

Meet Denise Bunkert



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Denise Bunkert.

Hi Denise, please kick things off for us with an introduction to yourself and your story.

While my newest series of paintings are focused on creating a sense of place, happiness and connection, my past experiences as a graphic artist, teacher, traveler, and painter have definitely contributed to this development.

Art came naturally to me as a child, beginning my study of painting along with my mom and grandmother as they taught me Norwegian Rosemaling (Tole-painting). I was a teenager when I painted my first wall mural on my bedroom wall. Envisioning all the places I would one day love to visit; my walls turned into painted places of magical, volcanic mountains, oceans, palm trees and European landmarks.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout, I studied graphic design and studio painting. During this time, I began to live out my childhood dreams of traveling. I decided to live and work on the island of Maui, Hawaii for two summers. This experience opened my eyes to art galleries filled with gorgeous paintings by artists from around the world. Living in Lahaina Town, I walked by buildings and galleries with colorful murals and paintings by Hawaiian native artists, Christian Lassen and Robert Wyland. I enjoyed the luminous colors and joyful feelings these paintings evoked in me.

After college, I married the love of my life, Jeff Bunkert. I spent fifteen years as a graphic designer and Instructor at colleges, k-12 schools and art centers near Minneapolis. During this time, I painted and traveled, experiencing and studying the art and origins

of the Impressionist painters. Graphic Design honed my attention to line, shape, value, composition and space. I designed and published two limited-edition books of my poems and paintings, one of which was a collaborative book of my paintings and poetry "Mirrors of the Soul, Reflections on Life's Seasons" with English poet, Richard Whitfield.

My business, "Painted Places" was established in 2002, bringing together all of my experiences-beginning with Rosemal-painting, Graphic Design, teaching, fine art and traveling. This culmination has led to an exciting painting career as a fine artist, where I am able to express myself and add beauty to the world through my landscape paintings.

Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way. Looking back, would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?

Throughout my career, I have been blessed to have opportunities, talent and supportive friends and family along the way. It has not always been a smooth, perfect or predictable career path, though. My winding road has led to many jobs: graphic design-publishing, advertising and marketing, teaching, retail and interior design. I'd like to think of previous job experiences as "additions to my palette" and learning opportunities on the way to becoming a fine artist.

A turning point in my career occurred around 2001, when I received a layoff notice from my well-paying job as a graphic designer. I knew it was time to "think outside of the cubicle" and grow as an artist. I looked at the transformation in my own life and wondered how I could use my art for healing to make a difference in the world. This is when I decided to paint a series of large butterfly wings and show them in a gallery. The wing paintings reflected my transformation as an artist, with names like: "A Wing and a Prayer", Star Dust and "Wind Song".

As with many artists, I've faced fierce competition, harsh criticism of my work, self-doubts and creative droughts. Despite the slow start, I persisted in painting and taking every workshop and class I could find. My husband encouraged me to stick with my painting. It wasn't until 2010-2013, when I applied for and was selected as one of the artists to be commissioned for the "Arts in Healing" project at the Minneapolis Children's Hospitals. The butterfly wing paintings were the inspiration for transformative, healing paintings that could be rotated and viewed from many perspectives. This project helped me to gain confidence in myself as a fine artist and confirmed that I was on the right path.

Many artists felt the impacts of the pandemic. Some continued on their path, some completely gave up and some simply had to reinvent themselves. Art fairs, gallery showings and social gatherings were canceled- leading to long periods of isolation. For me, this was a time of reflection on my art career and again a major transformation and growth period. I began painting one large oil painting each week. For two years, I concentrated on painting in oils, explored different techniques and developed my new "Crystal Impressionism" style. This focused, uninterrupted studio time was pivotal in creating a new body of work. All of these experiences have helped me to become the fine artist I am today.

Alright, so let's switch gears a bit and talk business. What should we know about your work?

My paintings continued to be inspired by the natural beauty of the world. I am known for my light-filled landscape paintings in pastels and oils. My landscape paintings of places I have traveled to, visited or experienced have become the basis for several commissioned, large-scale paintings at Saint Paul and Minneapolis Children's Hospitals as well as private collections. I was also honored to be selected as the artist to create a series of paintings for a Make-A-Wish recipient at the Children's Hospital in Saint Paul.

Most recently, I have had success exhibiting my paintings in group and solo shows at galleries, art competitions and juried art fairs in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Along with exhibiting my work at several juried, fine art fairs, I was honored to be named "Best in Show" artist at the Red Wing Fine Arts Festival (Oct. 2022), Award-Winner at the Appleton, Wisconsin Art in the Park (July 2022), "Feature Artist" at Stillwater Art Guild Gallery (Sept. 2022) and "Featured Artist" at the juried Eagan Art Festival (2021).

