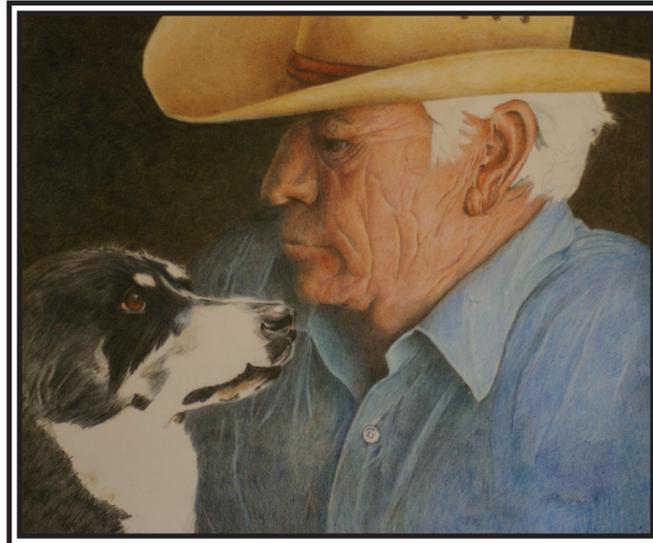




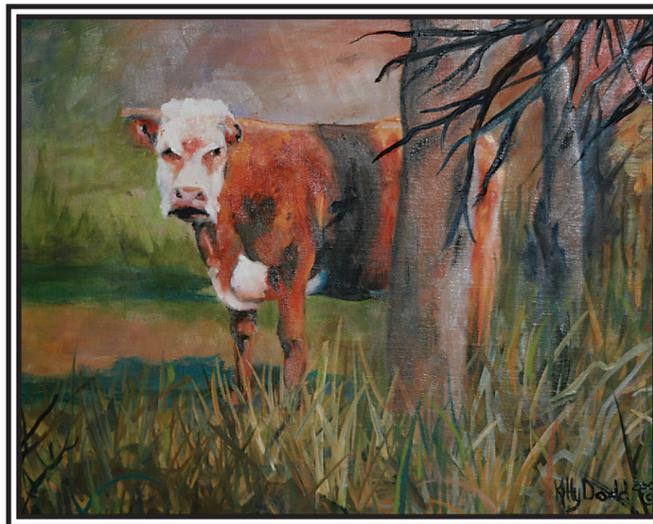
This picture of an elk hangs in the Dodd's living room.



A commissioned work by Kitty Dodd that was done in colored pencil; it is called 'Respect.'



Foxhounds are a popular subject in this area. This work is entitled '3 after 6.'



Kitty Dodd prides herself on putting expression in an animal's face. It's pretty easy to tell what this cow is thinking.

widely respected sporting art painter Sandra Forbush, who Kitty calls, "my idol and my mentor." Of oil painting she says breathlessly, "I'm loving it. It's a feeling. Now I can put the passion, put the emotion in. I'm learning my colors. I'm learning my backgrounds."

Kitty Dodd is passionate about learning. She says, "You have to learn something everyday. If you don't it's a waste." She also loves to teach

and she makes the valid point, "You learn more when you teach." She particularly enjoys teaching adults because invariably they are uptight about what others think about their material. "And you gotta break down that barrier, and just teach them to be a kid again, and enjoy what they do...To heck with what everybody else says, because who cares? It's their opinion and if they don't like it, you say 'thank you very much; how

can I fix it and turn it into a compliment?"

All of her life, Kitty Dodd has been sneaking off to the zoo, literally and figuratively, to paint animals. On the way through her house, she says, "Watch where you walk because everything is a mess." She waves vaguely around her studio. "I'm so at home here, and I'm really lucky, I have a family who backs me. This is heaven."

Naw, it's a zoo.



Kitty Dodd often chooses humorous titles for her works. This one's called 'Bad Hair Day.'

