

# Miller riding tall in Western art scene

By Rhonda Van Pelt

It's hard to believe that Tracy Miller has been operating a gallery in Manitou Springs for almost five years — she can't believe it herself.

Every square inch in her self-titled gallery reflects her love for color and the West. It's become a destination for art lovers visiting from places as far-flung as Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

Miller credits several factors for her success, including her parents. When she decided to pursue a degree in applied design at Metro State in Denver, thinking she'd pursue commercial art, her father urged her to minor in business.

"I was obsessed with art history, so I pretty much took every art history class I could at Metro State," she said. "I think that having the art history knowledge, the business, learning things about marketing and how to run your own business, combined with being an artist, I think I've been able to take all three and curate my own gallery."

Add to that working with Paul Zueger at Gallery One in Denver about 20 years ago, and she was set to run a successful art business.

"I was an art consultant for five years with them, and I was a sponge," Miller said. "I just watched and soaked it all up."

Somehow, while running her gallery, she still has time to pursue her own artwork.

Miller was 4 or 5 years old when her parents gave her some art supplies, and she's been obsessed with creating ever since. She even dreams of colors, patterns and designs that she has to get out of her system onto canvas.

"It is something inside of you that — I can't even explain it — you just have to do it or it's not worth living. It's your life; it's what you do."

Miller estimates that, between her home studio and the gallery, she paints 20 to 30 hours per week.

"Art and beauty bring such joy to your life that if you're missing it, there's a hole there that nothing else can fill. As human beings, we need to express ourselves."

Miller loves being in Manitou, which she describes as a "little

**Art and beauty bring such joy to your life.**

— Tracy Miller



Photo by Rhonda Van Pelt

Tracy Miller stands outside her gallery near the mural she painted on the wall.

October is Arts Month, a Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region initiative to celebrate the performing and visual arts. Each week, the Bulletin will publish a story that focuses on a particular art form appearing on the Arts Month schedule. The first week highlights visual arts. Information: [www.culturaloffice.org](http://www.culturaloffice.org) or [www.peakradar.com](http://www.peakradar.com).

October is  
**ARTS MONTH**  
engage

escape" from the big city to the east.

But it's not perfect, as anyone who lives on or runs a business on Ruxton Avenue knows. That area's parking shortage has been a burr under her saddle, so to speak.

She joked about setting up a video camera to see just how many Manitou Incline hikers park in front of her gallery once the Incline reopens. On weekdays, it hasn't been much of a problem since her gallery opens at 11 a.m.

But on Saturdays, it's been a different story.

"It's just all day, a constant stream of Incline users; I might see real customers at 2 or 3 p.m.," she said.

"Sometimes I come in on a Saturday and it's like, 'Where are the non-Incline people?'"

Miller is trying to figure out ways to draw more visitors to Ruxton Avenue.

"There's this little area of downtown that they walk, and then they turn around and go back without coming up here."

She suspects that might be because of the "deadbeats" who hang out near the roundabout at Manitou and Ruxton avenues.

"I think if I went to someone else's town and saw this kind of stuff, I'd say, 'I'm not walking over there.' I can totally understand why that might drive away tourists," Miller said.

She particularly wants art lovers

to stop by in October, when she'll present "Horse Sense: Form + Function."

A portion of sales from the exhibit will benefit the Cloud Foundation ([www.thecloudfoundation.org](http://www.thecloudfoundation.org)), a Colorado Springs-based nonprofit which advocates for wild horses. Miller has rounded up a stellar selection of Western artists, animal lovers all, who believe in the foundation's mission as much as she does.

"Horses have been a companion to man and have served in so many functions and facets of our society. Moving westward, we couldn't have done it without horses. So it's kind of a near and dear thing to my heart."

Her work will be included in the exhibit, and she hopes that art lovers will pick up on the emotions she and the other artists feel while depicting horses.

"I want my paintings to make people smile. And I want them to be uplifting in a way that brings joy into people's lives. I think by painting animals, the way I paint them and the colors I use, I'm not saying that it humanizes the animals, but I think it gets people to think about animals in a different way."

## IF YOU GO

"Horse Sense: Form + Function" opens 5-8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Tracy Miller Gallery, 16 Ruxton Ave., and lasts through Oct. 31. Several artists in the exhibit will give demonstrations and answer questions during Art Walk Weekend, Oct. 21-23. Information: 650-0827 or [www.tracymillergallery.com](http://www.tracymillergallery.com).