

Reference book junkie

TulsaPeople puts the work of a little-known artist under the microscope.

by JUDY LANGDON



Shanna Teague-Bishop finds her inspiration in nature. Her most recent work, including "Scissor Kicks," pictured, depicts creatures interacting with modern technology.

SHANNA TEAGUE-BISHOP TRULY FLIES under the radar when it comes to her artwork. Although she was featured at the Art Plus showcase of selected OSU Institute of Technology alumni earlier this year, she says she doesn't work on commission and can be her own client.

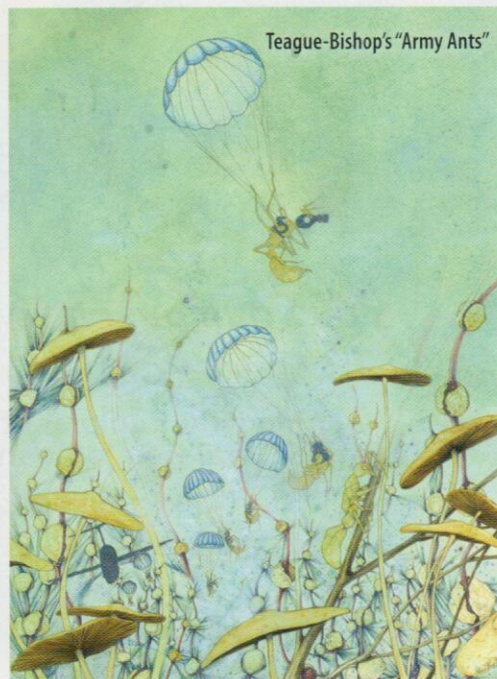
TulsaPeople gets to know this intriguing artist, whose environmental inspirations are often sparked by biology books.

How long have you been an artist, and what experience first propelled you in that direction? I've done art for as long as I can remember, so well over 30 years. My parents encouraged me from a young age to embrace art. Often my dad brought me art supplies when he got back from business trips, so these new art supplies seemed fancy and exotic to me. I turned up my nose at crayons!

Are you self-taught, or were you influenced by one or more artists/instructors or classical artists? I am a largely self-taught art school dropout. I used to be highly influenced by famous artists, but at this point I'm mostly inspired by nature and biology books. I'm a reference book junkie.

What is it about nature that piques your artistic interest? The main catalyst for my interest in biology, especially ecology, was adopting a vegetarian lifestyle several years ago. It made me increasingly aware of the effects that I have on my surroundings, ethically and environmentally. Plus, I am constantly dumbstruck that right beneath my feet there are whole crazy worlds of tiny happenings. For instance, right now a gaggle of micro-organisms is having a party on my eyelashes. Something so mundane to me as applying a coat of mascara could mean dire consequences for them. It's little things like that I think about. This tendency to get lost within minutiae naturally spills over to themes within my artwork.

Describe your work. I've gone through phases where I worked with a lot of dark colors, but now really vibrant colors work well for me. I primarily work in mixed media, like pen and ink on a thinned wash of oil paint, but I have recently delved back into acrylics. It's difficult for me to pinpoint what style my art is. I'd call it "anthropomorphic surrealism." I tend to depict lively, playful scenes of creatures interacting with modern technology, but with a serious undertone.



Teague-Bishop's "Army Ants"

Courtesy of Shanna Teague-Bishop

Walk us through your process. Each piece is different for me. When I begin a new project, I never have an estimate of how long it will take, because I usually take a different approach each time, whether it's with materials or methods. I've had pieces that take a couple months, but I'm also still working on a piece that I began five years ago. I have, of course, experienced creative difficulties in the past, but because I do not work on commission, I have the luxury of being my own client.

Do you have any upcoming shows or gallery openings? I do not have any upcoming shows scheduled, but I must mention the last gallery show I was fortunate enough to be involved with. Art Plus showcased artwork from several OSUIT visual communications alumni, and I was among them. The show highlighted the versatile connection between fine art and graphic design, and the proceeds benefitted incoming students with scholarships.

Where do you see your career as an artist in five years? Ten years? I've become interested in global environmental crises, so I think I will be producing more art that deals with the effect that humans have on our surroundings and our fellow organisms. tp