

# Words and Watercolor Reflections

Cherry Blossom Trees



Mr. Smith's Student's Pastel (Grade 5)



Chinatown in San Francisco



Vineyard



Bride Groom and Cathedral Skies

## ARTIST'S WALK

### Solitaire walk

Unveiling relationship among visual perceptions of the coexistence of mass, form, natural elements life, thought, and color

By Raenell Hooten

Even when Poway artist Christine Renhard Stenstrom was in the fifth grade, she understood the message of lines and curves. And by using bold pastel colors to define her flower painting, she displayed an early talent for capturing the essence of visual conversations. This was a childhood drawing that was a hint of the style and rhythms of her works today.

From a painting of a single flower to her complex works, Renhard Stenstrom's portfolio is an odyssey that delves into the imprints of life. By compiling 20 years of painting and prose into an award-winning book, both her talents are presented with outstanding clarity. "Cherry Blossom Trees Literary Writings and

Artworks" is a beautiful book that is unusual in that it combines prose with artwork. It's a marriage that, as with any good marriage, shines with its compatibility.

The book is composed of 68 original paintings and 100 literary writings that bring Renhard Stenstrom's world view into focus. Most artists just paint and most writers stick to words, yet Renhard Stenstrom had the courage to do both. After finding she did want to part with her paintings, her collection became the core of her literary work. Her initial art with prose was a 1991 Christmas card.

**A savior was born  
to bring peace and love  
into our hearts  
to teach us to forgive  
to walk with us on our journey  
to be with us in eternity**

"I started painting in 1971," she said. "That's when I developed my style. I knew I had a very eclectic style and I paint with thick, very thick bold straight watercolors. I only took a drawing class and everything else is self-taught. My paintings are always loose because I'm for freedom of expression. So when I compose my pieces, I'm drawing on a collage effect from memories.

"It's the same for prose," she continued. "It has style, it is creative, and you have a tremendous amount of freedom. What I like about the prose in combination

(with art) is that it is so expressive and draws the reader in to see both. It works creatively in that one reflects the other and one enhances the other."

As a native of Bremerton, Wash., and the Pacific Northwest, Renhard Stenstrom grew up with a

strong aesthetic sense of nature and its gifts of form and color. She was especially influenced by Yoshino cherry blossom trees that grew in the quadrangle at University of Washington in Seattle, which she calls the most beautiful campus in the world. In 2004 the alumni association issued an invitation to share thoughts about the trees because they were in decline.

Her painting, "Cherry Blossom Trees" and her prose was accepted to appear on the University's website, where Renhard Stenstrom's works remained for five years.

With this recognition, a book crystallized into more than just an idea and Renhard Stenstrom began her literary companions to her art work. Prose may have been added two years later to artwork, but the premise was the same. Her vivid energetic paintings were given a prose partner to bring about a visual union of word and watercolor.

Her diverse subjects reflect her youth in the Northwest, current events that burrowed into her memory and living in several U.S. cities. She includes events as far away as Kosovo ("Flight from Kosovo"), Hurricane Katrina ("Bourbon Street and Black and White Diamonds") and the attack of 9/11 ("Blue Heavens of 9/11"). Closer to home there's "Hills of Escondido" or "Del Mar Fair" and "Poway's Rodeo with Akhal-Teke Horses."

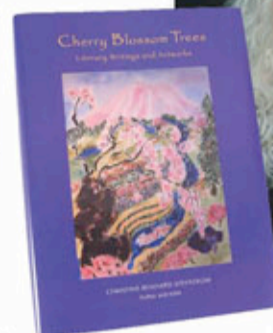
The book, "Cherry Blossom Trees Literary Writings and Artworks," was published by an independent publisher, Beaver Pond Press. Renhard Stenstrom's book was an Award Finalist given by the National Indie Excellence Book Award in the art category. The award is an honor bestowed by independent publishers to only three books in each category and are given for overall excellence in presentation.

Her mentor, Richard K. Dunn, professor emeritus of English, University of Washington, said, "Christine Renhard Stenstrom's work as a painter and writer vividly reminds us that just as a painting can speak, writing can picture, help us to see, to enjoy and to determine for ourselves beauties seen and unseen all around us. The intersections of different art forms themselves are points at which understanding and feeling intensify and achieve clarity."

Meet Christine Renhard Stenstrom at the Bernardo Winery's First Friday Art Walk, Aug. 6, from 4 until 8 p.m. for a book signing. Her book is available through Amazon, at Barnes & Noble in Carmel Mountain Ranch and on West Valley Parkway in Escondido and Border's online. More information about the author and her book can be found at [www.britikafinearts.com](http://www.britikafinearts.com). ■



Christine Renhard Stenstrom



## SCATTERED STARS

Ideas —

a scattering of stars in the universe

Sometimes organized like the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper

With thoughts somewhere in between