dreadcatcosmikaleidoshow", my role was to sit in the audience and paint my response to the actors, audience and subject matter of the play. I began a new canvas for each performance, after which I displayed the paintings on the street at the Grahamstown Art Festival.

After traveling in southern Africa, I worked my way over to Europe on a Polish cargo ship. One of my jobs was to paint a mural on the bottom of the drained swimming pool. While living in Europe, I sold my jewellery and mixed media collages on the markets and in cafes. I displayed and sold drawings, paintings and 3-D sculpted paintings (compiled from found objects), on the streets, in parks and in random spaces (eg. a site where the Berlin Wall had once stood). In the United Kingdom, I was employed by Lord and Lady Pembroke of Salisbury to teach art to their children.

In Canada my husband and I started a business called "Holy Cow". We made and sold clay art and musical instruments, clothing designed and made by myself, and jewellery we co-created. This business was operative in Canada and South Africa.

Since 2001, I have focused entirely on my painting. I have been working mostly in BC, but also have a studio in Cape Town, where I return every 2 years or so. In 2003-4 I was awarded the publicly voted "best artist of the artwalk season".

In 2005 I was invited by Mark Ackbar (director of "The Corporation") to display my work at the function celebrating the success of the movie.

I am an active member in the art world in the Slocan Valley and in Nelson, where I teach art at the Vallican Whole School and facilitate life drawing classes in the community. I sell my paintings locally, through galleries, as well as privately from my studio or by commission; on the coast of BC and in South Africa. My work has been shown in numerous public and private exhibitions.