KAREN BALZER, ARTIST

Karen attended the Glassell School of Art in the Houston Fine Arts Museum District where she studied painting, sculpting and photography. The sculptures tend to be customized and individualized. Her paintings number in the several hundreds and are varied. She was also a contributing artist in the "Cow Parade" benefiting charity.

Preferred mediums are; acrylic on canvas, watercolor on paper, terracotta clay.

Paintings include:

- **Innovative crosses**
- **Collection of eyes**
- **Erotica**
- **Illustrated pain paintings**
- **Weird Creatures from the planet Zarran**

Sculptures include:

- **Sculptured and personalized memory urns**
- **Animal rights**
- **Aquarium sculptures**

Karen lives with her husband in the Houston, Texas area. She has three children and three grandchildren.

"My Creative Art Journey"

My family was artistic. My parents were opera singers and I did not realize it at the time, but I was immersed in this culture from the beginning. My father painted pictures and encouraged me to do the same. I grew up drawing and crafting things just for the fun of it and to pass time.

My first realization of how much I really liked this environment came when my future husband took me on a date to Folsom Prison (of all places!) to review art work created by the prisoners. After that point, I begin to explore more of the art world and was fascinated and deeply interested in seeing what I could do personally. At this point, there was no formal training. Rather, more exploring and experimentation on my part.

Later, and after marriage, I had an opportunity to attend the Glassell School of Art in the Houston Fine Arts Museum District. For several years I formally studied sculpting, painting and photography. It was, to say the least, an awakening. One of my beginner classes was in sculpting. After lecturing and demonstrating, the teacher assigned the first sculpting project for the students. I got into unanticipated trouble, but not because I had done something wrong. Au contraire, my sculpture was

far superior to the entire class and better than the teacher's! He accused me of not being a "beginner" and he kicked me out his class! That was the first time that I realized how much talent actually resided within me. Fortunately, I did not get kicked out of any other classes and I went on to learn, fully understanding that my passion was and still is being creative through the medium of painting and sculpting.

There was another confirming incidence of my creativeness. During one of the years that followed, I had the opportunity to attend a conference that was sponsored by the company that my husband represented. As a social and integrating exercise, the company had each of the managers and their spouses do a "resourceful/ creative" assessment in advance. At the conference and as a fun thing, they lined some 140 of us in order of how we ranked. My husband was someplace in the middle of the line that snaked through the conference ballroom starting with high resourcefulness on one end of the spectrum and ending with high creativeness on the other end of the line. I could not see my husband and, in fact, I could not see anyone since I placed at the high end of creativeness and was alone and about 20 feet beyond the end of line and out in the hallway! Wow----is this me??

Over the years, I have completed several unique projects including sculpted memory urns. My thinking was "why not do a sculpture of the individual" that could be a fine piece of art that the family could keep. These urns are intended to hold memorabilia such ashes and small keepsake items such as favorite rings or personal notes. I also designed and patented a creative animal (I love animals) staircase. I always work totally from my imagination and just let my subconscious guide me. It never fails to inspire and motivate me to do creative things. I never really plan the project. However, I do plan the medium to be used. It could be; clay, paper, canvas, watercolors, acrylic paints (I don't care much for oils). I found that I really like bright colors. I've also discovered that even though I am capable of and have done more traditional art work such as; tables, people, lamps, i.e., "regular stuff," I am more drawn to things are non-traditional.

I live with a condition called CRPS (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome). A few years ago, I was asked to do paintings for a couple of editions of the Pharmaceutical Journal of Compounding. I used that opportunity to paint well over 50 descriptive paintings of pain. It's really difficult to describe pain, but having a personal visual was extremely impactful. Art is a way for me to utilize my gift to transcend pain and move into a meaningful way to utilize the gift I have been given to share with the world.

Lately I've been fascinated more and more with the theme of "weird!" My pen name is "Zarran." That is a reflection of the imaginary planet I've developed called "Zarran." I've created several hundred paintings of different creatures that reside there. Yes—they are weird and colorful and fun to see and I love coming up with new ones! This is my world---won't you join me???

Always Creating,

Zarran