

# Seeing Red

by Jill Duff-Hoppes

This local artist finds beauty and inspiration in the abstract

One spring day about 20 years ago, Lake Mary resident Linda “Red” Harrison felt an overwhelming urge to create a work of art. Specifically, an abstract painting.

At the time, Linda was an on-the-go businesswoman living near Denver, Colorado – not the award-winning visual artist she is today. The sudden desire to paint was too strong to ignore, so Linda pulled a decorative painting off a wall in her home and scrounged around for every house paint, brush, and sponge she could find.

Then she let loose, covering the old canvas with new strokes of color. Linda still isn’t sure what triggered her creative spirit on that particular day, but it was a turning point.

“It was just something internal that said, ‘This is what you need to do,’” muses Linda, now a full-time, contemporary abstract artist. “And it did change my life. I said, ‘Hmm, I really like this.’”

Linda’s husband, Greg, was away in New Mexico on business when she experienced her artistic awakening. Upon his return home, Linda proudly showed him what she had created in his absence.

“He said, ‘You did that? Wow, that’s really good.’ And then I said, ‘And by the way, I’m going to keep doing it,’” Linda recalls with a laugh.

True to her word, Linda has been painting with a passion ever since. Born and raised in a sugarcane farming community in Louisiana, she is the fourth of seven children. Growing up, Linda experimented with arts and crafts at summer camps and was exposed to art through her parents and paternal grandmother. Her grandmother enjoyed painting oil landscapes, and her parents were ceramic hobbyists who sold their work at art shows on the weekends.

But from the age of 16, Linda was laser-focused on becoming a success in the business world. A self-described driven person, she earned a bachelor’s degree in marketing at the University of Central Florida and an MBA at the Florida Institute of



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– Linda “Red” Harrison

Technology. Linda worked for years as a contractor at Kennedy Space Center and then founded her own management consulting company in 2000, when she moved to Colorado.

In 2005, she returned to Central Florida and continued to juggle the demands of running her company with creating bold pieces of art in her spare time.

In 2020, Linda decided to retire from her management consulting company to focus on her art business, which she calls Strokes by Red. For Linda, the use of Red as her artistic moniker isn’t just a nod to the ginger shade of her hair. The color signifies strength, passion, and spirit – all of which she infuses into her expressive artwork.

## Living Color

Linda’s artistic repertoire doesn’t include realistic landscapes, portraits, or still-life paintings. Most of her pieces are modern abstracts, with the occasional painting of a whimsical-looking horse or bear thrown in for good measure. She works in oils, acrylics, or a combination of the two – using brushes, palette



knives, and even her fingers to apply paint to canvas.

"I don't really like representational art; it's not interesting or appealing to me to create it," says Linda, who prefers abstract art for its focus on colors, textures, lines, shapes, and movement.

Music and the spirituality of nature are what most inspire Linda, who works in a spacious, light-infused studio at her home in the Alaquia community. The studio, itself, has a Jackson Pollock quality, with colorful paint splatters on the floor and walls – remnants of Linda's enthusiastic painting sessions.

"My art philosophy is, there are no rules," she says. "I can't paint any preconceived stuff. I paint intuitively. Whatever's inside that wants to come out, I try to let it. If I don't fight it, I paint better."

And to better connect with her audience and collectors, the artist pens an inspirational short story about each painting, which she gifts to those who purchase her work.

Linda is a member of Artists Registry – a community of visual artists and organizations – and she is a frequent exhibitor at venues throughout Central Florida including the Orlando Museum of Art, the Leesburg Center for the Arts, and the



Contemporary abstract artist Linda Harrison, a.k.a. "Red," at her home studio in Alaquia.

To learn more about Linda's work, visit [StrokesByRed.com](http://StrokesByRed.com).

Lake Mary Museum. Linda's art has also been shown in other states including Colorado at the Denver International Airport.

Refusing to let the ongoing COVID pandemic slow her down, Linda has exhibited in multiple in-person and online shows last year and this year. She recently painted live at a fundraising event in Nehrling Gardens in Gotha and currently has work on display at the SOBO Art Gallery in Winter Garden, among other venues.

But no matter how many paintings she sells or exhibits, the first piece that Linda created two decades ago in Colorado will always hold a special place in her heart.

Appropriately titled *No Turning Back Now*, the painting is on display in the entryway of Linda's home and is one of the first things guests see when they come to visit.

"I'm very much an arts proponent," Linda says. "I'm a true believer that art can play a significant role in our lives, whether you're young or old or rich or poor or a collector or not. You can experience and enjoy art."

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