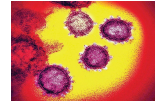




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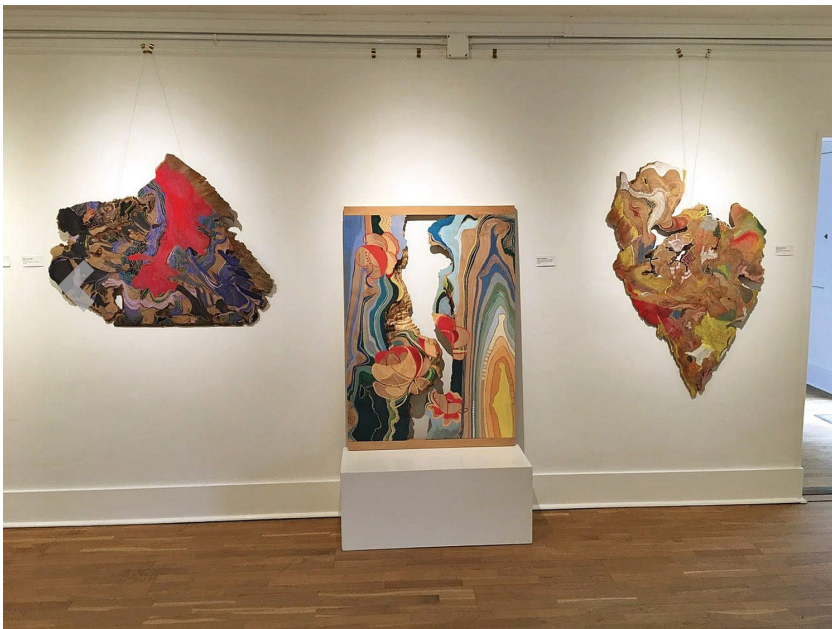


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Hilary VanWright's pastel paintings on burls, which are tree growths, were on display during the gallery's summer show.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOLLY MCNEELY

A gallery hidden in the basement ...

Posted Wednesday, July 24, 2019 11:36 am

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IF YOU GO ...

What: New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery

By Nicolas Davidoff, The Berkshire Eagle

New Marlborough — "The cobwebs were enormous," wrote Ann Getsinger. "Overall, it was a dark, dirty, and dusty, with daylight barely penetrating the grimy windows."

Getsinger is one of the founders of the New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery. In 2017, for the gallery's 20th anniversary, she wrote a column in the New Marlborough Village News remembering how it all started and how far the gallery has come.

Where: New Marlborough Village Green, 154
Hartsville-New Marlborough Road, New
Marlborough, MA, 01230

When: The gallery is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday
through Sunday (June 22 through Aug. 25); 11 a.m.
to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays (Sept. 1 through
Oct. 6)

Information: 413-229-2785,
www.newmarlborough.org

"Now, at 20 years old, the gallery has great momentum, is well respected by the artistic community, and is well supported by the New Marlborough community," Getsinger wrote.

Two years later, the gallery continues to showcase local artists in the basement of the Meeting House. This summer's exhibit, "Seeing Red" — which ran from June 22 through July 21 — featured a variety of works made by more than 20 artists. The gallery's next show, "Water Works," an invitational mixed media show, will open Friday, July 26, and runs through Aug. 25.

"It's not hard to put a show together" said Holly McNeely who has served as the gallery's graphic designer and curator for 10 years. "There's a huge selection of artists in this area to choose from."

Hilary VanWright was one of the artists displaying her work at the Meeting House Gallery. The exhibit was a way for her to integrate herself into the area's artistic community, as well as a chance to showcase her recently finished work.

"I have been living in Norfolk [Conn.] for two and a half years now," VanWright said. "I moved from Manhattan. Back there, I was an art director at Vanity Fair. I came to the realization that I needed to change things up a bit. I still do some graphic design freelance, but now that I moved out here, I have a lot more time to work on my art. I'm really loving that."

VanWright's art combines her work as a graphic designer and her love of artistic expression. She paints complex pastel patterns on burls — dome shaped growths, which can be found on the trunks of trees.

"I stumbled upon the Berkshire Products lumber yard in Sheffield," VanWright said. "I came to the realization that I needed to change things up a bit. I had a friend who was building some shelves and I was planning to do some pastel drawing and I stumbled across a really cool-looking piece of wood there. It spiraled from there as the medium I've been recently drawn to."

Despite the artists' varying inspirations and interpretations, the exhibit was still centered around the color red.

"We try to get a theme that will provoke a certain idea, but we try to keep it as broad as possible," McNeely said. "It's very much up to interpretation."

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER THESE ADS

For VanWright, the color red evoked a sense of passion and emotion.

"I happened to have a piece that had a red floral base already," VanWright said about one of the pieces displayed in the gallery. "Then I did another one, which was more of an emotional expression that I had while creating it. It has this kind of flow of blood going straight through it. Not in a gory way, though. I think of it more of like a heart beating. So, I interpreted the 'Seeing Red' theme through the lens of the emotional, alarming and startling sensations, which the color can convey."

Jane Burke, whose red clay pots were on display, interpreted the theme in a completely different way.

"'Seeing Red' was the perfect excuse for me to get closer to red clay, and to really dive into the materials that the area has to offer. It's the native clay that you can find in Sheffield in the mines," Burke explained "That's how I interpreted the exhibit's theme."

Burke doesn't necessarily consider herself an artist. This project was a chance for her to try something new, which is what she has been doing her whole life.

"I grew up thinking I was going to be a dancer until I went to college," Burke said. "I would sew and do some silversmithing when I was younger. But I was always a maker. That's what I think I really am."

Burke studied chemical engineering and then began teaching middle school science. But her passion for craftsmanship pushed her to study pottery in England.

"I moved to London without a work permit, so I decided to take some weaving classes to complement the sewing I learned when I was young," Burke said. "That class was full and I ended up taking ceramics. I fell completely in love because it seemed like it was a combination of chemistry and dance. I studied there for two years then I came to the Berkshires, deciding I would become a country potter and make functional items. I never thought of myself as an artist. I wasn't looking for original shapes or anything artistic."

Burke then founded the Flying Cloud Institute — an alternative education center in Great Barrington. She has been exhibiting her work at the Meeting House Gallery for three years now. She uses her vast array of experience in all kinds of professions to aid her in her artistic process. For example, Burke discovered that Saratoga water bottles are a great material to make cobalt glaze with.

"I found out that the cobalt in those bottles made a really great color after I melted the bottles," Burke said. "As you can tell, I'm very experimental and I also like making everything from scratch. I think that connects me much more to my work."

The New Marlborough Meeting House has come a long way since it hosted its first art exhibit in 1998. Now art classes are sometimes held there, as well as meetings, lectures and programs for the New Marlborough Historical Society. The basement, which is now the Meeting House Gallery, has perhaps seen the greatest transformation. Until 1998, the space was largely being used for storage and the sporadic party or event. Over the years, the space continued to be remodeled after the success of its previous shows.

"It's a beautiful building and great space for an exhibit," McNeely said. "There's a casualness about it that is very welcoming."



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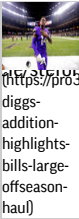
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