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Art

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a faux painter, she would give a wooden column the appearance of being marble or transform a plain fireplace to resemble mahogany.

As the economy tanked during the most recent recession and demand for her work was impacted, McClelland returned to school to study graphic design.

Then, her life took another major turn. In 2010, she married and moved to East Tennessee. Her new husband helped her build an art studio - In Color Studio. She describes the studio as "a haven to bring all of these experiences into one space... A place where I can create with abandon... an Atelier where I can create on my terms."

For her personal artistic pursuits, McClelland tried her hand at landscapes, but she wanted to pursue something different. She turned to rocks and gems, which, she said, offer "an endless supply of inspiration."

McClelland often finds interesting rocks or seeks out specimens at gem and mineral shows. Once she gets a rock or gem into her studio, the artist studies it under a magnifying glass to see its layers and decide how to approach recreating it in a painting.

She uses encaustics and various mixed media to create the depths, layers and jewel-like colors of gems and semi-precious stones.

Bepe Kafka, the owner of Art on 16 Contemporary Gallery in Marion, said, "Her unique compositions suggest the mysterious flowing forces of the earth itself."

Kafka and McClelland met at an art show when their booths were side by side. Earlier this week, McClelland said she's visited several of Art on 16's exhibit openings and she's flattered to have been invited to exhibit there.

The exhibit, which will hang until Oct. 31, is McClelland's largest solo show, featuring 34 pieces. The gallery will celebrate the exhibit, *The Art of Geology*, with an opening reception tonight (Oct. 6) from 7-9 p.m. The reception is open to the public.

McClelland's work has been shown at many venues. She has also been commissioned to do pieces for designers in High Point, N.C., Sea Grove Beach, Fla., and Berkeley, Calif. Her work was selected by jury for the Jonesborough Open Juried Art Exhibition 2017 and 2018. She was also chosen by jury for The Journeys of Women Art Show for 2017 and 2018.

HARD ROCK ART



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Susan Connelly McClelland is opening her largest solo show to date in Marion. Titled *The Art of Geology*, the artist has chosen 34 pieces to be part of the exhibit. Above is one example of her art.



Show digs into art of geology

BY STEPHANIE PORTER-NICHOLS
Staff

Susan Connelly McClelland often comes home heavier than when she left. The weight gain doesn't come from the usual ways, though. It's from a pocket full of rocks.

On their travels, McClelland's husband will see her pick up a stone and ask, "Do you seriously need another rock?"

Her answer is always: "I do."

After all, rocks are a vital source of inspiration for the

longtime artist.

Her fascination with stones began when she was a child, growing up in Morganton, N.C. McClelland lived near woods through which flowed a creek. Her artistic talents were already emerging. She painted with berries and loved to dig up clay and search for rocks. She believes "being born in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains was probably my greatest stroke of luck."

Her fascination grew so strong that she considered studying

geology in college. "My love is with the rocks and minerals," she reflected, but McClelland knew that she was hardwired to work in an arts field, not science. And so, she opted to earn a Bachelors of Fine Arts degree.

In 1985, McClelland landed in North Carolina's furniture market, designing showrooms. Work she continues to this day.

For many years, she also worked as a faux painter for businesses and individuals. As

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