

Painting 365 ** Creating one picture a day for a - Morning Call, The (Allentown, PA) - January 28, 2007 - page E1

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Austrian painter Gustav Klimt famously took three years to finish his "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I." It's a pretty nice piece, to be sure, but in that same amount of time Ann Schlegel of Allentown would have completed approximately 1,095 paintings.

Schlegel, a resident artist at Bethlehem's Banana Factory, is one of a growing number of painters nationwide committed to a discipline known as "a painting each day." Last August, she made a one-year commitment at dailypainters.com, "a painting each day" Web site. She has resolved to create at least one 6-by-6-inch oil painting every day for one year.

Schlegel decided to go for it when a friend mentioned an article in USA Today on "painting each day" pioneer Duane Keiser. "I always feel like I need a little push to be a little disciplined, so I thought this would be a very good project for me to do as well," she says.

When Schlegel joined the ranks of daily painters, she was one of approximately 30 participants. "As of today, there's almost 300 of us," she says. "It's becoming a force in the art world."

Schlegel is known for working in series: her fun "Adult Beverage Series" of prints featuring people as cocktails has been quite successful, as has a series of oil paintings of musical instruments. The difference in this series is that it's only the size that's the same. Finding a unique subject to paint each day is a different way of working for Schlegel, but she says it has not been as difficult as originally anticipated. She finds her still-life models in all parts of her life. Running themes include food (candy, hamburgers, garlic, fruits and vegetables) and nostalgic objects (animal crackers, a Parcheesi board, Pez dispensers).

Some days, happy accidents lead to new subjects. On Schlegel's blog -- www.paintingeachday.blogspot.com -- she explains the painting of Jan 6: "I didn't prepare anything for today's Painting Each Day painting, but fortunately, I had a Diet Coke sitting on my bookshelves. So, Diet Coke it is." The creation, a shimmering rendition of the silver cylinder, turned out to be quite beautiful.

The next day Schlegel wrote: "I wasn't sure what to paint today since I left my pepper mill at home ... Fortunately, this grapefruit rolled out of my grocery bag yesterday and hid beside my car seat. I painted it, then ate it. My lucky day!"

The blog is an important part of the project. The technology of blogging -- adding daily comments to a personal Web site -- works perfectly with the "painting each day" project. Every day, Schlegel takes a picture of her painting, uploads it and adds some commentary or poetry.

With a new subject each day, she has found herself learning many new things, from the cult of Pabst Blue Ribbon to how to play with dreidels, and the depth of feeling many people have for White Castle cheeseburgers. After posting her painting of the fast-food burger in its iconic

packaging, fans responded by sharing stories of their epic binges and professing their love for the little burgers. An employee of the company wrote in to the blog to thank Schlegel.

Schlegel also includes personal information on her Web site, a glimpse into the artist's world. "I've included photographs of my day -- my apartment, my garden, and even my dinner. I've photographed my fish and grilled vegetables. It makes it more of a well-rounded blog," she says.

The routine of blogging helps keep Schlegel disciplined. "Every day in the morning, the first thing I do is to turn my computer on," she says. Before the coffee is even brewed she is checking e-mails, working on the blog, and then starting the search for the day's "model."

A favorite spot for research is the farm market, where she finds plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables to paint, as well as items from her childhood, such as animal crackers or a jar of Brer Rabbit Molasses.

Schlegel studied graphic design and is a Mac aficionado, so she took well to blogging. Painting on such a small scale, however, took some getting used to for Schlegel, who is used to working large. Capturing minute details such as the lettering on a package or the flesh of a fruit has been a technical challenge. But there also have been benefits to working so small.

Large-scale paintings require a large working space for the artist and carry a larger purchase price. Buyers also need more space to display their art.

"These small paintings can appeal to a broader scope of art-lovers."

Indeed, her project has appealed to art-lovers from around the globe. Schlegel's paintings are for sale for \$100 each; half are already sold to people from all over the world.

