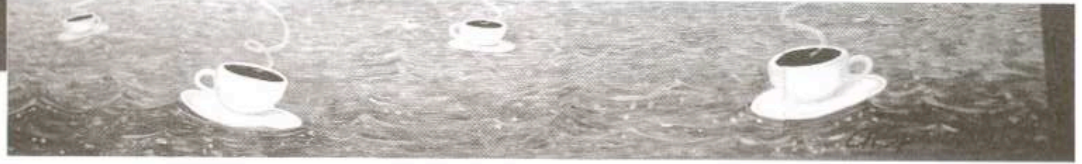


Profile



Ashley Spencer Artist and Illustrator

Marty DeVine

A tunnel, a chapel, coffee shops, magazines and babies. What do they all have in common? Artist and illustrator Ashley Spencer has lent her creative talents to all of the above. In the case of the babies, she sketches the newborns for birth announcements. Del Ray's denizens see Spencer's work daily as they sip coffee under the flying and floating coffee cups she painted on the walls of St. Elmo's Coffee Pub on Mount Vernon Avenue.

Meanwhile thousands of employees working at the Patent and Trademark Office in Alexandria pass six Spencer-created murals and six historical maps that she reproduced in the new pedestrian concourse connecting the King Street Metro and the Carlyle office complex on Duke Street. Alexandria visitor Robert Marshall commented that Spencer's murals "inspire the viewer to go and read about the history of Alexandria."

Regardless of whether one has a reason to walk from the King Street Metro through the new pedestrian concourse, the murals are well worth going through the tunnel to see the historical pictures. Alexandria resident and fellow-artist, Patsie Uchello exclaimed that "Ashley Spencer's murals sweep you through the history of Alexandria in an inspired way, while the concourse safely sweeps you under the bustle of Duke Street, saving your life as a pedestrian while informing and educating you in our illustrious city's past. Thus, Alexandria has demonstrated the value of combining efficiency with education and the arts, all in one fell swoop."

Sherry Brown chaired the Subcommittee that worked on the design for the concourse and its artwork. Brown stated that "we were very influenced by Pam Cressey, the City Archeologist, who told us what excavations in Carlyle revealed about the earlier history of that large site. So, we decided we wanted the



St. Elmo's cups float in the upper right corner of the page. At left, detail from the pedestrian concourse (above). An unfortunately gray version of a colorful trompe l'oeil is at right below.

All pictures are courtesy of Ashley

brought this background to her work in the Design and Installation Department at the National Gallery of Art, the Exhibition Design Department the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Arena Stage where she was a scenic painter. In 1988, Spencer started her illustration business, *The Occasional Palette*, with her infant son's birth announcement (Piers is now 17). She was a graphic artist and illustrator for Consumer's Research Magazine for 15 years (1988-2003). She started her decorative art business, *Casart*, in 1995 when Piers and Jackson, now 13, were in school. Spencer has found that both of her art businesses allow her to pursue her love of art and enjoy the flexibility she needs for her family.

For information about *Casart*, *The Occasional Palette* and Ashley Spencer visit www.ashley-spencer.com or by call 703-549-1622.

concourse to reflect that history, and we also wanted public art in the passage that also told the history. In the end, we decided that we wanted something that began to create a sense of place in the minds of people visiting Carlyle. The design, the maps, and especially Ashley's murals do that."

Since the age of eight when she worked on her first publicly displayed mural in her native New Orleans, Spencer appears to have been destined to paint. In the thirty-something years since then, Spencer has completed over 250 art projects, ranging from murals to decorative finishing to portraits and house renderings. Recent publicly displayed projects include a Venetian plaster wall treatment in the resident managers room of The Guest House during the Alternative Design Show House in 2004 in Del Ray and several wall finishes in four rooms in a home on the Belle Haven House & Garden Tour last year. In 2003, she painted at 35 foot-long theological quote and trompe l'oeil cross for St. Stephen's & St. Agnes' Meditation Chapel on the high school campus.

A University of the South (Sewanee) alumna, Spencer studied at Parsons School of Design in Paris and the Corcoran Gallery's College of Art and Design. She



Marty DeVine is a non-profit consultant and freelance writer who lives in Alexandria 703-836-7762