I have developed and coined a unique style of painting inspired by my travels to Barcelona, Spain —with Antoni Gaudi’s colorful mosaics and stained-glass windows. I call my new, distinctive style of painting, “Crystal Impressionism”. Working in thick layers of oil paints like the Impressionists, my paintings are alive with light and refracted colors resembling stained-glass windows. Brilliant colors also infuse my paintings and call to mind warm Maui sunsets. Traveling close to home and overseas has provided inspiration for my work, giving me the opportunity to explore landscapes and light and transform them into beautiful paintings.

Where do you see things going in the next 5-10 years?

Living and working in the Upper Midwest, I can only speak to what I see in the art industry near me. Known for its affinity towards muted, neutral or “safe” colors, I feel that there will be a shift in the Midwestern trends toward, intense, electrifying art pieces. I frequently hear comments such as, “Wow! The colors in your paintings are so vibrant! We need more of that in the winter here.” By infusing my paintings with bright, glowing pigments in the cold winter months, I can express intense and “electrifying” scenes in an otherwise muted and neutral landscape.

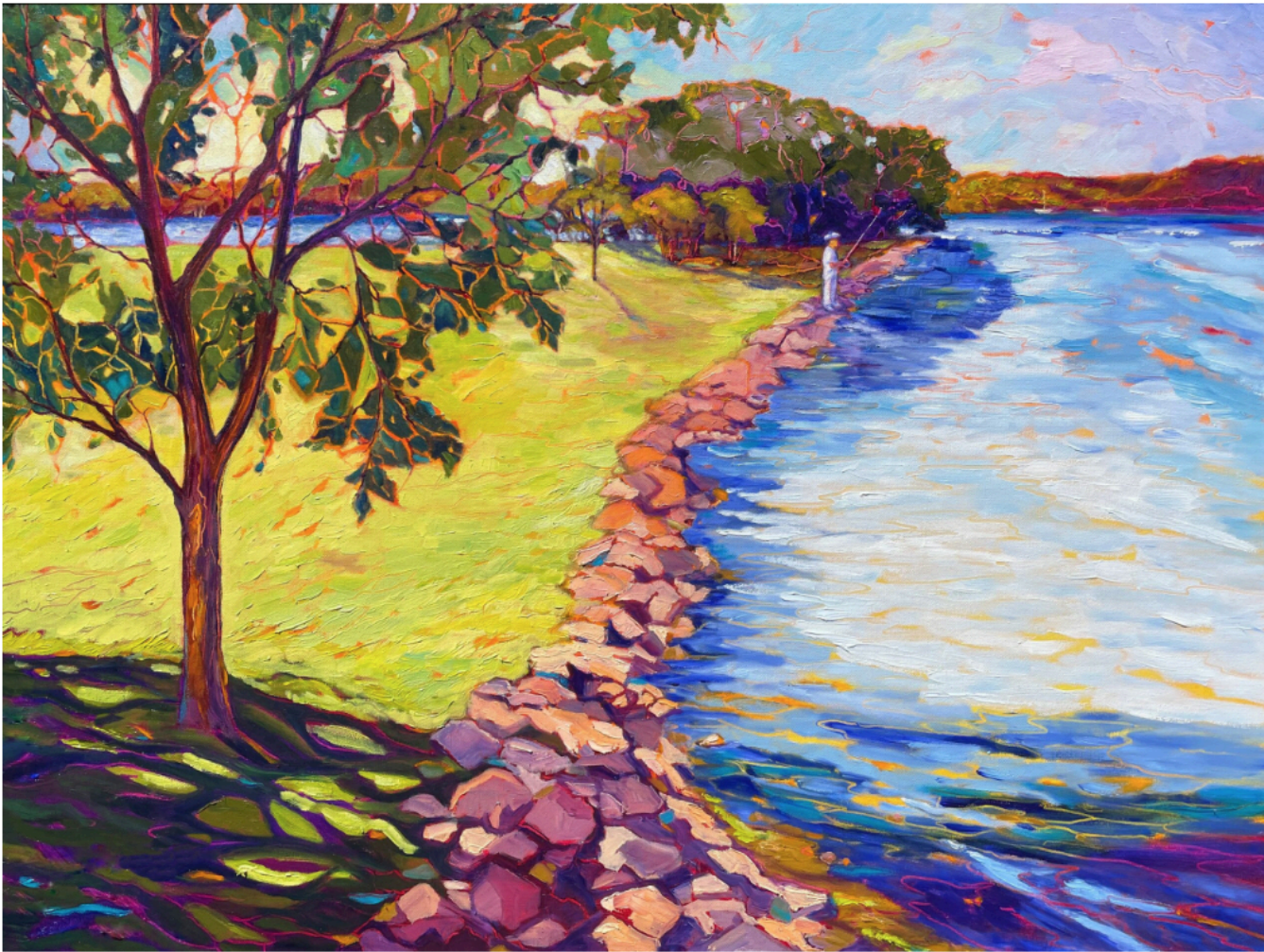
In my experience, I can honestly see a shift in upcoming years towards art that is uplifting, healing and hopeful- Art that brings joy, connection and stirs feelings beyond surface decoration.

