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Artist and Alamo Heights High School alumna Janet Eager shows her works often in such places as the Olmos Park-based Hunt Gallery.

Alamo Heights High School alumna Janet Eager artwork assembles stories, photographs and Greek mythology into a historical and cultural narrative of South Texas life.

From the cattle ranchers to the landscape itself, Eager's ensemble cast reveals a world of synchronicity and mysticism, rooted in the everyday.

Eager's understanding of the region stems from her childhood in San Antonio, where the everyday meant riding her bicycle from North New Braunfels Avenue to **McNay Art Museum**, where she attended summer classes in the former potting sheds with her sister and mother.

After graduating from Alamo Heights and enrolling at the **University of Texas at Austin** in 1970, later obtaining a bachelor's degree in art history, Eager said it became evident to her that an upbringing filled

with multi-media art classes and attending exhibitions with her parents Russ and **Betty Eager** was not the norm.

“Not only did we have a lot of art going on at home but at school,” she said. “I assumed all homes had original art work in them.”

Oil paint-stained fingernails and pencil lead-smearred hands may have been Eager's fate from birth.

One would not consider this a surprise given a family history in the arts that not only includes Eager's water colorist mother, but her father, who she said was a talented illustrator, much like his sister, **Grace Eager**, a 20th century forerunner in the field of zoological illustration whose work is displayed at **the University of Michigan**.

Shortly after graduating from UT, Eager said a chance encounter in the **Texas Commission on the Arts** office led to a year-and-a-half long artist-in-residence at College Station Independent School District.

This job marked the beginning of a long-standing relationship with the TCA, which led to an artist-in-residence at **Encinal Elementary School** in Encinal, Texas, in 1993.

The town of Encinal is home to the more than 600 residents and wild terrain that have provided inspiration for Eager's large-scale oil paintings, drawings and prints for about 20 years.

“I was telling the story of what it meant to live in Encinal,” she said.

The town is also home to Krueger Ranch, property that has been in the family of Eager's husband, **George Krueger**, for generations.

Krueger and Eager met as AHHS students and moved to his family's ranch in 1979.

Encinal has had an effect on Eager and her work, harkening back to her experiences as a teenager, when she would ride horses at the former Brackenridge Stables and later worked for a large-animal veterinarian in San Antonio.

Eager, who was named “Texas State Two-Dimensional Artist of 2008,” has had work displayed in many private and public collections, including USAA, the AT&T Center, the Olmos Park-based Hunt Gallery and **the Institute of Texan Cultures**, among others.

As time has gone by, Eager said her work, not only as a narrative artist but with students, has become more meditative.

After obtaining her master's degree in painting from the [University of Texas at San Antonio](#) in 1998, Eager began her decade-long work as an associate professor of art at Texas A&M International University in Laredo.

Two years later Eager co-founded the nationally recognized non-profit youth arts program Hecho en Encinal with former colleague [Donna Lednicky](#) and Sean Chadwell.

Through a collaboration with the [Alexander Memorial Library in Cotulla, Texas](#), the organization continues to host a branch library in Encinal with public access computers, despite no longer providing programming because of the increasing difficulty to obtain funding.

“We did amazing things. I'm very proud of what we did,” Eager recalled. “...But I had to decide whether I wanted to be an arts administrator or an artist. I chose artist.”

Jordan Gass-Poore' is a Seguin-based freelance writer.

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