

FREE

LAKE CHAMPLAIN WEEKLY

PSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PLATTSBURGH, NY
PERMIT NO. 87
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Serving New York, Vermont & Quebec since 2000

IN NEWSPRINT & ONLINE • www.lakechamplainweekly.com

SEPTEMBER 4-10, 2013 VOLUME 14 • ISSUE 7

Doing the Gallery Hop

Ausable Valley art venues collaborate for an outstanding arts tour.

By Fred Balzac



AS A TESTAMENT TO the extraordinary concentration of artists in the Adirondack North Country, three exhibit openings that had been originally scheduled separately are now coming together in what could be called a “progressive art tour” of the already stunningly scenic Ausable Valley.

On Friday, September 6, extending from 5:30 or 6 p.m. to 7:30 or 8 p.m., exhibits will open at Keene Arts in the Old Methodist Church on Route 73 in Keene, N.Y., featuring the work of Mike Kazmierczak; Wells Memorial Library on Route 9N (just north of the Springfield Road) in Upper Jay, displaying the “Skyscapes” of Becky Pace; and the Tahawus Lodge Center (TLC) on Route 9N in Au Sable Forks, just south of the Clinton-Essex County line, highlighting a 65-year retrospective of the photography career of Jeri Wright, titled “Through the Years.”

The combined efforts of the three exhibit spaces — which, along with the Recovery Lounge/Upper Jay Art Center, and Jay Hamlet’s Amos and Julia Ward Theatre, Jay Craft Center, and Young’s Gallery, are among at least seven distinct cultural gathering spots within a 20-mile corridor — represents a new level of cooperation in area where artistic collaboration is common and community cohesion celebrated.

Barbara Smith, who, as a board member for Wells Memorial Library is the point person for exhibits there, said she was thrilled when Annie Scavo, a member of TLC’s Steering Committee, approached her with the idea of a gallery “crawl” or “hop” and working in concert to promote all three events as one.

“We get lucky sometimes and the right people [emerge] with much-needed skills and fresh ideas,” Ms. Smith told the Lake Champlain Weekly, when asked to describe Wells Memorial’s role in the joint venture as well as the library’s overall approach to exhibiting art. “We feature a local artist every two months and host a reception for each artist to meet the public and discuss the work...In general, we try to be as eclectic as possible—traditional artistic expression as well as photography, ceramics, pottery, and textile arts. Our receptions take place Friday evenings in the summer and Sunday afternoons in the off-season.”

And while the idea for cooperative marketing was the result of some creative brainstorming at TLC, it was the sharp eye of an Au Sable Forks community member, Karla Oehler, co-owner of Tea Time Antiques, the unique new store on the ground floor of the Tahawus Center, that tipped off the artists upstairs.

“Karla is always aware of art events in the area,” said Rebecca Kelly, who, along with Craig Brashear, her husband, founded and directs TLC. “She brought this confluence of events to our attention...Isn’t it wonderful that the Ausable Valley flows with cultural projects, openings, and reasons to gather? On September 6, we have an abundance of good things going on all within an easy drive.

“In Chelsea, the art district in New York City, it is common to go gallery hopping with a six-minute walk between exhibits. Here in the Adirondacks you do have to get in your car. But a gallery opening trek that includes Au Sable Forks, Upper Jay, and Keene is very doable. It will be a pleasure to meet others over the excitement of a gallery opening, to wonder and marvel with others at one human

being's achievement, to perhaps compare experiences—and, oh yes, enjoy refreshments and nibbles!"

Eclectic Oeuvre

Giving patrons plenty to nibble on, in terms of artistic nourishment, will be the 65-year retrospective of Ms. Wright's work, which first came to the attention of Rebecca Kelly back in October of 2011, when Jeri's

"Through the Years" is the latest in what—over the course of less than three years—has proven to be an eclectic mix of exhibits ranging from high art to pop nostalgia. "Our mission states that the Tahawus Windows Gallery above Main is where the art world and the village community engage with innovative projects..."

photograph "Pond Lilies" was posted online in the Jay Community News, after the artist received a nomination in the prestigious International Color Awards Photography Masters Cup, one of the leading international awards honoring excellence in color photography. "I was intrigued and wanted to see more of her work, so I discovered she was a member of Art Exchange and examples of her work were listed under Adirondack/nature photography and environmental portraits," Ms. Kelly said.

Her career has gone in many different directions but always with the desire to create or capture artful and meaningful images. Feature journalism offered her an opportunity to make images that were not just "news." Commercial studio work was initially a cooperative effort involving the clients, but the final product came from the photographer's own artistic and technical expertise.

"Working with interior designers allowed me to use my interest in architecture, color, and design," Ms. Wright observed. "And when doing magazine editorial pieces, I also found that I could write.