Contact Info:

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- **Instagram:** [Painted-places](https://www.instagram.com/painted-places)
- **Facebook:** [Painted Places by Denise Bunkert](https://www.facebook.com/PaintedPlacesbyDeniseBunkert)







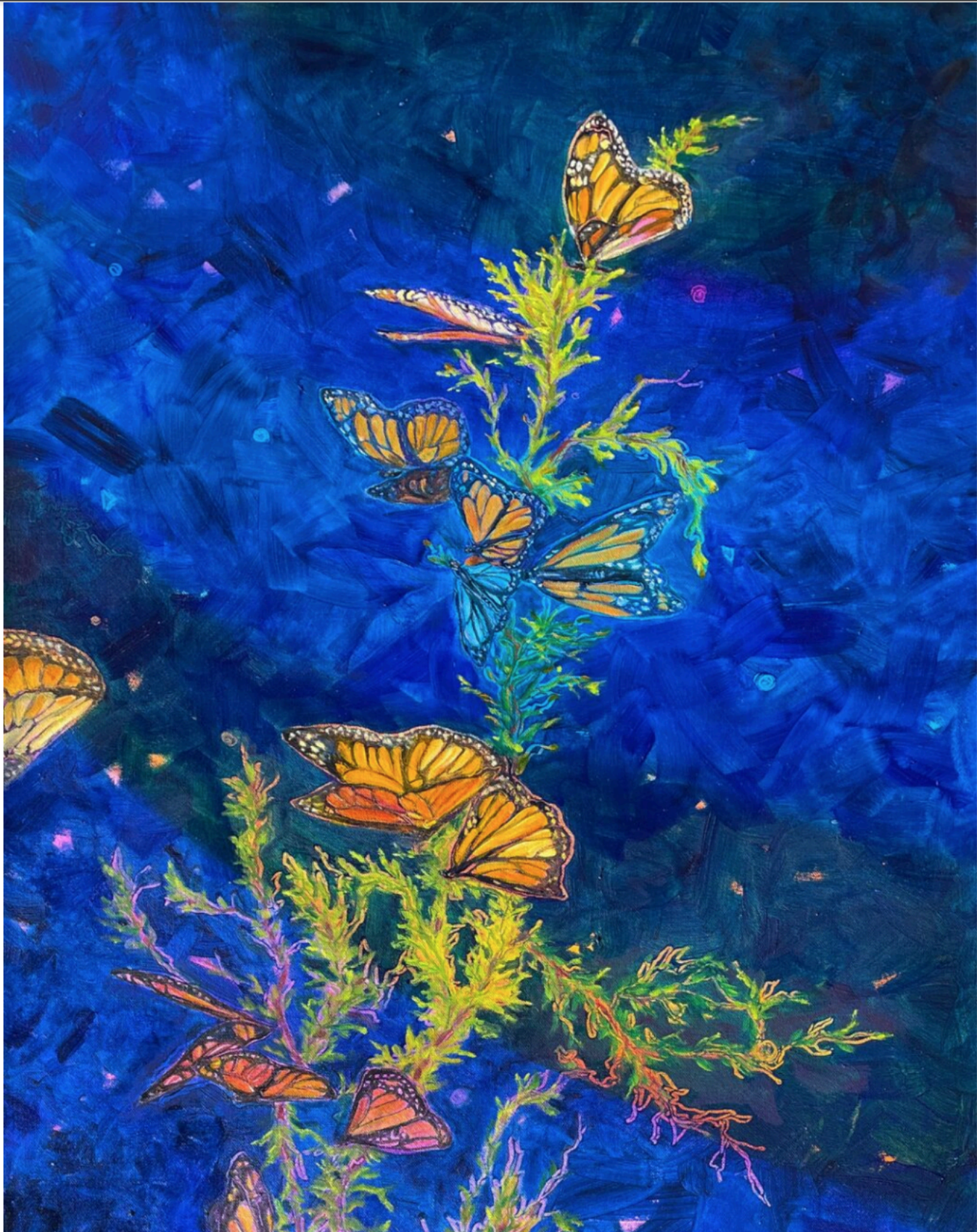




Image Credits

1. Denise Bunkert with award winning painting, "Kaleidoscope Path" 30×40" Oil ©2021
2. "Blossoms" 48×62" Oil on Canvas by Denise Bunkert ©2020
3. "Line on Summer" 30×40" Oil on Canvas by Denise Bunkert ©2022
4. "Into the Mystic" 24×48" Oil on Canvas by Denise Bunkert ©2022
5. "Fields of Gold" 16×40" Oil on Canvas by Denise Bunkert ©2021
6. Best of Art Show award winner, 2022

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