

**Nativity creativity** • Sara Morris of Jackson, La., created her 8- x 10-inch collage of a manger scene using paper and other assorted materials. Morris made 3- x 5-inch color photocopies of the original to attach to blank greeting cards.

# season's GREETINGS

*Don't think of holiday correspondence as one more chore on your December "to do" list. Think of it, instead, as an opportunity for artistic expression. Here, Artist's Sketchbook readers share their creations and the inspiration behind them.*

BY ANNE HEVENER





#### Perfecting peppermints •

Peppermint candies, which are a fond childhood memory for Folsom, Calif., artist Jeanine Robb, also offered a creative challenge. "This painting was an exercise in glazing. The challenge was to effectively paint the cellophane wrapper." The result was a 7- x 7-inch watercolor which Robb scanned into her computer, printed, mounted onto card stock and then onto cards.



#### Do you see what I see? •

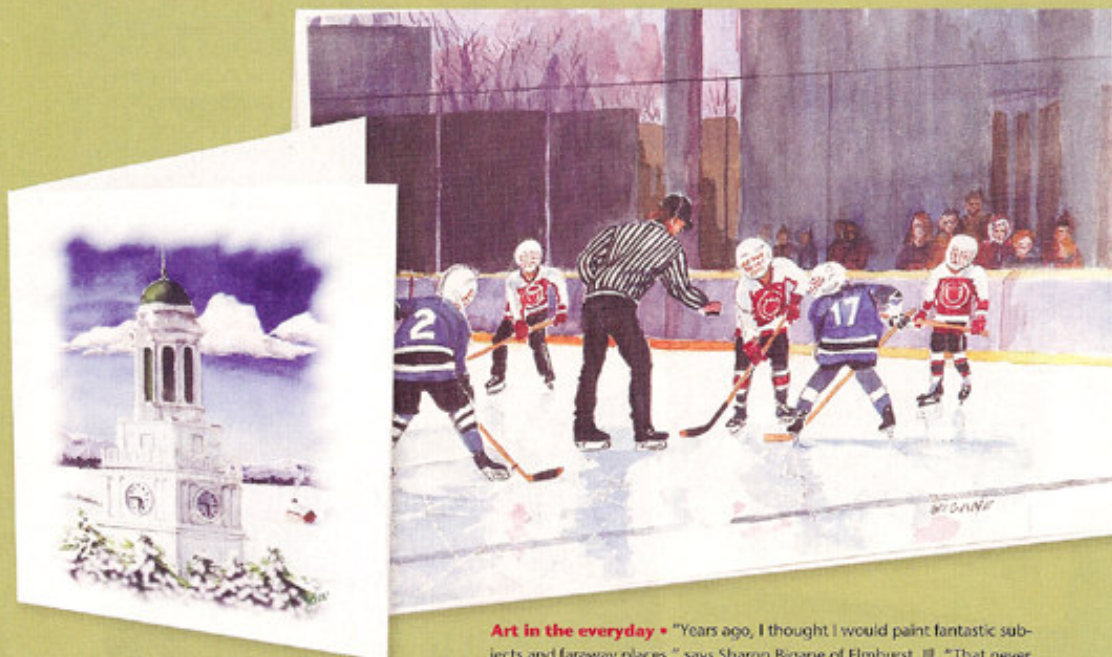
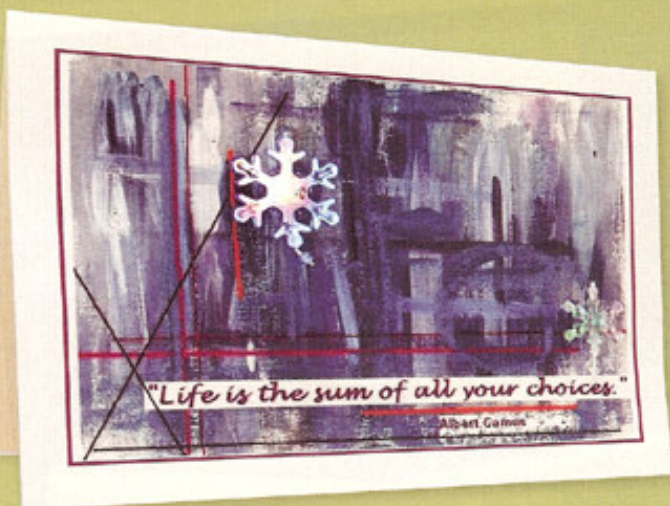
Judy Bennett's design looks like a Celtic pattern to some, while others see the angels. "I drew it that way," the Mehoopany, Pa., artist explains, "as a way to practice working with negative and positive images." She scanned her black and white sketch into Adobe Photoshop and used Printshop to create the card design and add color.



#### Watercolor wonderland •

Karen Standridge of Colorado Springs, Colo., has no trouble finding the right scene for her holiday cards: "Every winter paints a brand-new holiday scene to inspire me!" She uses digital photos of her original watercolors to create her holiday greetings with card-making software, and prints them on her printer using watercolor paper cards. "I use Brilliant's Embassy-White Felt Plain Deckle (no. 302), which comes in a pack of 52 cards with 50 inner and 50 outer, gummed envelopes for \$14."

