

Local artist on the leading edge at the BC Festival of the Arts

Submitted by: Marilyn Belak

Artist Emily Mattson works out of her Sweetwater Studio near Rolla B.C.

Hangin' out the wash - life size sculpture, steel, cow placentas and umbilical cords, was shown by invitation at ARTROPOLIS from April 7th to 28th, 2001 in Vancouver. The show was held at the CBC building downtown and was visited by thousands.

The Chair — an old spring rocker partially re-upholstered in cow placental membranes — was chosen this year for the B.C. Festival of the Arts and will be shown during the festival in Fort St. John. This is the 8th time in the past 10 years Emily has been chosen for the festival.

Emily grew up in the McBride area and had opportunities to leave for art training but her ties to the land and family were too important to her, and she could never stay away for long periods.

At twenty she moved with her new husband, Larry Mattson, to Rolla and took up cattle farming. Emily immediately started putting down roots and establishing a place in the farm community through her unflagging energy, passion, honesty and commitment.

Years flew by raising kids and barns, building fences and friendships, learning the ins and outs of the cattle business while her art simmered on the back burner. At forty, her children and farm life were pretty well established and she knew it was time to give more of herself to her art.

Job experience around the place had brought out her skill as a carpenter and she decided to build The Sweetwater Studio and begin to explore her artistic talent in a more serious way.

From the beginning of Sweetwater Studio, Emily's paintings have reflected her life. Scenes of pitching hay to the cows at minus forty or riding horses through the bush are full of emotion, exposing what this way of life is about.

Her sculptures carry the spirit of the horses and people who work with them; they are full of movement and purpose (and her Sweetwater Art Crates which hold these pieces are beautiful treasures as well).

Visual Art is like farming; there is always some new issue popping up that needs to be dealt with. Emily's vision, imagination and talent break through fear and lead us into new ways of looking at ourselves and our

connection to the world we live in. She says "women who live in the country have a raw sensuality. . . we understand the earth and what it is all about."

Cattle farming is based on producing calves and farm women are part of the twenty-four hour team that spins for weeks around birthing. It was during calving time that Emily noticed the light shining through placental membranes she was draping over the fence and she was struck by the beauty of these tissues.

They were just too full of texture and colour to ignore the artistic possibilities, and she started experimenting with freeze drying and researching other methods to preserve the colour and pliability.

Word spread through the farming community and soon she was receiving donations of placentas from other farmers.

As her work with the membranes has progressed, her awareness of its wonderful connotations of nurturing and femaleness have also grown. She has found a medium that helps her to "make a statement that is both universal and mundane"; a medium that will help us consider the female person in a fresh and essential way.

De
rec
oc
cc
cc
fr
fr
Br
fr
24
an
att
are
pr
Cl
w,
cc
cc
w.
te
tra
m
fr
pr
Se