



Cathy Gardner

Illumination and Calligraphy

How did you come to be an artist?

I taught myself calligraphy when I was a young girl (maybe 12 years old). I continued to learn on my own until my first official calligraphy class in New York City after college. My first class was learning how to do Hebrew calligraphy. For those who remember *The Jewish Catalogue*, published in the early 70's, my teacher was one of the authors in the Hebrew calligraphy section. After this experience, I realized that I had a talent for this so I studied with professional calligraphers for the next 20 years. I mostly work on commissions, with an emphasis on making illuminated *ketubbot*.

How did you come to select the work you are exhibiting?

Because most of my work has been commissions, I only have retained a few original pieces. One is the first ketubah I created. I had to redo it completely because there was a mistake and I didn't know how to correct it. The second piece is "Eshet Chayil" (A Woman of Valor). Both of these pieces hang in my office.

How does the work you are exhibiting fit into your Jewish journey?

The ketubah story is there. However, the Eshet Chayil piece is a replica of the one that I made for my (ex) mother-in-law when I was living in Israel. Esther was the exemplary Woman of Valor. She was a little concerned because I wasn't around much as she prepared for Pesach, even though we only lived a few blocks from each other. When I gave her the manuscript for Pesach she understood why I hadn't been available to help.

Biography

Cathy Gardner is the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dayton. While that's a mouthfull, it really means that she is in charge of the Jewish Federation and all its agencies, which include the Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Services, the Jewish Community Relations Council and the Jewish Foundation. She also works closely with the editor & publisher of *The Dayton Jewish Observer*.

Ms. Gardner has been working as a Jewish communal professional for over 28 years. She began her career in the hotel industry following graduation with a degree in business, majoring in accounting and marketing. Her other passion is art, and she is a master calligrapher and dabbles in mosaic arts.

A fourth generation native of Tampa, Florida, Cathy moved to Dayton in 2012. She moved up north for this position and has been asked repeatedly why she would move away from Florida. Her answer is that a change of season is truly the best. She reports that Dayton has become her second home, and she truly loves living here.