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# Robin Cole Found Inspiration In The Time Of Corona | Neighborhood Gazette

*by Mike McKibbin | July 11, 2021*

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Adversity can often result in something positive, and it can come out of nowhere. That's what happened to Robin Cole, an Arvada artist. When the coronavirus pandemic happened in 2020, it adversely affected Cole's work, but maybe not as much as other artists or professions. Cole was inspired to create what turned out to be her most popular painting so far, called "Art in the Time of Corona."

Described online as a "giclee print of a roll of toilet paper from my bathroom cabinet, bathed in divine light and glowing in a silver space," Cole explained: "It was supposed to be purely satirical and it was right after everything had shut down. I couldn't hold in-person classes and I was kind of despondent. So I grabbed the last roll I had and tried to elevate it to what society was going through at the time. It ended up selling in the hundreds."

The paintings attracted attention from local, state and national media outlets. "It's not what I would have chosen to be famous for, but I needed some sales at the time," Cole said. People who purchased copies of the paintings sent her photos to show how they were framed and mounted in their bathrooms, over toilets and

other locations, she added.

With an art-specific online teaching platform, Cole managed to teach drawing and painting classes during the pandemic. “The students hit the ground running and I ended up teaching several classes on that special platform,” Cole said. “I went from being completely terrified of it to thinking everything worked out fine.”

Cole was also helped financially by a City of Arvada grant for artists, called Artist Relief, to help upgrade her computer and other equipment to teach online. “That was a lifesaver,” she said.

## **Late bloomer, ‘encaustic’ artist, now oil painter**

A Colorado native born in 1985, Cole grew up in Littleton. A self-described late bloomer as an artist, Cole earned an English degree at Colorado College — where she was a Boettcher Foundation scholar — with plans to become a teacher. “I guess I didn’t feel passionately about it or something,” she said. “So I looked at it and saw there was one other thing I loved and that was art.”

While she completed a post-baccalaureate program in studio art at the Burren College of Art in County Clare, Ireland, Cole realized the school was not geared toward what she wanted — “I wanted someone to teach me how to draw better,” she said — so she returned to the U.S. After researching art schools, Cole decided Laguna College of Art and Design in California could be a place where “they teach the skills to be a great painter, along with the theory” involved with art.

Cole earned a master’s of fine art degree in drawing from Laguna in 2013, was a faculty member at the school for five years and returned to Colorado with her family in 2018. Cole has been a professional artist since the late 2000s. She has held several artist

residencies plus many shows and exhibitions across Colorado and elsewhere.

Previously, she focused on what is called “encaustic” art. That involves applications of beeswax, resin and heat on top of drawings, Cole explained. “It was a cool, exciting medium and it used my skills in an unconventional way,” she added.

However, it also led her to develop tendinitis and she had to abandon the process. Oil painting was the next choice when Cole said she “caught the color bug” after many years of working in a monochromatic medium. “The more you look for it, the more you see it,” Cole added. “Now, I really love it.”

Most of the subjects of her paintings are related to nature, but not in a traditional landscape way, she stated. Cole’s online biography describes her approach this way: “... her work explores a slightly unusual, more nuanced and closely experienced relationship with nature that is at once otherworldly and scientific.”

She also enjoys portrait painting and teaching. “What I’ve found is there is a whole skill set that just atrophies if it’s not used,” Cole stated. “Even if I didn’t paint portraits, it feeds into other things.”

In the past, when she would start to create a new painting, Cole said she would have an idea of what a viewer of that painting would think. “I used to think I’d like to have them react a certain way, but now not as much,” she added. Cole thinks abstract designs, how the shapes interact and flickering patterns are more important than the “storytelling” that often results from other approaches and mediums. “There’s something nice about that,” she said.

Cole is also involved in helping develop a new art-based initiative called Art on the Farm in Arvada and Wheat Ridge. It could include artist talks, painting and other artistic demonstrations, along with

picnics and live music for residents and families. Those events would be held on area urban farms, where visitors could also learn about that type of agriculture.

Cole lives on a half-acre urban farm, which she described as a “work in progress,” and where she grows most of her own produce. Those interested in signing up for Cole’s upcoming classes and workshops can go online to [robincole.art](https://robincole.art) for more information.