

Salt Lake

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Susan Swartz

arts
BY BRIAN STAKER

Susan Swartz's Olympic art celebrates the lay of the land, as it were. When the Salt Lake Organizing Committee named her Spirit of the Land Environmental Artist and commissioned her to create two paintings to commemorate the Games, their instructions were specific; they wanted images of Olympic events from Soldier Hollow in Heber Valley, site of biathlon, cross-country, and nordic combined events, and of Cascade Springs, near Mount Timpanogos. "The Heber Valley is an amazing area," Swartz says, "SLOC has made many changes here--like paving dirt roads, and constructing a stadium--all done while remaining mindful of the environment."

Swartz has donated a percentage of her poster sales to help replant trees in the Heber area. Her work is also being considered for reproduction as limited-edition giclee prints (a type of fine art reproduction higher than poster quality), proceeds of which will be donated to SLOC Olympic Aid Programs that benefit disadvantaged children.

To prepare herself for this project, Swartz took several photographs, at all hours of the day, of the areas she was commissioned to paint. "I tried to place myself in the spot of Olympians and others will see, to know what it would be like when crowds are there, and to feel what an athlete might be feeling before the race," Swartz says.

Originally from Princeton, New Jersey, Swartz has exhibited work from New York to Paris but says she came to Utah with her husband eighteen years ago for the skiing. Swartz's work is infused with her love for the landscape. "Utah is amazing in what it has to offer, an amazing diversity," she says. "For an artist, there's so much to paint here. There's a strength in the sky and the mountains, and the strength in my work comes from looking out my window every day, hiking and biking--it's all at our fingertips."

The Gallery of Park City and Phillips Gallery in Salt Lake will represent Swartz's work during the Games. She also produced artwork for the cover of the Cultural Olympiad program booklet, which included images of performances by the Utah Symphony, Ballet West, and Utah Opera. "Art is an important part of the Olympics," she says. "It's not just about sports but all viable areas that carry off the essence of the Games. For the first time, the environment is being



Soldier Hollow

considered. So when we go back to that two-week period, it won't just be the Games, but the place that is remembered as well." More information about Susan Swartz's work is available online at www.susanswartz.com.