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Arlington multimedia artist uses a wide palette

BY LINDSEY BEVER
Special to the Star-Telegram

Kris Swenson, 34, spends most of her time working in the digital world as a Web specialist at the University of Texas at Arlington's library.

But when she's not at UTA, she's an artist.

Her work has been on display in galleries in Fort Worth and Dallas, and four of her pieces were selected to be shown in New York, at the new Art: Raw Gallery.

What's your job?

I actually work in digital library services at UTA. Basically we do a lot of digital preservation assistance, — preserving valuable materials that are becoming antiquated. I do video postproduction and graphic design. I also work on the library's Web site.

What kind of artist are you?

I do a range. I do assemblage art. I do digital compositions. I do graphic design. I do postproduction video work. And I write. I also do photography. I like having a variety of media to choose from. They all work together. It's like having a palette of media to choose from.

How did you get into it?

You know, honestly I don't know. I've been doing it since I was little. When I was 3 or 4, my parents bought me a sewing machine. I started painting when I was 5 or 6 and never really stopped until I was 17 or 18. I still like to paint, but my passion now is in other mediums.

Did you get an education in art?

I did some college for art. But I'm a bit rebellious. I kind of quit after two semesters. But I hope to go back.

What inspires you to create each piece?

You know, it's just emotion that just comes out and materializes in whatever medium I'm using at the time. I'm a very emotional person. It's built-in, I guess. It's not much different than breathing for me. To me, it's a privilege to be able to express myself and do what I love.

What's your favorite piece?

One of them was one that I sold called *Shroud*. It was an assemblage piece. It was very small, like 12-by-12. There were so many different elements. I put so much heart into all my work it's hard to pick a favorite.

How did you get your work into the New York City art gallery?

The name of the gallery is Art: Raw. Actually I had made a communication with someone on MySpace. I applied, and they notified me I was chosen. There were 300 chosen out of 25,000. So I was very fortunate. I have four pieces on display in the gallery.

How does it feel?

When I read that there were 300 artists chosen out of 25,000, I called my sister screaming, going, "Oh, my God! I had no idea that many applied!" The gallery is in the Chelsea district. The opening was Feb. 19, but I couldn't go because of work and projects here. I watched the opening reception online.

What's your favorite medium?

Oh, that's tough because I like mixing. I like doing installations. I like to do multimedia with video running. I love the contrast of natural elements to video and digital photographs. Sometimes I feel like a mad scientist just throwing things together. I can't pick one medium. I love them all.

Do you sell your work?

I've sold probably about 10 or 12 pieces. A lot of my work is for sale, and I want to do prints for sale. I want to make my artwork more available for sale. I have to realize that although they're part of me, I have to let them go.

A closer look To see Kris Swenson's artwork, go to www.strangefamiliar.com

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