

Stephanie Stouffer's "Holiday Legacy"

The holiday spirit is something many people equate with feelings of joy, warmth, peace, and love. We are surrounded by this each year in the form of greetings from neighbors on the street, get-togethers with friends and family, gift-giving, and as the recipient of greeting cards. Many of the images on these cards or gifts you may recognize as the design by freelance illustrator Stephanie Stouffer. Stouffer's designs are seen internationally but she has been a long-time resident of Vermont, working out of her Belmont studio.

The Compass Music and Arts Center has become a great supporter of this talented artist, and is presenting a special holiday exhibit of the artist's original paintings and commercial products displaying her designs. 'Holiday Legacy', opening November 17, is a testament to the legacy Stouffer has created during her 35-year career.

Stouffer created over 430 paintings for the international 'high-end' card company Caspari, of which approximately 75% were used for their boxed holiday cards and related products like napkins, wrapping paper, and plates. Chances are you've seen, if not purchased, one of her designs before.

Iconic Christmas and holiday imagery, such as Santa, snowmen, winter scenes, the Nutcracker, amaryllis, partridges in pear trees, and images of Peace are what you'll find in Stouffer's illustrations. However, it's the way she brings them to life, her own personal style and sense of whimsy that have made them so popular. They, in themselves, evoke all the feelings of joy, warmth, peace, and love that we associate with the season.

Her portrayal of Santa, as Stouffer describes, is a "nostalgic, red robed character with a flamboyant mustache", that not only brings a smile to your face, but for many, also evokes a sense of simpler times, recalling childhood memories. He is often shown interacting in a loving way with animals, a signature element in Stouffer's designs. The use of animals extends into her iconic images of Peace as well. As a more general topic, depicting the idea of Peace offered Stouffer the chance to create art "that came from my heart", she says. "My paintings of animals from all over the world, grouped together, are symbols that celebrate living together in a community, peace, and are a celebration for life."

The original paintings, from which cards and product designs were produced, are not available anywhere else and as Stouffer's illustrations have become a staple of the season and are still produced in a limited manner, never has such a collection been presented at once.

Beginning at 2:00pm, attend the holiday event on December 6, coinciding with Brandon's Moonlight Madness event, and meet Stephanie Stouffer while you view the exhibit. Visitors will also be able to shop for the holidays, take advantage of special deals, get a fabulous meal provided by SoundBite's chef Vicky Regia, and more.

The Compass Music and Arts Center is located in Park Village at 333 Jones Dr. Brandon VT, 05733 (Park Village used to be the Brandon Training School, located 1.5 miles north of downtown Brandon off of Arnold District Rd.). www.cmacvt.org