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ART OF THE STATE

BY MARK EARNEST



Robin Ruybalid with some of the textile works from her latest show, *Die Defunctorum*.

PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

Dark into light

Robin Ruybalid

There's something to be said for the

artist who consistently displays their work and practices their craft. Robin Ruybalid is one such artist who has been featured in either a group show or a solo one every year for the past four. She's definitely listening to the muses.

"Every year, I say I'm not going to do another show this year—it's too much work," Ruybalid said. "But, then I have another idea, and I go from there."

Ruybalid has been drawing and making art from the time she was in grade school. "I remember being young and dreaming about something and then waking up in the middle of the night and having to sketch it before I went back to sleep," she said.

She's a grad from the University of Nevada, Reno, with degrees in both art and criminal justice. Ruybalid said that she is working in criminal justice for her day job, and she did see some parallels between what she does for a living and her art, adding that it's also a great stress-reliever from her day-to-day life.

"In many areas of my life, I've always been fascinated by the darker side of things," she said. "That's what really spoke to me during art classes. In order to do life drawings, they sent us to the medical school first to draw skeletons, to understand the structure of a human body, and that just clicked with me. The bones, the skeletons, I just loved it."

At the same time, Ruybalid doesn't want it all to be all macabre or sardonic. "I'm tuned into the idea of why something feels dark," she said. "That's why the Day of the Dead spoke to me. It's a celebration

of our ancestry and those who have passed, so to take something people normally see as scary or dark or intimidating, instead I want to turn it into a celebratory thing."

To that end, Ruybalid's latest show, *Die Defunctorum* at Reno Art Works, features prints on canvas that meld her *Dia de los Muertos*-style skulls and skeleton parts from Victorian medical illustration books with found objects from books, including fruit and floral motifs. There are also some intriguing textile artworks, including sculptures mounted on wood, a modified suit jacket and embroidery. It's a style she's done before, but not to this extent.

Ruybalid said she's started to use more unconventional materials for her art.

"Taking something that's meant for one thing and then making it into something else, that's what I like," she said. "I've always loved to sew. And, I've done a handful of prints that were on mounted on wood instead of canvas. I just like the idea of making materials do something that they aren't meant to do. I've just never felt comfortable with straight paint on a canvas. It's doing these other things that gets me excited."

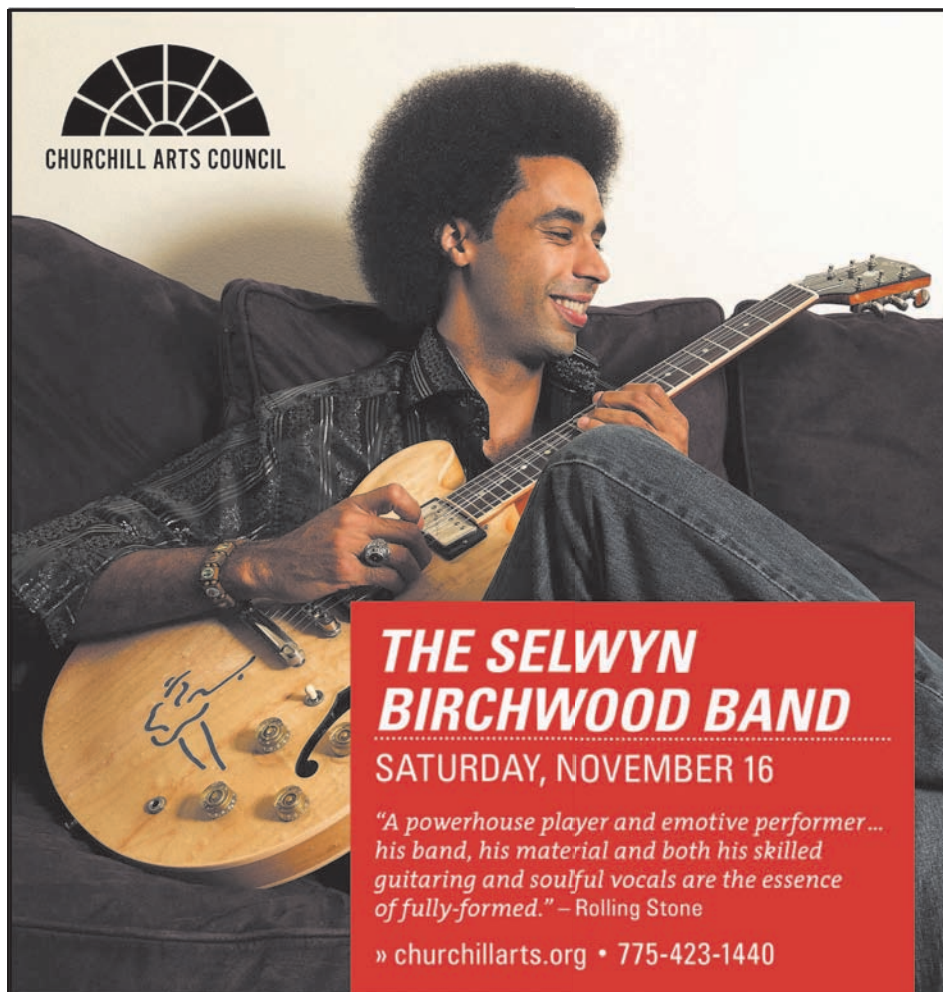
Ruybalid is also a big supporter of the entire arts scene in Reno. She's been featured in a group show at Nevada Fine Arts as well as some of the local coffee shops that feature artwork. Her main venue, though, has been at Reno Art Works, the longtime Dickerson Road space where she has also rented a studio for about six years.

"I think that we have a great art community in Reno that's really growing, and so many people provide the opportunity for us to do things like this show," Ruybalid said. "Reno Art Works has been so encouraging to up and coming artists over the years." □

Die Defunctorum by Robin Ruybalid is showing now through Nov. 30, which is also Small Business Saturday, at Reno Art Works, 1995 Dickerson Road. See more of her work at robinruiybalid.com.



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