"I loved every aspect of whatever work I was doing, but when I was able to travel, discover, and explore so many wonderful subjects and places, I was in heaven! Of course, living in the Adirondacks for 35 years has given me inspiration and many opportunities for creating my photographic art."

"Through the Years" will feature examples of the photographer's work in multiple categories and will include hanging art for sale. Ms. Wright obliged her interviewer by commenting on a few of the pieces in the show. "Acropolis Refuge," which centers on a cat sleeping at the Parthenon, is a prime example of the need in photography for seizing opportunity: "Coming upon this magnificent feral cat dozing on similarly colored ancient stone was an image not to be overlooked."

Of the simple, yet exquisite "Sunflower," she said: "Up close and personal with a beautiful natural specimen is a beautiful experience."

And of "Greek Guard": "I watched the changing of the guard at the Presidential Palace in Athens many times, but this nighttime view really took my fancy."

Where Art and Community Engage

"Through the Years" is the latest in what—over the course of less than three years—has proven to be an eclectic mix of exhibits ranging from high art to pop nostalgia. "Our mission states that the Tahawus Windows Gallery above Main is where the art world and the village community engage with innovative projects," Ms. Kelly said. "It is designed to be a

"Through the Years" came about as a result of previous exhibits at TLC. Ms. Kelly and her colleagues have been posting a call for proposals on the Windows Gallery page of the TLC website since 2011, and Ms. Wright was an attendee at one of the very first exhibits at the center, which featured photography by Mark Hobson.

"We learned that she too was a photographer working both in the commercial and the fine arts world," Ms. Kelly said. "She became a frequent visitor to the Windows Gallery and possibly has not missed a single exhibit since we opened in January 2011. So we've had many an occasion to talk about art and photography.

"Jeri approached us in 2012 about a future exhibit of her photographs, so we began to research her work. The examples we became familiar with are mostly from her Natural Expressions collection and reflect the inspiration of the Adirondacks, but we are eager to see what her international travels and experiences will reveal."

Asked to characterize the photographer's oeuvre as well as any individual pieces in the exhibit, the TLC co-director pointed to a 5' x 7' canvas depicting a photograph of a leaf-strewn road leading through a canopy of trees past a barn. "The colors are muted and the feeling is very soft and quiet, partly because the medium itself is soft," Ms. Kelly said. "The image is so big that you feel you could walk right onto the little road.

"I think we can expect the oeuvre to be eclectic. A retrospective spanning 65 years will reveal many adventures, many points of view, and the moments that captured her attention." As for the artist herself, it seems—from her current vantage point—like her whole life has been behind a camera. "It all started with a Kodak Baby Brownie when I was seven," Ms. Wright recalled when asked for a statement. "Progressively, there have been several 35 mm's, a 4 x 5 Crown Graphic, a twin-lens Rolliflex, a Hasselblad, and on to 4 x 5, 5 x 7 and 8 x 10 view cameras. Then it was back to a faithful Nikon. I must say that I haven't responded well to the digital age. Since most of my images are on film, I now digitally scan and print my slides."

flexible, entertaining, gathering place, committed to serving the community, while opening a window to the best talent and culture of the region and beyond.

"This leaves us open to a broad spectrum of creative endeavor—from the august works of Rockwell Kent to the heart-warming exhibit of G-scale model trains by Lou Scavo and Carl Kokes. In these early years of the Windows Gallery, we are committed to revealing the creative output of people who live and work in our region. So the artists—or curators—have come from Au Sable Forks (Mark Hobson and Rockwell Kent), Upper Jay (Arto Monaco), Lake Placid (Todd Bissonette), and Jay (William Dilworth, curator/artist, and Margaret Horn, curator for "Mohawk of the Adirondacks"). Jeri Wright is from Wilmington. We want the work of our exhibitors to connect[F1] with our visitors."

As the driving artistic force behind her own New York City-based dance company, Rebecca Kelly Ballet, the choreographer and now North Country impresario is keenly aware that competition for people's attention is vigorous, particularly in a metropolis that is always packed with events from which to choose.

"Choice and competition is fundamentally good for artists, and it is good for the purveyors of art as well," Ms. Kelly emphasized, when asked what she hoped the progressive gallery hop might accomplish. "When the work of artists is worthy of attention, capable of attracting the eye and the mind, and stimulates dialogue, it enhances all who partake. It enlarges our perception of our world and makes us more discerning. I hope our three galleries will enjoy visitors from all over. We were only wishing there was an art opening in Jay, then all stops would only be about six minutes apart."

Fred Balzac reports on the arts and other cultural topics. For more information on the three exhibits, please contact TLC at (646) 734-7151 or Tahawus@verizon.net; Wells Memorial Library at (518) 946-2644 or UpperJayLibrary@whiteface.net; and Keene Arts at (914) 309-7095 or on its Facebook page.