**Finding the right words** • When thinking about a holiday card, the first step in the creative process for Scottsdale, Ariz., artist Peggy Briggs is selecting a quotation. "My husband and I work on these together, gathering quotes throughout the year. ...From the quote comes inspiration."



**A change of seasons** • John Wolff of Livingston, N.J., took a photograph from a summer trip and painted it as a winter scene for his holiday card. He added the edge detail in Adobe Photoshop before having the cards printed.

**Art in the everyday** • "Years ago, I thought I would paint fantastic subjects and faraway places," says Sharon Bigane of Elmhurst, Ill. "That never happened. I had four children and never went to faraway places, but I did go to school functions and children's sporting events." Bigane's paintings honor what she describes as "the courage and dignity of everyday life, and the beauty in the people around me."

## Gift Cards

A gift card or certificate that purchases credit for someone to use at a bookstore, restaurant or coffee shop is an easy gift solution for long-distance loved ones, but is also rather forgettable. Here, instead, are some ideas for a more memorable "gift card." These handmade creations are still easy to mail in an envelope, but far more personal.

**Book deal** • Portland, Ore., artist Dory Kanter, author of *Art Escapes* (North Light Books), created 75 8½- x 5½-inch handmade books as holiday gifts in 2001, as a response to 9/11. She created the cover with colored card stock, brushing it with a 2-inch interior house painting brush and metallic gold paint. She designed the page layout on her computer, adding a scanned image of one of her acrylic paintings, *Lemon Trees, Villa Monte Solare*. Then, she folded the pages and cover, and sewed them together in the center using linen thread and a simple bookbinding stitch.

"These were, in fact, my presents to friends and family that year," Kanter says. "As noted on the insert page, I made a contribution in each recipient's name to Mercy Corps for its campaign on behalf of Afghan children."

**Culinary arts** • Paula LaMont of Corvallis, Ore., combines her passions for art and cooking by always printing a keepsake recipe (in this case, "Greek Cookies") right on the back of her original cards. LaMont created the pear and partridge art using watercolor paint and watercolor pencils.

**Worth noting** • When photographer Pam Monfort, of Cincinnati, Ohio, couldn't decide which image to choose for her holiday card, she sent a mini note card set with four photographs-turned-note cards paired with matching envelopes. "I wanted every image to be red," says Monfort. "And then I found some great textural fine art printing paper." She tucked them inside a handmade card-stock envelope, and tied it all up with candy cane cording. Since recipients get to send out the cards, it's a gift of art that keeps on giving.



**Scrap pile inspiration** • Every year Saratoga, Calif., artist Judith Puthuff sorts through her stack of failed watercolor paintings to find what she can use for a card. "I find it stirs my creative juices to imagine what can be done to salvage those inevitable, interesting spots in the midst of a 'dog.' Or search out an area of white that I can use for snow." When she finds an area that's usable, she traces around it using the opening of a mat, and then cuts out the rectangle. From there, she paints trees, mountains and other additions on top, using watercolor, gouache and even glitter glue to enhance the design. "I often have several boxes of these scrap rectangles waiting to be turned into cards," she says. "It is so satisfying to be able to use up old paintings this way. I find that I like these 'found' images better than starting from scratch, too; they're more imaginative."



**Family ties** • Poway, Calif., artist Lydia Velarde has made her own holiday cards for years, using this approach: "I think of an idea that includes my family. Then, I take a photo of each person in the position I want them to be in (using a self-timer if it's a group shot). Next, I draw from these references photos to get a likeness, adding holiday elements. I photocopy the drawing, enlarging or reducing it as needed. After having the cards printed, cut and folded, I make my family help in coloring them in with colored pencil or felt-tip pens."



**Made from scratch** • Haverford, Pa., artist Janet Austin used scratchboard to create this Christmas angel card, a fund-raising project for the Valley Day School in Yardley, Pa. Austin was inspired by the angels of the Metropolitan Museum's annual Christmas tree display. She sketched the design in pencil first to develop the darks and lights, and suggested the school have it printed with red ink to add a festive touch.



**City of angels** • An “angel” mime in Key West, Fla., inspired the watercolor painting that Bernadette Meier, of Endwell, N.Y., used for her holiday card. “She was all in white,” Meier says, “and her ‘aura’ was brilliant.”



**Holiday lights** • Peggy Horowitz, of Austin, Texas, used a permanent marking pen and watercolors to create her menorah. She also worked the word Chanukah, written in Hebrew, into the design.

**Wordsmith** • Knowing that she'd be leaving in early December to spend the holidays in Europe, calligrapher Penelope White, of Jefferson, Ore., needed to create a card design that—unlike years past—was not too labor intensive. “I sat down one evening in front of the television and came up with this design,” she writes. “I had great fun doodling the designs between the letters.” She then zipped into a photocopy shop with her design and paper, made her copies, and went home to cut, fold and glue. “Since the entire greeting was printed on the front, all I needed to do was write my personal message inside.”

**To see more holiday cards from our readers, visit our Web site at [www.artistssketchbook.com](http://www.artistssketchbook.com).**