

Arts & Culture

Pop-Up Art Gallery to Bring Abstract Works to Washington

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By JACK CORAGGIO

Gradually, the pop-up gallery concept is flowering into one welcome art world meme.

This relatively new phenomenon, for those unfamiliar with it, is a creative means to both showcase artwork and utilize idle space. Empty warehouses become working exhibition halls. Homes and condos on the market convert to temporary galleries; the method of simultaneously opening up a domicile and displaying artwork to potential buyers is synergy epitomized.

The concept is, naturally, embraced by communities for its forward thinking methodology. It's non-invasive and it's a quick image boost.

Sometimes vacated businesses are deemed most suitable. Even longtime country drugstores closed for three years are apt to be scouted by a discerning eye.

Remember Washington Pharmacy (previously Parks Drug) in Washington Depot, the cornerstone country drugstore that has been sitting blankly in town center since its 2008 shuttering? That lonely old Colonial would be ideal, even if for only two weeks, to be made into a makeshift art gallery.

That's the opinion of Lauren Della Monica of Litchfield, proprietor of LPDM Fine Art. Mrs. Della Monica is an art consultant who specializes in advising private clients on art collections and acquisitions, but starting next week and ending Columbus Day weekend she'll be the pop-up gallerist who transforms the old pharmacy into a temporary showcase for abstract painter Sarah Hinckley.

"This is another way to use an empty space that is unfinished, and I just love this idea," said Mrs. Della Monica. "There is such an interest in art in this part of the world, and this is an art event."

To better clarify the purpose, perhaps to give a point of reference, she noted that the pop-up concept isn't unique to the current era. For the hip, they're in fact reminiscent of a bygone groovy age.

"In the 1960s," she noted, "they called them happenings."

Far out.

The Cape Cod native and her husband, Armand Della Monica, are often residents of New York City. But two years ago they bought a home in Litchfield, and soon her keen sense for taste and flair had Mrs. Della Monica track a heightened art interest in the Northwest Corner. As astute as she is, it's her timing and placement for the pop-up that reveals something in her particularly sharp.

The same weekend the gallery pops up, across the street the Behnke Doherty Gallery will conduct an opening reception for its new exhibit, "The Atmosphere of Light." Essentially equidistant but in the opposite direction, over in Bryan Memorial Town Hall, that weekend also marks the 25th annual Washington Connecticut Antiques Show.

Mrs. Della Monica doesn't see it as a conflict but an opportunity. An opportunity, that is, to tap into the arty sentiment certain to manifest

itself in Washington Depot, a community also home to other creativity magnets, the Washington Art Association and the education bolstering After School Arts Program headquarters.

"I think it's a lot of fun and the best part about this is showing someone's work that I really believe in," Mrs. Della Monica shared. "Also to bring this show in works great, because otherwise a lot of people around here wouldn't get to see this sort of thing."

As artistic as the area prides itself on being, the venues are clearly finite. Meanwhile, the art consultant said that in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan alone there are 300 art galleries and they are all contemporary.

As for Ms. Hinckley, she too expressed certain intrigue at a sudden gallery in the Connecticut countryside. A professional artist for more than two decades, her resume is quite lengthy and impressive, and lists dozens of venues from the East to West Coast. But nowhere on it does it say "former pharmacy."

"I love the idea of this pop-up show," the artist told The Litchfield County Times. "Any opportunity to exhibit one's work is rewarding for the artist and, I hope, for the community."

Since the drugstore closed, the building interior has been stripped, and its inner skeletal structure is quite visible. But Mrs. Della Monica likes the motif; it will be so natural and raw, kind of like an artist's studio but with a few stud-masking drapes.

As she envisions it, the pared down space will complement Ms. Hinckley's abstract creations, oil and watercolor paintings that contrast colors, blend mediums and create a uniquely rich texture without sacrificing a profound sense of structure. Often there aren't any discernable images, sometimes there are, but a theme of large color blocks abutting and contrasting is persistent.

Her oil painting "Tomorrow Starting Now," which will be one of the 21 works on display at the gallery, reflects three very different tones in separate blocks. The bottom block looks so weathered, like an old piece of furniture that needs to be stripped. The middle is an expanse of silver, and very metallic. But the top has an oxidized hue, or maybe it's a partially cloudy sky at sunset.

"This has more of an earthy feel, lots of desert colors, orange and brown," said Mrs. Della Monica, specifically about "Tomorrow Starting Now." "But for me, maybe because of where we live, I think of fall, the leaves and the vegetables."

That's a sentiment that can serve as a case study in the evocation of art: how interpretations might vary from somebody around here to somebody from, say, Arizona. But beginning with the soft opening Sept. 29 to the final showing Oct. 10, art lovers can decide for themselves. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., just pop in.

To learn more, see the Web site at www.lpdmfineart.com.

URL: <http://www.countytimes.com/articles/2011/09/22/entertainment/doc4e7b44346112b045218425.prt>

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