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Nancy Wiest Nay: Calligrapher

D. R. Dant

Nancy has a beautiful calligraphic style. The lines of her work are so clean — that is the beauty. She has a natural gift for calligraphy, an eye that lets her visualize things and know just what to do with them.

— Liz Margetts, President of Utah Calligraphic Artists

“Calligraphers love the written word,” says Nancy W. Nay, the Latter-day Saint artist featured on this issue’s cover. “The most satisfying aspect of my work is finding passages of words that move me in some way and then interpreting them calligraphically.”

Nancy views calligraphy as a contemporary art form that lends itself naturally to the disciplines of graphic design and the book arts, but she firmly believes that it also stands on its own merits as a fine art. She enjoys working within each of these diverse areas, noting that, for her, the design process remains essentially the same regardless of the calligraphic application. Nancy believes the scope of her work includes but extends far beyond the formation of letters; in approaching a piece, she considers aspects such as color, texture, alphabet, size, and weight in an effort to interpret visually what she feels the words she is working with are trying to communicate. In addition, she always tries to interject contrast of some kind to create visual impact within selected elements of a given piece.

Nancy was fortunate in being raised in Portland, Oregon, which in the 1960s and 1970s enjoyed a renaissance in calligraphy. Thus she was exposed to good calligraphy early on and was able to start her training in junior high school. Over the last twenty years, she has studied with several well-known calligraphers, artists such as Sheila Waters, Jacqueline Svaren, Gunnlaugur SE Briem, and David Mekelburg. She has taught workshops and exhibited with Utah Calligraphic Artists. Nancy currently pursues a dual career — teaching calligraphy at Brigham Young University and being a wife and mother.