



Dan Shearer / Green Valley News

## Artist

Victor Stevens-Rosenberg and his wife, Sue, built his studio out of an enclosed patio. The grand opening is this weekend.

Posted: Tuesday, March 13, 2012 8:17 pm | Updated: 7:07 am, Tue Mar 20, 2012.

# Artist finds his calling on the edge of Sahuarita

By Dan Shearer Sahuarita Sun | 0 comments

*"The artist takes a walk, returns to his studio, and wrestles with the angels for a vision."*

### — Variation on an old artists' saying

A few miles west of Sahuarita on what he calls "one of the most beautiful pieces of the Sonoran Desert," Victor Stevens-Rosenberg is creating even more beauty.

[A closer look at Open Studios tours](#)

With a dream — and a lot of power tools — he and his wife, Sue, have converted a 10-by-20-foot storage shed into an 800-square-foot studio and art gallery on their hilltop acre.

Stevens-Rosenberg, 72, is among more than 50 artists who are opening the doors this weekend to the public during the Open Studios tour. He's the lone participant north of Green Valley.

The studio is new, but Stevens-Rosenberg is known in these parts and has a reputation across the country.

He has owned several galleries, including ones in Charlotte and Tucson, and closed his Tubac gallery in 2007 after his wife became ill.

His paintings — mostly acrylic, some watercolor — are often done without the guidance of initial sketches. He sits down, and he paints.

"Everything I paint is something I wonder about, that I'm curious about," Stevens-Rosenberg says.

"I don't want to have a big game plan when I paint. It's no fun, there's no discovery."

His subjects range from nature to animals to landscapes, with a heavy emphasis on spirituality. His works include the Virgin Mary, kachinas, angels and shamans.

He says there are three types of artists. Those who copy nature, those who imitate nature and those who reinvent nature.

"I reinvent nature," he says. "I like to take nature and bend it, mold it, manipulate it, bat it around and see what happens."

Stevens-Rosenberg attended the Cornish School of Fine Arts in Seattle in the '60s and was influenced in the 1970s when he lived for three years near the Swinomish Reservation.

He landed in Tucson in 1990, where the Sonoran Desert offered more opportunities to explore.

By then, he had spread his influence across the United States with exhibitions, a couple of television appearances and pieces placed in several collections, including the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Va., and the Saks Fifth Avenue corporate collection in New York. Tucson offered more galleries and shows.

## Early talent

Stevens-Rosenberg said his talent was recognized as a third-grader when, he says, the teachers pointed out that he drew better than them. They called him “a natural.”

“Being an artist, that’s been ingrained in me since I was a kid,” he says as he stands next to dozens of works of all sizes.

He went from drawing cartoons and Native American figures at 12 to seriously developing his talent as he matured.

What stood in the way was what Stevens-Rosenberg refers to as a calling — the ministry. Painting, he said, is a gift and a talent. But a calling, that’s where his energy should go.

The only problem was he didn’t know which faith to follow despite searching and study.

So at 27, he landed in art school.

Today, many of his pieces sell for thousands of dollars, but they remain within reach for casual collectors through prints and giclees – fine art digital prints made on ink-jet printers.

But that doesn’t mean Stevens-Rosenberg is comfortable with the business side of painting. Quite the opposite.

“There’s a big difference between salesman and a businessman,” he says with a smile. “Marketing art for me ... it’s a bother. At my age, I’m just ready to paint quietly and show at a gallery here and there.”

But Sue had another plan.

“You’re work’s going to be shown to the world,” she told him. Soon, the idea for the gallery took root, and art lovers this weekend get to be in on the grand opening.

But what about that other dream of his — the call to the ministry?

He never let it go. He and his wife attended 11 churches in the area before settling on The River, a small congregation not far from their home.

And this month, Stevens-Rosenberg, who was born Jewish and has become a follower of Christ, is putting the final touches on his dissertation, titled, “Blessed is He: A Spiritual Journey Anthology.”

When he’s finished, he’ll have a Ph.D. in religious studies that has helped bring art and faith together. The journey has brought him to a good place, with perspective and meaning. The best word he can use, he says, is that today, with the help of God, his art is “settled.”

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## IF YOU GO

Open Studios runs Friday through Sunday, March 16-18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For a list of the 54 artists with addresses, color art samples and directions, pick up a free copy of the Open Studios guide at the Green Valley Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce, Tubac Center of the Arts or any participating artist.

## West of town

Victor Stevens-Rosenberg’s studio/gallery is at his home, 14015 S. Avenida Haley, Sahuarita. Head west on Sahuarita Road (it turns into Helmet Peak Road shortly after you cross over Interstate 19). Take it to Mission Road and turn right. Go north to Pima Mine Road, then turn left. Then turn left on Avenida Haley; continue past Maverick Road, turn left up driveway with sign for Victor Stevens Studio/Gallery. There is also a blue sign for the Bed and Breakfast, Mi Gatita, at the bottom of the driveway. There are three houses on the hill; his is the middle one. (Note: You cannot reach the property by taking Pima Mine Road off of Interstate 19; you must go south to Sahuarita Road.)

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