



Images © Brenda Miles

Artists Profile

Photographer Brenda Miles



Photo Credit:
Peggathy Gabriel

Meet photographer Brenda Miles. An artist who's work is best described by a quote on her website, "(your work) reflects an exuberant avalanche of fun, whimsy, thought, feeling, satire, humor, beauty, message and pure uniqueness. In a word, art. All of it, covered with a light delicious coating of the subtlest hint of decadence and good-natured irreverence." Owner of West Light Studio, a "boutique" studio in the heart of downtown Corpus Christi, Brenda offers her clients a variety of photographic services – including "Photo Impressionism." If you are looking for a unique gift (Christmas is around the corner) or a way to personalize your home or office, read on...



How did you get involved in photography? Taking photos of my children as a young wife and stay-at-home mother in the eighties. Took a community-college class at Del Mar Community College on basic black & white photography in 1985 and I was hooked.

What's your professional background? College graduate of Texas A&M University at College Station in business; just always loved photography.

Who are some of your favorite photographers and artists that have inspired you and what is it about them that you appreciate? Of course, French photographer Robert Doisneau (1912-1994). His images of Paris; the everyday people and situations are timeless and so many times humorous. American portrait photographer Annie Leibowitz for her outrageous, cutting edge, witty style. Rosalind Solomon who had an exhibit here in Corpus Christi at the Art Museum of South Texas years ago; I loved her direct journalistic style of portraiture. I wrote to her as a young aspiring artist and she wrote me back (real letters, pre-internet!) — that made a very big impression on me.

Of the photos that you have taken, what is your favorite and why? It's hard to name a single favorite, but I guess it would have to be "*Cruel Shoes*," which is a self-portrait of sorts that I created in 1990; of a bride on the side of the road...it has so many layers of meaning for me, both on a professional and personal level. I have recently run into several people who bought a print of it from me way back, and they are still enjoying it and getting comments about it from folks who see it. It was the beginning of my hand-coloring phase that was very

successful; it was reproduced in a photography magazine, and in a book on hand-coloring in 1994. I think it works because it always gets a reaction from the viewer. I like to write, so I wrote the story about how I created it, which is pretty funny in itself, and posted it on my website as a "secret" link...you have to find the link on the bride's dress to find the story...

Anything unusual that you have shot? An off-the-cuff shot I grabbed in Paris last October...in the Robert Doisneau style...I spent 4 days on a bicycle with my camera around my neck - my favorite way to explore a new city. My girlfriend and I were biking to see the Moulin Rouge (a traditional cabaret built in 1889), in the Montmartre District. It was a gorgeous, sunny warm day - a miracle for Paris that time of year. I saw this older couple just sitting together at their open window, on the second floor of a classic Parisian apartment building, with a retail shop on the ground floor below them. Underneath their window was the shop's sign "*Love Shop*." Montmartre is the District known for its sex shops - I hurriedly changed lenses to get the shot without looking up at them - I didn't want them to notice me - and fired off a few rounds. I entered the best one in a local contest this fall and it won - \$500! Also, in a stroke of serendipity, an exhibit of Doisneau's work opened the week we were in Paris, so I got to immerse myself in his incredible images. He was famous for capturing everyday Parisian life, mostly in a very witty way. You see his work in postcards, posters and books all over the city.

What or who have you always dreamed of photographing? Rock stars...Paris (a dream realized)...famous people of all sorts...exotic places and the indigenous people there ...



Are you from Corpus Christi? No, born and raised in Beaumont, Texas.

How did you get here? Moved here after flailing around the state after graduating from college.

What do you like about living in Corpus Christi? The small size of the city, driving by several friends' houses just to get to the grocery store or the post office, my circle of friends and being involved in their lives, the wind and the water, the way we think it's a "long way" to get to the south-side because it's a 15 minute drive, the beach and bonfires in winter.

What do you like about living and working in downtown Corpus Christi? I love downtown. It's a secret jewel that just needs a following to enjoy its many assets. I love being able to buy fresh-caught shrimp from my shrimper friends on the T-head. Eating out at the many wonderful restaurants. The karaoke bars with their passionate regulars. The edgy art spaces like K-Space. The wonderful twenties-era building that houses my studio ...

Your studio, West Lights Studio, located at 508 Mesquite in the heart of downtown Corpus Christi, is currently working with "Photo Impressionism." What is this? This style of "Photo Impressionism" is cutting-edge technology that allows me to create "portraits" from digital photographs using software called Painter. I use a tablet and stylus in place of a mouse to actually "paint" with pixels. To be clear, this is no automatic conversion by the software; it's a stroke by stroke transformation of a photo into a sort of hybrid of a photograph

and a painting. There are all sorts of "virtual brushes" I can use to create different looks but I think it's smart to stick with a few techniques to create a signature look. I received a great compliment from a friend today; he said that he used to think that portraiture "was really kind of boring," but that my work changed his perception of it. That's what I'm after; a signature look to my work that stands

out from the usual fare. I'm also hoping to change people's perceptions about portraiture; photographic portraits as art for their homes — what dearer piece of art is a portrait of a loved one? Large portraits on canvas can make a bold impact that's both timeless and cutting edge.

How long does the process take? Usually we can complete a portrait canvas in several weeks. I try to do the actual image work in one or two sessions at my computer. After the graphics are completed, I print the image on canvas. Afterwards, it's stretched on a frame. I am still a one-woman-show; or a "boutique studio" as they call them these days.

Can a client bring in a printed photograph or does the photo have to be digital? The image I work with must be digital. However, a client can bring in a photograph to the studio and I can scan the image in - thus, converting it to a digital image.

What is the price range? Prices range from \$700 to \$2,000 - it depends on size. For info call 361-888-5249 or visit www.brendamilesphotography.com