

Roseta Santiago:

From 'paintslinger' to artist of distinction

■ ■ Story by Farah Bohannon
■ ■ Photos courtesy Cotton Calf Kitchen

In Asian philosophy there is a process of becoming "new." This intellectual sensation, says artist Roseta Santiago, has been her best ally. In a state of continual change, Santiago is always developing her technique as an artist. And much of her development took place in Gainesville.

"I always dreamed of being an artist. I don't think there was any doubt that is what I wanted to do. I never thought it could happen," says Santiago.

Having grown up in Washington, DC in a military family with 6 siblings, the Quinlan Visual Arts Center in Gainesville was a place she had heard about and wanted to take a few classes "someday."

"I saw Marc Chatov's work and the work of his students in an atelier class in a building where I was working one day," Santiago says.

She asked about taking a few classes and eventually ended up at the Quinlan.

As a single mom, I had



no idea how that would ever happen, but it did."

Santiago says of the many paths she has waked she has always been optimistic of the results.

"On some of those paths, I managed an employment agency in Washington DC, designed and sold signage and exhibits, started a graphics design company that led to theme restaurant advertising, an advertising and promotion agency and a design/build career."

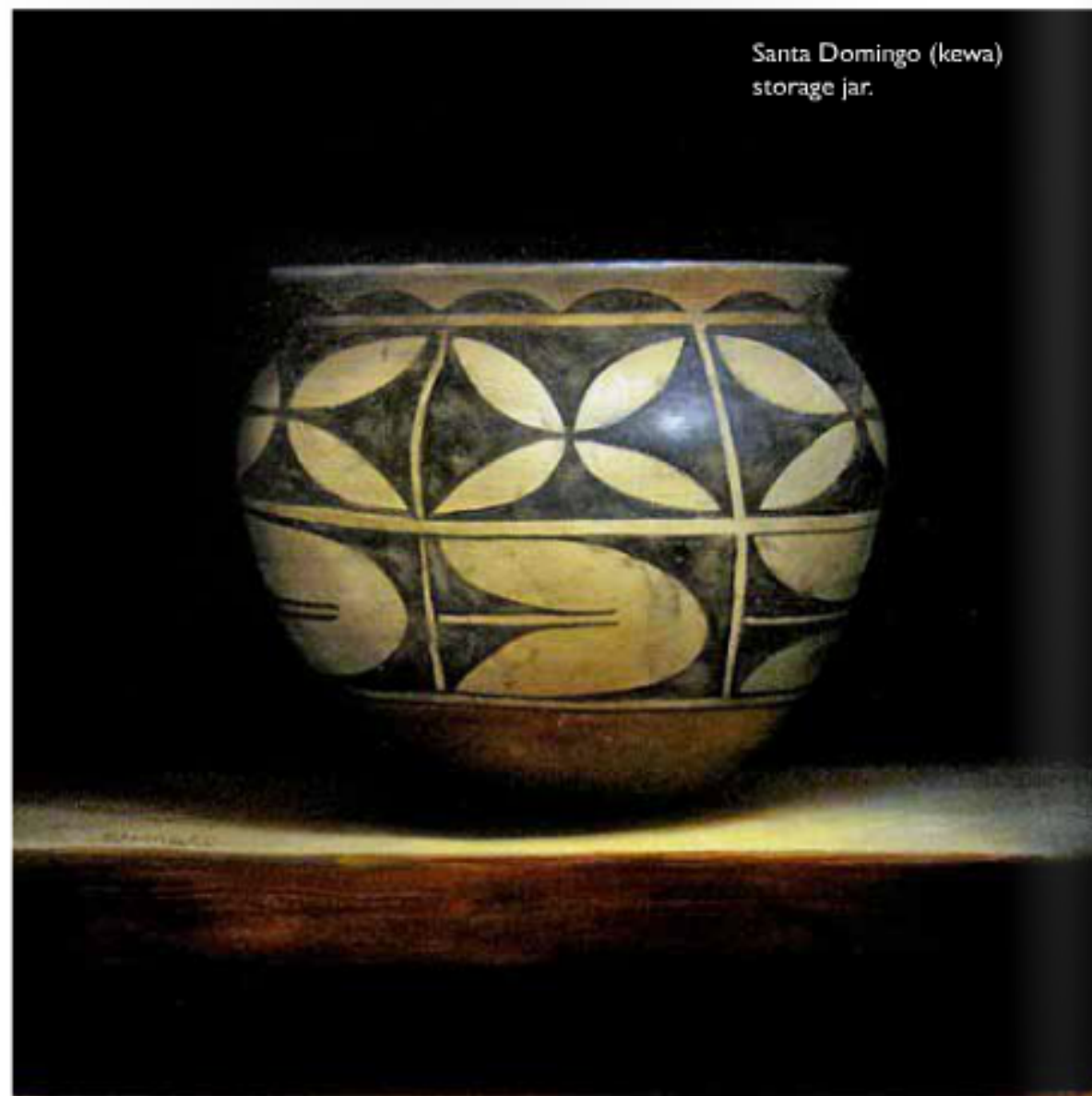
Her design company's success brought her to Atlanta in 1976.