Kitty Dodd and the Zoo



Nowadays, Kitty Dodd is surrounded by brushes instead of colored pencils as she further explores working in oils. Photo by Phil Audibert

So picture this: artist Kitty Dodd is sitting at her easel in her cramped but sunny second-story studio at her home on Clark's Mountain. She has Beethoven's Seventh blasting on the stereo. The shelves are literally bowing under the weight of her art books, most of them about animals. Every horizontal space has something on it, including but not limited to a stack of cowboy hats. She has a coffee maker and an espresso machine, a TV, a wine rack, and a day bed. "I don't need anything... isn't it great?" she asks excitedly.

It all began at the Detroit zoo. "We lived just a couple of blocks from it and... I'd get my little trusty blue Schwinn bike and go up to the zoo... and just walk around and spend the day with the animals. It was a really neat place."

Wearing multiple rings on almost all of her fingers, a trio of jangling bracelets on her wrist, her signature jeans, western concha belt and a pair of absolutely kicking two-tone cowboy boots, she "blobs" and "smooshes" paint on a canvas. To complete the picture, she is surrounded by, count them, seven cats and five dogs of varying breeds and sizes, "and hopefully a partridge and a pear tree."

It is a veritable zoo in here.

One of the dogs, the Chihuahua, routinely nestles in the small of her back...a living, breathing dorsal support cushion. She calls this train wreck of a room, "my little world," and she rejoices that the dogs, two of whom aren't entirely housebroken...long story...didn't "do" anything.

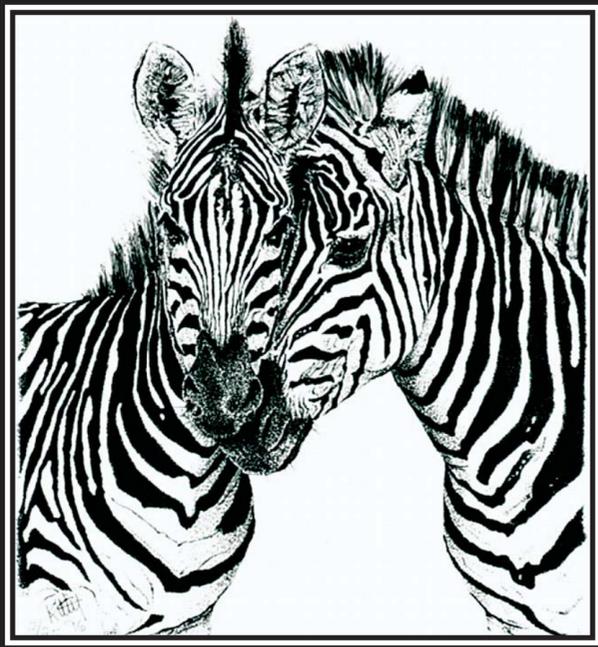
And this woman claims she's not a typical "flighty artist."

"Flighty? No." She blinks those sad big brown eyes. "Uhhh, cluttered... unorganized maybe... but flighty, no." Then she reflects, "It's funny; artists are more left-brained than most people think. I know where everything is." And indeed, her colored pencil collection is neatly organized in drawers by color and shade.

But little else is. She turns back to "Bucky," the current work. It's an oil painting of a prong-horned spike buck that she photographed recently in her yard. "Kitty the artist is different from Kitty the person," she elaborates. "Kitty the artist will go to the places and be entertaining...but when you're the person you are, you're totally different."

Huh? "An artist is two different people...very schizo. It gets confusing sometimes." Kitty the artist returns to her work. Earlier in this conversation, Kitty, the person, readily admitted to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). "My brain never shuts up," she once said. "The ideas come so fast that I have to keep a notepad so I can keep track of my 'to do list.'"

She has found that art helps her focus. When she taught at St. Luke's Lutheran School in Culpeper, "I worked with kids like that, and I don't believe in giving anybody pills or drugs. I would tell the parents, 'art and music, give that to them because they'll focus and they'll learn.'"



Zebras are another favorite subject of Kitty Dodd's. This pen and ink is done entirely with tiny dots. It's called 'Keyboard.'

