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THIS WEEK

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APRIL 3-9, 2008



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mature audiences**

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TEMPO

The arts and entertainment magazine of The Taos News

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Pet projects

Photographer Josie Lenwell helps bring focus to the beasties in our world

Josie Lenwell greets the world with boldness and audacity and she makes no apologies.

Her car is literally covered with bumper stickers primarily stating her beliefs about social progressive issues. She is often dressed in pink because she is an active member and participant in Code Pink, Women for Peace. She often flies to Washington D.C. or San Francisco to protest the war with other members of Code Pink. If you see her, in her car or walking the streets of Taos dressed in pink, she asks that you flash her the peace sign if you are old enough to remember what it looks like.

Besides being a multi-media artist, a photographer and a psychologist, Lenwell is a lover and caretaker for lost animals who simply show up at her home looking for a place to live. Currently her family consists of two dogs, Iggy and Oggie and a huge cat named Little Tommie Tucker. She has a “beastie” shrine of ascending adobe bricks and mosaic tiles in the north courtyard of her home commemorating the other “beasties” who have come and passed on. She has had up to six animals living with her at one time.



**LOCAL
COLOR**

Betsy Carey

Lenwell met her partner, Steve Noriega, who owns Tarzan's Tree Service when she hired him to trim a large tree in her yard. That very day, he asked her if she would like to have dinner with him and the rest is history, so to speak. “We lead a very loving and joyful life in two different homes as we both need a lot of private time and frankly, I take up a lot of space.”

Born in Washington, D.C. she lived in one of the four magnificent floors that provided refuge to her parents after World War II. Shortly afterwards they moved to “absolutely no where” Virginia. Because her parents focus was on saving money for her college education, her mother, Ruth Lenwell, made all of her clothes and her dad, George Lenwell built all of the things they would need. Early on she learned that she could have almost anything she wanted if she learned how to create it.

“My mom didn't drive and so I became very comfortable with being alone and creating my own activities. I loved my animals and I would photograph them with my Kodak point and shoot in all sorts of finery — create plays like, ‘Will My



Courtesy illustration

“Sadaka's Thousandth Crane,” photo illustration by Josie Lenwell

Dog Be Proud of Me’ and read and read and read.

Lenwell attended Virginia Tech in Blacksburg Virginia and there she learned how to sew and began creating her own clothes. At first her clothes were very practical but they became more flamboyant as the years passed. She continued her education at the University of South Florida and completed her undergraduate and master's work in psychology and rehabilitation counseling. She said she spent her free time in the arts and crafts workshops in the student union building.

Her art classes did not come until she moved to San Francisco in 1975 where she took a smorgasbord of art classes. Three weeks into her stained glass class, her teacher asked her to take over her children's classes as she was ill. With her love for light and color, she was a natural for glass art and received numerous commissions for her work and taught glass courses at the college of Marin, Mill Valley Art School.

In 1981 she began her private therapy practice and would see clients three days a week, leaving four days to explore the arts. She said that as her parents watched her grow artistically they would

often express remorse that they hadn't recognized how important the arts were to her. She said she would reassure them that their love and efforts for her to be educated was exactly the foundation she needed for her life's journey and she could figure out the rest.

“I discovered Taos in 1986. I was captured by the light and the land and I began to imagine the possibility of creating my own home out of the earth with space for every art form I wished to explore. In 1993, I had to have neck surgery and I decided if I came out whole I would move to Taos and create that home/studio I imagined and I hoped to create a simpler life here. The slow down never happened as I got swept up in the multiple needs of the Taos community. I became the clinical director of the Child Sexual Abuse Program, led court-ordered domestic violence groups for women, led creative arts therapy groups and developed my private practice. At the same time I was creating my “art home” dragging home old cedar trees, collecting stones, making tiles, mosaic countertops and stained glass windows.”

*COLOR
Continued
on Page 20*

Weekdays 6am-10:30am

If you're talking about it, we're talking about it.



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Color

Continued from Page 18

Finally in 2003, Lenwell took a digital photography class at UNM-Taos with Joseph Ciaglia. Although she struggled with the technicalities of working with a computer she was utterly amazed at the possibilities that digital photography offered her. She began to carry her camera with her everywhere she went so she would be ready when each photographic opportunity presented itself.

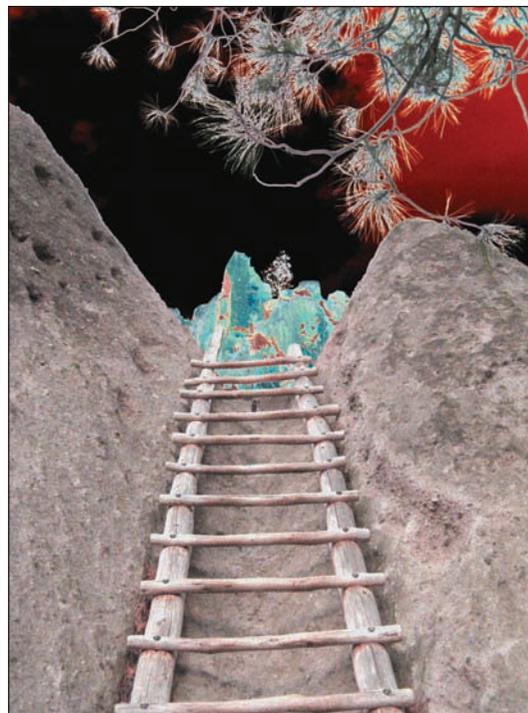
At the end of 2007, Lenwell decided it was time to move on and in December she had the first public show of her photographic work. She said, "I realized I couldn't wait for a move or the end of the war, or a peaceful world, I needed to take my place as an artist/photographer now. I didn't need to end my therapy practice. I could continue my political work and I could begin to

show my work as a photographer.

As I become public with my photography, I begin to realize, that Taos is once again an incredible place to live. I have the most amazing home and multiple art studios and a warm, loving and supportive community. I can fly to Washington DC and San Francisco as I need to, photograph, raise a ruckus with Code Pink in Congress, and return home to my animals and my partner, Steve Noriega. There are no restrictions here as to how many characters I can be, so I'm going to relax and enjoy."

Lenwell's work can be seen for the month of April at the Northside Peoples Bank, 219 Paseo del Pueblo Norte. She has also joined the newly formed Taos Artist Organization, which is planning early October studio tours.

Appointments can be made to visit her studio-gallery by calling (575) 751-0407 or via e-mail at josiesbeasties@earthlink.net.



Courtesy illustration

"Ceremonial Treasure," photo illustration by Lenwell



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