



1ST THURSDAY

APRIL 3RD

Capturing the Spirit of Dance

By **ANDRIA WATSON** / CASA

A LARGE SCALE MURAL by Ruth Ellen Hoag was recently unveiled at the Arthur Murray Dance Studio. A celebration of dance, the 1920s, art deco, and vivacious color, the 61 by 7 foot painting will be on display for 1st Thursday.

“Private contemporary murals of this size, which are available to the public, are rare in Santa Barbara and to be appreciated,” shared Rita Ferri, Visual Arts Coordinator. “It’s obvious that Ruth Ellen Hoag has a real musical sensibility as she captures the sensuousness, playfulness, and history of dance with her painting. I appreciate that the artist was not only able to envision, but complete such an ambitious project! This is a gift to all of Santa Barbara.”

Hoag, who had been taking swing dance classes with her husband at the studio for five years when the owners approached her about creating a mural explained, “The style of



Detail from *Decodance* by **Ruth Ellen Hoag**



Ruth Ellen Hoag

painting is what you call ‘hard edge,’ in the sense that everything is bold, including shadows, shapes, and lines.”

The Arthur Murray building was built in 1924, thus the 1920’s theme, art deco style, and title, *Decodance*. The mural depicts sweeping gestures of swing dance that pop and burst with tangerine orange, scarlet red, plum purple, mint green, brilliant blue, and sunny yellow. Hoag had to mix and measure enough interior house paint to cover the spread. Hoag worked on the mural for 20 ten-hour days, with no prior experience in creating a piece so large in scale.

When the dancers are practicing their steps, they can see the reflection of the artwork in the facing mirror, brightening the light and feeling of the room.

The mural wasn’t completely smooth sailing for Hoag. As an artist who works primarily with watercolors, she had to switch gears and learn how to manipulate the acrylic paint. The result offers clean lines, sharp color, and a lot of playfulness.

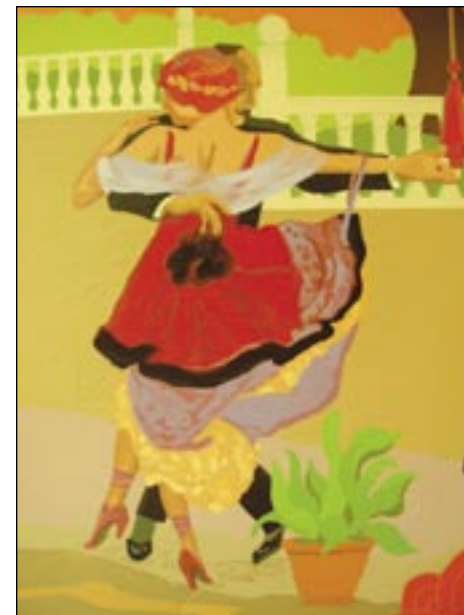
While Hoag’s first artistic expression came playing the French horn, eventually culminating with a position playing for the Santa Barbara Symphony, after taking several Adult Education painting classes, where Hoag excelled, in watercolor, she let go of playing music. Two of her painting mentors, Christopher Schink and Skip Lawrence, offered encouragement.

“Art feeds my soul. I do it because of what it does for me. I can’t imagine not being involved in the arts,” Hoag shared. “My friend and fellow artist David Flores, said ‘Do what

you love and do so much of it you can’t be ignored,’ and I’ve really taken that to heart.”

Hoag recognizes that, “The more Santa Barbara is known for being an artist destination, the more people I can share my work with, and the more artists can support one another.”

Hoag’s advice for aspiring artists is simple: “Stop thinking about it and do it! Nothing replaces the doing,” she said with a smile. “You have to plow through to learn and teach yourself what it is you want to do. And you have to find your own voice.”



Detail from *Decodance* by **Ruth Ellen Hoag**

Arthur Murray Dance Studios is located at 222 W. Carillo St. #3. Hoag will also be having an open studio at Whistle Stop Gallery on April 5th, from 2-5pm. Whistle Stop is located at 115 Kimberly St. For information visit ruthellenhoag.com or call the dancestudio at 963-6658.