For Kitty Dodd, it all began at the Detroit zoo. "We lived just a couple of blocks from it and I used to run away from home a lot. And I'd get my little trusty blue Schwinn bike and go up to the zoo... and just walk around and spend the day with the animals. It was a really neat place." And so that explains why Kitty Dodd draws and paints animals almost exclusively.

Here's something else: "I'm pure Greek...on both sides...my father and my mother both," says this fair-skinned blondish woman.

"The true Greek is actually blond-haired and blue-eyed," she insists. "Yup, before the Persians came." Kitty is telling this as she effortlessly prepares a simple and delicious lunch of marinated grilled salmon, French bread, Brie cheese and a Greek salad.

"We ate well. My Big Fat Greek Wedding? It's just like that. That's the family, except instead of Windex, we're into olive oil. Olive oil will cure anything." She dumps a generous quarter cup of the stuff into the salad and tells how her grandmother would toss a similar salad with her bare hands and then run her oily fingers over her face and through her hair. "She never had any gray hair and she never had any wrinkles; she was really beautiful."

Kitty Dodd cannot remember not being an artist. "My Dad said I was born with a crayon in my hand, and I always remember drawing," she continues. Unlike some parents who would steer their children towards more practical pursuits, he was supportive. "He took me to every art class around, made sure I had the supplies and materials, really encouraged me."

Then, Kitty discovered her favorite "beatnik" aunt was an artist who was actually being paid \$80 a fig-

ure as a fashion illustrator for several Detroit area department stores. That was a fortune in the 1960s! Kitty became her assistant, pasting up ads and drawing backgrounds for \$10 an hour "which was pretty awesome back then too." Meanwhile, she was flunking art in high school because the teacher was telling her that "fashion wasn't art."

No matter; her father sent her to Walt Whitman School for Girls in Bethesda, Maryland "to learn to be a lady." Kitty lived with another aunt who was the antithesis of the fashion illustrator. "It just didn't work," says Kitty who wanted to be a "mod rocker," instead. "I wasn't a hippie; couldn't be a hippie because I liked clothes too much."

By 1968, Kitty Zanottis had moved to hip, upscale Georgetown and had become a fashion illustrator in the children's departments at Hecht's, Woodward and Lothrop and Kann's. She also freelanced, attended the Corcoran School of Art and waited tables at night, "everywhere that served good food, so I could eat. I was making \$75 a week and my apartment cost \$100 a month...You just didn't have money back then...I remember the lowest part of my life I was on the corner of Wisconsin and M begging for a quarter to buy a Little Tavern hamburger."

It was while she was in Washington that she met Bruce Dodd, a Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot. "He was a really good pilot," says Kitty reverently, adding, "he's the only one I'll fly with." After a stint in McLean, Bruce and Kitty moved to Gettysburg, where he flew helicopters for everything from bird's eye view battlefield tours to dusting crops on the Eastern Shore. And then it was on to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to fly corporate aircraft. Eventually, the couple settled down on the Hazel River at Slate Mills right on the Culpeper/Fauquier line.

Kitty found work as an art teacher at St. Luke's in Culpeper. It was here that she transformed the art curriculum from a push cart that she wheeled down the halls to a fully supplied classroom of her own. "I actually got art on their core curriculum so it was actually part of their grade," she says with obvious pride, adding, "75 percent of my grade is effort...I don't expect people to draw, but I push them."

And then four years ago, someone cut down all the trees on either side of their lot, "and I picked up

the dogs, put them in the car and I said, we're finding a new house." That new house, with the clutter, the studio, the animals and the examples of her art on just about every vertical space, is what Bruce and she call home today. Bruce currently works at Klockner Pentaplast, and Kitty has settled into her life as a full-time artist. "I've been painting all my life and it's all I ever learned how to do," she shrugs.

This may sound like a technicality, but actually Kitty Dodd, up until just a few years ago, worked exclusively in colored pencil, not paint. She is a member of an organization that is actually called the Colored Pencil Society. And she has just recently returned from the Chestertown Wildlife Art Festival where she was the featured artist. "It's a very sensual medium because the pencil is basically an extension of your finger," she points out. She shows a picture of an old man with a border collie and off-hands that it is all done in pencil, every nook and cranny in the man's craggy face, every hair on the dog's coat.

