

We are currently undergoing maintenance on some services, which may temporarily affect access to subscription accounts and the E-edition. We apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your patience as we work to resolve the issues.

https://missoulian.com/news/article_5dcfe40c-2f79-58de-ad2f-3649fe9e314e.html

Bronze beauty: Christy Daniels' award-winning 'The Crossing' honors her uncle's memory

By **JAMIE KELLY** of the Missoulian

Mar 24, 2007



Frenchtown sculptor Christy Daniels won Best of Show and the People's Choice awards two weeks ago at the Western Heritage Art Show in Great Falls for her 8-foot-long bronze sculpture "The Crossing." The river crossing scene features 17 horses and one rider crossing a river somewhere in Montana.

Photo by MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

By JAMIE KELLY of the Missoulian

It started small, just a couple of steeds dipping their hooves into a stream.

But that was 15 years and 110 pounds of bronze ago. And so the lesson with Christy Daniels' "The Crossing" - an 8-foot-long, mammoth bronze sculpture of 17 horses plowing through the rough waters of a river under the watchful eye of a cowboy - is that art is evolution, that what begins in your mind's eye isn't necessarily what will be your final inspiration.

Gazing over her finished piece at the Montana Taxidermists' Art Show at the Hilton Garden Inn, Daniels sums up that philosophy:

"You just work on it until you like it," says the Frenchtown woman, a lifelong Montanan. "And if you don't like it, you're not done."

Daniels is done. "The Crossing" is complete, and she isn't the only one pleased with the piece. Two weeks ago, Daniels was awarded both Best in Show and the People's Choice awards for the sculpture at the Western Heritage Art Show in Great Falls, chosen from a field of 65 artists. The top prizes were awarded not only by the show's jury, but by a vote of the attendees.

People are also reading...

- 1 New to-go only eatery brings Southeast Asia flavors to Missoula**
 - 2 Dr. Thomas Weiner's medical license renewed by state despite criminal, civil inquiries**
 - 3 'The City apologizes': Kalispell agrees to allow Flathead Warming Center to operate**
 - 4 Fired Forest Service employee battling cancer now faces imminent loss of health coverage**
-

"That's an incredible honor, absolutely," she says. "It was just stunning. It makes me speechless."

Speechless about the honor, but not about her craft. For Daniels, "The Crossing" - with an asking price of \$18,500 - is both a literal and metaphorical journey. Literal, of course, because of the efforts of her 17 horses, and metaphorical as a symbol of an artist who feels she's crossing over into the world of professional art.

"I feel like this is just the beginning of a career starting to take off," she says.

Daniels, who grew up in Missoula, began sculpting when she was 17 years old. Never trained professionally - she briefly attended the Seattle Art Institute - Daniels instead honed her craft based on her love of nature and the animals she grew up with.

"I saw the gift when I met her," says her husband, Deeder Daniels. "I said, 'You know, there's no sense you getting a job down at the local Circle K, when you could be out there practicing your craft.' ... She stuck with it."

She was inspired not only by nature's beasts, but by her recently deceased uncle, John "Jack" Chase, who plays a starring role as the only human in "The Crossing."

Chase, who was posthumously inducted into the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame last summer, is the figure watching over the herd of horses, his eyes keenly trained on the lead horse, who is looking back across the stream at the cowboy - "almost making a circle out of a straight line," says Daniels.

Daniels wanted to honor her uncle, who "gave me my first sow and picked out my first horse," in the sculpture. Trouble was, she had packed away all her photos of him. On a whim, she searched his name on the Internet and found that he had been honored by the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame, an organization that found the photograph she was looking for.

And to further honor her uncle's memory, Daniels also gave "The Crossing" a subtitle.

"See You on the Other Side."

Entertainer editor Jamie Kelly can be reached at 523-5254 or at **jkelly@missoulian.com**

Continuing this weekend

Montana Taxidermists Association Wildlife Art Show continues Saturday and Sunday at the Hilton Garden Inn on North Reserve Street, and features an art auction Saturday at 7 p.m. Artworks and taxidermy will be on display and for sale from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$3.

The show features art by Cynthie Fisher of Hamilton, Tim Joyner of Hamilton, Judy Johnson of Lincoln, Christy Daniels of Frenchtown, Jerry Simchuk of Kalispell, Sandra Hiller of Elk, Wash., Cameron Blagg of Noxon and Tim Sullivan of Missoula.