

A Piece of Me: Annierose Seifert and the SLO CowParade

A Senior Project

By Annierose Seifert

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## **Background**

CowParade is an international art movement brought to sunny San Luis Obispo, California during the summer of 2016. CowParade SLO showcased 101 painted fiberglass cows. Each cow has a different sponsor and artist. This event was created to give back to local charities, attract tourism and notoriety to hosting communities, and give local artists the chance to be on a global stage. CowParade is an international event hosted in more than 70 cities around the globe including Paris, France, Perth, Australia, China and Brazil. The event began in 1999 with the first parade being hosted in Chicago, Illinois (CowParade, 2017).

## **Involvement**

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo purchased five cows in total. The College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) sponsored two of the cows and for one of them, selected a student to be the artist. Author and student, Annierose Seifert gladly took the opportunity and painted her very first life-size, fiberglass cow; a piece of art far different than any she had done before. CAFES was aware of the student's artistic ability from her rodeo coach, Ben Londo. Being a student in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, they thought it was the perfect opportunity to showcase the Learn by Doing motto of Cal Poly.

## **Getting Started**

The Cal Poly student has considered herself an artist from the very beginning. She grew up drawing and painting anything she could get her hands on; however, that never included a fiberglass animal. She did not have much direction on how to paint this cow so it was up to her how to paint it and what to paint on it.

The artist's first plan of attack was a design. She was painting this cow for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences so she wanted to paint something that represented the college's academic success, while staying true to her style of representing the western lifestyle, something unique and captivating; much like the agriculture industry. As noted by Jenny Wilson in her book, *Artists in the University*, p 147-168, "Practicing within the university setting influences artists' identity, approach to their practice and the artwork they produce."

Therefore, the author did have concerns to ultimately represent herself as an artist. She sketched out a few different designs and after discussing with leaders of CAFES, they agreed on a very bright representation of the western lifestyle, a cow the artist likes to call Rosebud.

After the design was chosen, the artist researched the process of painting fiberglass- what paint to use, what varnishes to use, how to preserve, etc. The artist received extensive guidance from the staff of Art Central SLO with research and ordering the paints, varnishes, and brushes needed to complete the process.

## **The Process**

The cow took the artist about a week to finish. There was 10-12 hours spent everyday working on the art piece summing to about 60-70 hours total. There are a number of steps the artist used to paint the cow:

1. Sketch design on the cow
2. Paint the base color- gold (2-3 coats)
3. Next, paint the stars- turquoise
4. Paint the hooves- turquoise
5. Paint roses-combinations of reds, pinks, whites
6. Paint the leaves and vines on the roses
7. Paint brands in the middle of stars
8. Paint brands on the hooves
9. Touch up paint on all areas
10. Apply varnish: 3 times every 24 hours

## **Symbolism**

Every piece in the artwork had a specific reason for being present. Overall this design was meant to represent the western lifestyle through the artist's perspective. The artwork was intended to be a piece that educates people, celebrates the western way of life, and represent the artist. The following explains the symbolism behind the art:

Cattle Brands: the cattle brands used on the cow were all SLO County registered cattle brands, used to celebrate the owners and the long history of their ranches and contribution to Cal Poly (California Cattlemen's Association, 2017).

Stars: The stars were used to highlight the brands and attract the viewer to them. Stars are a common art piece used in many different pieces of western art because of their patriotic symbol (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017).

Roses: Roses are a trademark of the artist and her family. The rose represents beauty and adds to the vintage and classic look, adjectives that the artist would use to describe the western lifestyle (Eastoe, 2017).

Flower Crown: The Flower crown is made of roses and was added for the artist's own personal preference to show off her style.

Bright Colors: the bright colors were used to attract viewers to cow and stray from a stereotypical "western" look.

## **Discussion and Recommendations:**

The artist discovered several recommendations through her Learn by Doing project. As far as advice for painting a fiberglass piece, the artist recommends the following:

For a fiberglass piece, use acrylic paint. Make sure to have the design finished and a list of needed colors before purchasing paint to prevent overbuying. Left over paint will be needed to fix any future blemishes. Color usually looks very different in person than online or in a catalog so it is critical to visit a local art supply shop for in-person

guidance, visuals and large quantity purchases. The greatest quantity of paint needed is for the base color so keep in mind quantities for each color needed. These life-size projects require three coats of varnish to protect from outside damage and wear which equated to two cans of paint to cover the life size cow three times. Remember, varnish is also very strong in odor and excellent ventilation is necessary for breathing safety.

Although this cow is eye catching in front of the agriculture building, it has a far greater meaning behind it. The work that went into all 101 cows went to a good cause. After being displayed around San Luis Obispo, the cows headed to Santa Margarita Ranch to be auctioned off. Together, the cows raised over \$2.1 million for local non-profits including Arts Obispo, The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, the California Mid-State Fair Heritage Foundation, and other charities. The CAFES cow, Rosebud, was purchased by the university (CowParade,2017).

CowParade was an incredible organization to work for. However, the artist knew very little about it before she was asked to participate. The artist encourages future commissioned artists do a fair amount of research before starting and ask a lot of questions.

- Find out why this event is happening.
- Who is sponsoring your project and why?
- What charities are involved?
- When people look at your work what do you want them to see?
- Who or what is your artwork representing?
- Make sure you have a clear idea of your deadlines and dates of events
- Keep in close contact with the sponsor of your work even after you are finished, you deserve to know where your work is going, how much it is auctioned off for, the plans for display, etc.

Being part of CowParade was a tremendous honor for the artist. This was her very first piece of art she received payment for. It is also her first piece of art to be showcased at this large of an event open to the public. The greatest part is the cow is permanently showcased in front of the Erhart Agriculture building 10 at Cal Poly with the artist's name printed below. The artist feels even after she is graduated, a piece of her will forever be part of Cal Poly. Being bright and bold, the artist hopes the cow brings happy feelings to each person that passes by the Ag Circle. As a student, the cow gave the artist the opportunity to broaden her horizons on campus and be more involved in the community.

## References Cited

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