Artists find their groove at all ages. For Sonia Calderon, it happened when she was young. "I've been painting since I was 2 or 3," she says. "My mother said I picked up paintings and never put them down."

Enamored by the creative process, as she became a young adult, she attended several colleges to study art including Cabrillo College where Tobin Keller taught her "to be free with painting."

Nowadays, as a painter, photographer and filmmaker, she makes her living as a visual artist here in Santa Cruz. Her workspace is at Michaelangelo Studios, a convenient space to grab lunch, take a walk, or "shoot photos of the yellow bushy green shrubbery which I have manipulated into a blurred fashion to conduct an abstract landscape," she says. "When I am walking through Pogonip (which is nearby), I snap photos to capture an essence that nature is moving and has a relationship with."

When she's creating a painting, references one of the photos she has taken. Next, she finds the colors she will use which relate to the emotion of the subject matter. "Paint is pushed, subtracted and built in accordance to finding a union," she says. "My work is about social norms, injustices, fashion, and human behavior and how it relates to our natural environment."

Look for Calderon's work to be displayed at Stripe, a women's lifestyle boutique in downtown Santa Cruz, in February 2015. In the meantime, learn more about the artist at soniacalderon.biz.

**A dive-bomb painter**

When Eileen Murray was studying art at Cabrillo College in the late 1970s, she learned that art can be created anywhere, and on anything. To prove this point, her teacher, the late Tom Allen, arrived in class one day with a huge roll of butcher paper and gallon cans of house paint. "We tore off large pieces of paper and proceeded to 'make art,'" she says. "I still have an abstract painting I did that day. I titled it, 'Abstract for Tom,' but really, it was an awakening for me."

For Murray, this "awakening" meant pursuing several different mediums including painting, mosaics, drawing, and some dabbling in ceramics. And while she says she was "born with a paintbrush in my hand," Murray didn't have the opportunity to really pursue her art full-time until she retired from a legal career working for a Silicon Valley municipality in 2007.

But now, she can indulge in such things that we all know aren't frivolous. From her art studio in Ben Lomond (a former gardening shed), she creates her figurative paintings and recent series have included a collection on canines and restaurant servers.

"I work on a piece for a half hour to two hours," she says. "Then I leave it for a while and come back in an hour or two with fresh eyes and work again. I'm a dive-bomb painter rather than a long hauler."

When she's done creating a painting, she hangs it over her kitchen table so she can see it every day and eventually, if something is wrong with the painting, she'll realize what it is. "I keep a bowl of colored chalk nearby and I begin to mark the egregious areas. Then back to the studio we go and changes are made."

When she's satisfied, she has photos taken of it, which give her another perspective — that from a computer screen — where she can see if it needs more revisions. "Sometimes I wonder if a piece is ever done or if I would keep changing it if I didn't finally put my foot down," she says.

Learn more about this compelling artist and see her work at Eileenmurrayarts.com.

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