"Every day I have people clicking in from all over the world," Schlegel says. "Japan, Taiwan, China, South Africa, Australia, Denmark, France, Spain, England, and from all over the United States. It's pretty fascinating to see your paintings and writings reaching people from all over the world."

It's not always a breeze to complete the work every day. Schlegel has the benefit of her online comrades urging her on, and also the haven of her studio.

"On a Saturday evening I'll come into my studio and nobody's here. All the other lights will be out. I like it when it's dark, because then my studio has a charm and romance. I'll put on great music, and then you just get into it," she says.

"Like any job you'll have days where you'll be like, "eh," she says. "But then some days I'll do two or three paintings in a day. And then I can give myself a day off. Even though the initial objective was one per day, I'm not going to be that stringent about it. Everyone needs a day off."

Schlegel is already thinking about extending the project. The plan was to work for one year -- 365 paintings.

"Already I'm starting to feel that I would like to go farther than one year," she says.

Josh Berk is a freelance writer.

Jodi Duckett,

Arts and Entertainment Editor

jodi.duckett@mcall.com

610-82-6704

THE DETAILS

PAINTING EACH DAY

BY ANN SCHLEGEL

On display: At the artists' studio at the Banana Factory, 25 W. Third St., Bethlehem, Studio 248A, and at the Apollo Grill, 85 W Broad St., Bethlehem, through April 1.

On the Net:

www.paintingeachday.blogspot.com

www.annelizabethschlegel.com

www.dailypainters.com

DRAWING FROM THE STUFF OF DAILY LIFE

Sept. 28: Animal Crackers

Says Schlegel: "You can tell which paintings create the most "stir" by viewing how many clicks to your Web site, certainly how many e-mails offering to purchase it. " Animal Crackers tugged on the heartstrings of many, who

reminisced about eating the little creatures in their youth, and an art-lover in Texas purchased the painting. The painting has a home

in Missouri City, Texas.

Oct. 28: Tabasco

Schlegel counts this, both the painting and the sauce, as personal favorites. "I love Tabasco sauce," she says. "There is nothing like it. " The bottle used as the model was also used for lunch: Tabasco with a side of tomato soup and grilled Stilton Blue Cheese on 12 grain bread.

Nov. 22: White Castle

Schlegel was surprised at the outpouring of love for the tiny burgers. "Who knew?" she says. "I had my paintings each day at ChristkindlMart, and everyone pointed to the White Castle. All the little kids said, "Hey, it's White Castle!" One guy told me he ate 75 in an hour and his friend ate over 100. Another guy told me they take out the pickles and shove 10 of them in their turkey, and that's how they make stuffing. " A White Castle associate sent Schlegel an e-mail thanking her for creating the painting.

Dec. 3: Silly Putty

DailyPainters.com issued a challenge to paint an egg. Schlegel chose not to go to the fridge, but rather to the toy store. It was a Sunday, and the color comics section reminded her of the old pastime of copying Charlie Brown onto a bit of Silly Putty. The painting sold to a family in Los Angeles, which also bought "Kiss, Kiss, Kiss" from Sept. 18.

Dec. 7: Pabst Blue Ribbon

Schlegel herself is more partial to a Sierra Nevada, but she gained respect for this budget brew after buying a six-pack at Lehigh Pizza in Bethlehem. She learned that PBR, as the in-crowd calls it, is a hot beer among college students in trendy cities like Portland, Seattle, Richmond and Atlanta. Indeed, Schlegel has become a bit of a Pabst expert, and can tell you all about the company's hard times and rise to hipster glory. The painting actually was a commission, along with three other pieces.

Dec. 19: Natalie's Dreidels

Although raised Catholic, Schlegel has always had a "respectful curiosity for the Jewish faith. " The painting is called "Natalie's Dreidels," but they actually were lent by Banana Factory director Janice Lipzin. Natalie is Janice's daughter. Schlegel likes that they represent the holiday season and also Bethlehem's gaming future.

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

Josh Berk Special to The Morning Call - Freelance, 'Painting 365 ** Creating one picture a day for a year ups Bethlehem artist's learning curve', *Morning Call, The* (online), 28 Jan 2007 E1
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