



Sherrie Buzby/The Arizona Republic

Anne Coe relaxes at her studio and rambling adobe home in the foothills of the Superstition Mountains.

Artist Coe rides out a 'roller coaster' year

By John Carlos Villani
The Arizona Republic

Long revered as one of Arizona's leading artists, painter Anne Coe is starting over. And she wants people to know that everything's all right.

Once idolized as the ultimate Southwestern sexual icon as depicted in the pop art paintings of Bill Schenk, she's now content to be focused, successful and, for the first time in many years, alone.

A few months ago, her husband and business partner, Robert "Bronco" Horvath, succumbed to a long battle with chronic leukemia. Without exaggeration, Coe looks back on the year 2000 as a "roller coaster."

"My life has always been a great challenge and a great adventure," Coe says, "and even though I don't have a clue where it's going, I remain a very positive thinker. I've seen life's bottom, I've written the journals and now I'm enjoying just being here, heading into the future."

In a Vanier Galleries exhibition that runs through Dec. 30, Coe joins another important Arizona artist, realist painter James Gucwa, in a show of new work. Coe's paintings focus on animal-populated scenes of domestic life, while Gucwa's are con-



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cerned with iconographic evidences of commerce and culture.

A rancher's daughter and rock-ribbed environmentalist, Coe lives in the Superstition Mountain foothills, a place she says reminds her of the Arizona where she was born and raised. Her rambling adobe home and studio com-

plex nestles into the desert landscape the way wolves, bears, jackrabbits and even monkeys are depicted in her paintings as integral components of the landscape. Seen through her eyes, man, animal and nature are enveloped in a sublime oneness.

The blizzard of red hair that proclaims her Scottish heritage frames a face that's quick to laugh. Her body, wiry and strong from years of hiking in the Superstitions, is pressed into work every day as she heads into her studio to paint and sketch. She is by all measures a woman in command of her life, who enjoys routines and simple pleasures.

"I get up each morning with ideas floating through my head and immediately try to manifest them as images, and that's a pretty nice way to live," she says.

"The paintings in this Vanier show were created during those final months of Bronco's life, but even through those difficult times it never occurred to me to not paint. Sometimes in life you just have to carry on, or else you'll be destroyed.

"Three months ago, I was in hell. I had all my hopes dashed. But I see a new person emerging from life's rubble, and it's been my work as an artist — all that process, practice and discipline —

If you go

'THE MAGIC REALISM OF ANNE COE AND JAMES GUCWA'

WHERE: Vanier Galleries on Marshall, 4124 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale.

WHEN: Through Dec. 30.
ADMISSION: Free. (480) 945-0195.

SUITABILITY: Suitable for families.

that's allowed me to paint a show at the most difficult point in my life. And I'm proud to have done this."

While it's often said that art inspires and elevates the human spirit, its capacity to heal is rarely discussed and little understood. But in Coe's circumstances, art has served as the emotional and physical anchor that's allowed her to complete a personal journey through extraordinarily difficult and even threatening times.

As the Vanier Galleries exhibition demonstrates, the fierce spirit that's placed Coe at the summit of the state's arts scene is still serving her well. The only appropriate reaction is a simple one: Welcome back.

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