

Orlando

FACES

OUTSIDE THE LINES

As a self-taught talent, Winter Park resident Brenda Heim has turned the craft of calligraphy into fine art that nourishes the soul.

After selling European hair-care products for several years, Heim realized she needed more in her life. "There were a lot of perks, but it wasn't enough," Heim says. "Something was still missing." So she listened to her heart.

Prompted by a friend's suggestion to "loosen up" the lines of the formal alphabets, Heim created an abstract calligraphic style in which the characters don't represent any specific letters or symbols from any language. "My work is about *feeling*," she says. "It's about looking into my heart—letting my inner child go play."

Today, Heim uses heavy industrial mops to create mysterious backgrounds on canvases that sometimes stretch to 15 feet in length. Relying on feelings and faith, her final brush strokes are never

planned. "Throughout the 'laying on' of colors, images begin to appear that resemble letters and characters from the Oriental, Hebrew and Sanskrit alphabets, as well as lovers embraced, elder tribal women and divas," says the 40-year-old who uses her back yard as her studio. The resulting images, Heim believes, are messages from God.

One recurring image found in much of Heim's work—which can be viewed locally at Scott Laurent Galleries and Chapters Bookshop and Café—is a bird of prey wing. "When I see an image, I like to research the possible meanings," she says. "Native American history suggests bird wings mirror our own flight through life. Just like the birds, we experience periods of vigorous flapping, soaring and gliding. In hieroglyphics, the feather is a symbol of truth.

"In this," Heim continues, "the message for me is one of strength and power." **OM**

—Kaylor Hildenbrand