Downstairs she has a room full of pen and inks of zebras, all done pointillism style. "I got the smallest pen possible, and I don't have the patience to do watercolors or pastels, but I'll do a gazillion dots. It's very therapeutic." Why zebras? "I don't know. They're black and white. I think they're cool. My favorite animal is the rhinoceros."

She points proudly to an oil painting.



No matter that she was in Montana at the time, Kitty Dodd decided her first oil painting would be of one of her favorite animals, a rhinoceros.

Painted in 2004, it is her first attempt at painting in oil. She did it at the Beartooth School of Art in Montana. Everyone else was painting elk and bear and she's painting this bizarre African beast in the middle of the Rocky Mountains. "I wanted to learn how to paint and if I'm going to learn how to paint I'm going to paint what I want to paint," she reasons.

At first she admits, "I was scared stiff to pick up a brush; I wouldn't even do my walls. There was just no control. With colored pencil you have control." But now she is much more comfortable with the new medium.

She has attended schools and workshops from Wyoming to Savannah, Georgia. She sometimes shocks her instructors when she tells them, "I paid big bucks for this; don't you dare tell me I'm doing good...I want to know what I'm doing wrong so that I can learn to do it right."

Every Monday, Kitty learns to do it right from

Painting animals

"Animals are the thing," says Kitty Dodd of her artwork. "I won't do people. I'll do children; I'll do old people, and I'll do dead people."

Eyes widen in surprise. Dead people? "It's a joke," she dismisses. What she means is she'll paint people posthumously, but not while they're still alive, because "they always complain." Besides when you do commissioned works, which "are like the bread and the butter," sometimes you have to gloss over the truth. Animals don't care, even if you give them a double chin.

But animals won't pose either. Kitty has chased a Jack Russell around a three-acre lot for hours to photograph him so she can paint him. "I've stepped and sat in more stuff than I want to know," she says of her efforts to catch animals on film. Out west, she has been chased by a bison at Yellowstone, approached within 30 yards of a grizzly, and once mistook an elk for a statue, until it blinked. "I don't have any fear—which is not good."

Kitty usually photographs her subjects...people's pets, dogs and horses mostly, and then paints them in her studio. "Plein air painters," she snorts, "I tell everyone I'm plein room." 'Plein' means 'full' in French, and indeed her studio is brimming.

On her artist's statement Kitty writes, "I am able to connect with and bring forth the animal's personality... Whether I am doing a formal portrait or an unrehearsed 'this is how I really am' painting, I am captivated by each and every expression. And because each animal is so different, I love the job of creating animals as they are."

She has also cut her prices. "I lowered everything about half because with the economy I decided to go by the economical value not the market value. And I want people to be able to afford a piece of art. I can



Taken a few years ago before she cut her hair, Kitty Dodd is pictured in her studio and with a tiger cub on a Montana ranch that specializes in training exotic animals for film and TV roles.

build up a clientele like that. They can have a piece of art that they really like and refer me on." A commissioned work starts at \$350 for an 8 x 10, \$650 for a 16 x 20, and \$750 for an 18 x 24. "I'm not going to rip people off... I just can't," she says.

Although she has exhibited her work at art shows and fairs, her dream is to have her own gallery, which she would name Animals for Art. She hopes to have a show of the same name at The Arts Center in Orange soon. Already the center has sold several of her works. "The more they grow and the more they do it's going to be good because I think it's excellent," she says of the Orange's not-for-profit Main Street gallery, museum shop and studio complex.

She often donates proceeds from sales to the Orange County Animal Shelter, from which she has adopted animals and to the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. "I'm a lousy business person," she admits. "When my husband and my accountant think I give too much, I know it's correct." She rolls those big brown sad eyes and shrugs. "I've got more talent than money."



Photo by Susie Audibert
Kitty Dodd tries to paint every day. "Sometimes I'll go half the night...it's like whenever it hits me."