

# WHO LET THE ART OUT?

— *Dorri Olds*

“I’ve always been crazy about dogs. They can sense it. I’ve had six so far, soon to be eight. I’ve been bitten three times, but I still love dogs,” says painter, Katherine Petitti Kornel. “Dogs are a lot of work, as are people, but if you put the work in, you get so much back.”

Devoted to both dogs and charities, Kornel is donating 25 percent of the proceeds from her current painting exhibit, “Organic Impressions: Oil, Watercolor and Multimedia,” to Green Chimneys (GC), a non-profit organization that provides assistance to animals, and inner-city kids. Many of GC’s children have learning challenges such as Asperger’s and donations help pay for classes that teach these kids to team up with and train dogs to be service animals. These trained dogs then go on to aid handicapped/wheelchair-confined people. The children gain self-esteem and the dogs find loving homes.

Through her art, Kornel aims to uncover the joys found in life’s moments. Her exhibit “Organic Impressions,” focuses on beauty in nature and reflects her time living in Spain and France, and her travels throughout Europe, Asia and South America. She also includes a nod to her beloved animals in the painting, *Dog and Pony Show*, which contains one dozen hidden dancing dogs, ponies and unicorns. I stared at this painting, mesmerized, as if counting the Ninjas in an Al Hirschfeld drawing.

This exhibit came about while Kornel was selling paintings to benefit the Northern Westchester Hospital. She caught the eye of another local artist who introduced Kornel to the “Organic Impressions” curator. Ten days after her hospital fundraising show she had shoulder surgery and then had to quickly finish her new artwork. Painting so soon post surgery is the mark of a hard worker—and evidence of a passionate obsession. Her high energy shows in every brush stroke and vibrant color.

Motives for Kornel’s philanthropy can be easily traced to her childhood. A friend of hers frequently had bruises. One day this classmate confided her father often beat her. Kornel felt a deep sorrow and wished there was something she could do to help. Other friends were gay and ostracized in school, then disowned by their families. GC provides a safe haven for gay children thrown out of their homes.

As a youngster, Kornel had a keenly empathic miniature poodle named Muffin. That poodle’s ability to comfort and console rubbed off on Kornel who became attuned to animals and children. She has dedicated much of her life towards helping both.



In addition to her pack of dogs, Katherine Petitti Kornel lives in Bedford Village, a Westchester hamlet, with her husband, Edward Kornel, a physician at Northern Westchester Hospital, and Katherine’s two daughters, 14 and 11, from a previous marriage. Ed’s son, 25 and daughter, 21, no longer live at home.

Her husband brings the other side of the dog obsession to their household. He had four dogs when they met. Like the Brady Bunch they combined their dogs and kids. If it hadn’t been for their four children, “People probably would’ve assumed we were running a kennel,” Kornel says, laughing at their combined kids, dogs, cat and two bunnies.

“Ever since the ‘Celebrity Dogs Unleashed’ project, my art has been connected to dogs,” says Kornel, referring to two dozen life-size fiberglass dogs painted by celebrities including Richard Gere, Martha Stewart, Rachael Ray, Judge Judy and Robert Kennedy Jr. The dog sculptures were auctioned and proceeds were donated to GC. Kornel’s painted 3-D dog, Pepe Le Smooch, was chosen for the cover of GC’s newly published “Celebrity Dogs Unleashed” photo book. All book sale profits go to GC’s children and animals.

“Organic Impressions,” is a free exhibit and can be viewed 24/7 until October 18 at the two-story glass lobby-turned-gallery of The Atelier, 635 West 42nd Street at 11th Avenue, near Lucky Strike Bowl and the Intrepid Museum. Once again Katherine Petitti Kornel has a connection to celebrities. The Atelier shamelessly promotes its famous

residents including Nick Lachey, Vanessa Minnillo, Jeremy Piven, Lindsay Lohan and American Idol Taylor Hicks. But the luxurious lobby with its floor to ceiling glass is such a dazzling venue to view art that I totally forgot to be on celebrity-watch.

To view a samples of the artist’s work and other information, visit [www.ktgdesignstudio.com](http://www.ktgdesignstudio.com).

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*Dog and Pony Show*  
Watercolor on Paper, 30 x 22 inch