In 1994, she was recruited to paint life-size wildlife murals for more than 20 Bass Pro stores in 16 states. This earned her the name "Paintslinger" in New Mexico. Today I realize that these experiences played a major role in this, my final painting "career."

She claims to be a late bloomer in the arts, not taking up fine art seriously until after 2000, when she glimpsed the Chatov class.

Santiago took numerous courses and eventually began to teach her own courses to several students at the Quinlan.

"I always tell students they are on a learning curve somewhere. Not unlike a merry-go-round, an artist gets on when they do. What they bring with them, as far as life lessons learned, is important." Santiago says to be an artist today, you need people skills and business skills.



Santa Domingo (kewa) storage jar.

"You start where you are with what you have, and in most cases you have a lot more than you think."

One of her former students, Christopher Sherry, an architect and professor at Brenau University, recalls his time with Santiago in the studio.

"I't was at the Quinlan that I first heard of and met Roseta Santiago," says Sherry. "She was leading a workshop in an adjacent classroom. I wandered in. Roseta kindly invited me to roam through

the classroom with its painters painting in the dark except for minimal dim lighting and a spot light on small boxes filled with 'junk'.

The 'junk,' he recalls, was some of many items which Roseta had personally collected, artifacts of significant personal memories. She carted these from Santa Fe, and to this day are still in use by Quinlan art students.

"Her generosity was extended to my students. She invited all of them to roam her class and check the paint-



Roseta Santiago and her studio. Portrait by Missy Wolf Photography



Jill McGannon, above, and one of her paintings, right.

Artist Jill McGannon also has fond memories of working with and learning from Santiago.

Having earned a BFA and MFA from the University of Georgia in 1988, McGannon took her first course at the Quinlan in 1997. The Quinlan, she says, filled a gap in realism that had been consumed in the art world by abstract works.

"I took a workshop from Roseta Santiago because I had never painted a still life, says McGannon. "She brought all of these amazing props and set them up so that a few artists would be painting each set up so that



we could get close enough to see well. Then she lit them from the side to encourage chiaroscuro painting."

"Realist painting is much more in vogue now, and I'm thankful for institutions like the Art Students League of New York and the Quinlan in Gainesville for keeping traditional painting alive," says McGannon.

The realistic still lifes and stoic figures in Santiago's work all have deep meaning.

"There is such mystery surrounding our family heritage. This may be a clue to my curiosity about subjects and the lineage of the objects I paint. I am fascinated by mystery,

illusion and the unknown," says Santiago.

"I find many things to admire and learn from. Being a teacher and student at heart, I am always willing to learn," says Santiago.

Her willingness to learn eventually landed her in Santa Fe where she currently resides.

Roseta Santiago's work is recognized and collected internationally. She has successfully exhibited at the The Eiteljorg Museum of Western and Indian Art in Indianapolis, The Booth Museum in Georgia, The Desert Caballeros Museum in Arizona, and most recently at the prestigious Autry



successfully exhibited at the The Eiteljorg Museum of Western and Indian Art in Indianapolis, The Booth Museum in Georgia, The Desert Caballeros Museum in Arizona, and most recently at the prestigious Autry Museum "Masters of the West" show in Los Angeles.

Her biography she says "is brief, a thumbnail sketch if you will, but it encompasses all the experiences that led to my



picking up a brush and beginning to paint my paintings. That is what I am here to do."

"Roseta is the artist embodiment of what the Quinlan is all about: education and exhibition, says Amanda McClure, executive director of the Quinlan.

"Not only is she one of the most gifted master artists to ever come to the Quinlan, teaching artists that are all talented in their own right, she is also one of our most successful exhibitors and top selling artists."

Because of this, the Quinlan has chosen Santiago as the Artist of Distinction for this year's gala.



"I never forget the days of love and support at the Quinlan," says Santiago. "The experiences I had there are forever a part of my life and future. I feel like the staff and students are like my family. And we all pass on our blessings to the next generation."

The 38th annual Gala Art Auction will be Saturday, March 5 at the Quinlan Visual Arts Center and will feature the highest caliber original art work by local, regional and national talents. The evening will feature 100 couples, 100 art works.

Santiago will be in attendance at the popular event and at the Collector's Preview Night on Thursday, March 3. One of her original pieces will be for auction during the GALA at the Quinlan on Green Street in Gainesville.

For more information on Roseta Santiago, visit rosetasantiago.com. For more information on the Quinlan, visit qvac.org.



Clockwise: Roseta Santiago painting in her studio. Moose Caller, oil. Santiago in front of a work in progress, photo by Gabriella Marks photography. Morning Meditation, oil.



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