

Watercolor Paintings and Mixed-Media on Display at Alfa Art Gallery

Second Part in Exhibition Consists of Eclectic Collection of Work by Area Artists

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White Cyclamen *Hanna Aviv*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ--Walk into the Watercolor and Mixed-Media exhibit at the Alfa Art Gallery on Church Street and one is immediately struck by artist Hanna Aviv's gorgeous watercolors of orchids, cyclamens, and scenes from the Scottish countryside.

The paintings possess a pastoral quality, but are alive and lit with bright reds, ochres and burnt siennas – the colors of autumn in a Scottish field.

A particularly arresting piece is White Cyclamen, which captures the multi-hued

whites of petals against a blur of pastel greens, yellows and blues.

The flower-pot possesses all the fleeting freshness of a beloved plant bursting into bloom. One wants to preserve the moment of its flowering and Aviv does just that in her painting.

Featuring work from thirteen artists, the watercolor and mixed media salon at Alfa Art Gallery is an exhibition of artwork by artists in the tri-state area. It began July 8 and runs through August 22.

The gallery regularly features art salons, holding three annually in addition to hosting musicians, solo exhibitions, authors and actors.

As a result of an overwhelming response to a call for artists, the exhibition was presented in two parts.

The first part, held in April 2016, featured a majority of artists from the Arts Council of Princeton.

Alfa Art was the brainchild of Bulgarian artist Vesselin Kourtev. He and his wife, Galina, wanted to provide an arena for local New Brunswick society to engage with fine art, while supporting emerging and established artists in the larger community.

The gallery opened in 2007 at 108 Church Street in downtown, and has received support from several local organizations and businesses, in particular, from Middlesex County's Heritage Commission.

It is a hub for artists of all genres, including music, sculpture and fine art.

In complete contrast to Aviv's delighted colors are Karen Terry's somber washes of black Sumi-e ink, using a technique that is strikingly different from its traditional use in Eastern art.

Hints of shapes and shadows extrapolate into real and imagined objects and themes, inviting contemplation and reflection.

Dorothea Berkhout's oil paintings mimic the style of Dutch still lifes of the 15th and 16th centuries in very classical settings – her use of vivid colors and detail make her subjects appear almost palpable.

Greg Battista's unframed abstract watercolors are inspired by the frescoes he came across while travelling in Rome.

Frescoes are typically painted into the plaster of the wall before it dries and Battista's works are left unframed on purpose – the intention is to create the effect of the image blending into the wall by removing the interference of a frame.

The gallery supports both professional artists and individuals who pursue art as a passion in addition to earning a livelihood or raising families.

Berkhout, one of Alfa Art's regular exhibitors, is Associate Dean at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy.

Indrani Choudhary, whose paintings of Mughal architecture in New Delhi and fishing boats from India's southern coast are featured in the exhibit, worked for 25 years as a biomedical researcher before turning to painting, full-time.

The exhibition's appeal lies in the sheer variety of styles presented. By opening the floor to artists of so many persuasions, the Watercolor and Mixed media art salon extends a gesture of interest and encouragement not only to a wide selection of painters, but to anyone who visits it -- there is something for everyone.

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