



ARTSWEEK

SUNDAY PLUS

Victoria Brzustowicz of Penfield sees the world a bit differently. She notices the peeling paper on a letterbox and remembers its texture decades later. She dreams about painting in her sleep. "The world is endlessly fascinating," she says. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY VICTORIA BRZUSTOWICZ

CREATIVE SPIRIT VICTORIA BRZUSTOWICZ

Cold weather no problem for this artist

By Marketta Gregory Contributor

As a plein air painter, Victoria Brzustowicz paints through it all – rain, snow storms, mud and mosquitoes. • "It's fun," she says. "Every season presents its challenges." • When it rains, she sets up an umbrella. When it's cold, she uses hand warmers under her oil paints. And when it gets too cold, she paints in her car. • "Even when there's a stretch of time where there's not an opportunity to paint, I can't help but see the world as an artist." • There's the texture of the peeling paper on a letterbox. The look on someone's face. The story told by the way the trees are moving.

"All of those things are fodder for an artist's imagination," she said. "I do a lot of things outside. How can you not be in awe of blue and pink stripes in the west?"

Art started early for Brzustowicz, who grew up in a home where art was valued and celebrated. Her father, a neurosurgeon, painted and drew whenever he had the chance, and every Saturday he took Brzustowicz to buy art supplies and paperback books.

By the time Brzustowicz went to college, she was focused on abstract acrylic paintings. Oil and realism came later, around 2015. (Although she still describes her realism as slapdash.)

"The looser I am, people get what I'm saying better," she said. "Some people say that in order to paint a boat, you have to understand the way it was built. I just paint colors and shapes. The more careful I am, I guess I just miss the life in it."

Of course, when she's painting outside in the cold, she hurries a bit more.

"I'm much more efficient when it's really cold," she said with a laugh, but she doesn't back down from the weather or many other challenges.

"People think if you're an artist then you're in your studio just painting, but most artists have to be creative about how they support themselves," said Brzustowicz, who lived in an unheated attic for a while and has worked all kinds of jobs, including serving as a chef. "I was doing jobs that didn't get in the way too much so I could do my own work."

Now, she helps other artists by teaching classes throughout the Rochester area and by



A painting by Victoria Brzustowicz. PROVIDED BY VICTORIA BRZUSTOWICZ

Learn more

- To see more of Victoria Brzustowicz's work – and to hear about the classes she offers – visit VictoriaBCreative.com.
- You can also find her on Facebook and Instagram under Victoria B Creative.

coordinating the Greater Rochester Plein Air Painters group, which welcomes artists of all levels.

"I enjoy making the arts available to more people and giving people the opportunity to try plein air."

And in return?

"I find teaching always makes me want to go back and paint. It reminds me of beginning my journey. When I see that flame being lit for them, it rekindles mine."

Do you have an idea for an artist to be featured in *The Creative Spirit*? Please reach out to contributor Marketta Gregory at markettagregory@yahoo.com.