

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Offers Works by Newest Members

Eight of the newest members at Spartanburg's West Main Artists Co-op will showcase their work in the collective exhibit *Nouveau 8*, on view through Feb. 10, 2018.

The exhibiting members will be jewelry maker Ashley Gilreath, photographer Chuck Reback, visual artist Elizabeth Bagwell, photographer John Lever, potter Rachel Child, photographer Tom Lorimore, encaustic artist Barbie Workman, and multimedia producer Yusif, who is also known as Dennis Evans.

"We are kicking off the New Year with the rising stars of art in Upstate South Carolina," WMAC Chair Beth Regula said. "These are some of our newest members, and their work is representative of a newer generation that is growing on the foundation set by artists before them. The quality, talent, creativity, and professionalism are all evident in the work that they produce. Not only do we have artists creating art that you can hold in your hand, but we have performing artists who entertain and make you think. Much of this art has deeper meanings and social comment. 2018 will be a great year for them, for WMAC, and for the arts in the Upstate. Come see this body of work and see what the future will bring. This is the power of cooperation at work."

Ashley Gilreath is a graduate of the metal design program at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, and has since been an artist-in-residence at Lillstreet Art Center in Chicago and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee. Her jewelry has been featured in several publications and permanent collections, including Lark Book's *500 Necklaces Series*, *American Craft Magazine*, the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin, and The Enamel Arts Foundation in Los Angeles.

Gilreath's conceptual artwork explores relationships with family and with personal objects. Her observations and fascination with inheritance, ancestry, and the loss of memories strongly influence the designs of her jewelry and sculptures. Besides her studio practice, Gilreath finds happiness in gardening, karaoke, hiking, and collecting antique books. Her website is AshleyGilreath.com.

"Hanging on the walls and hidden in the corners of our homes are the photographs and works of those who came before us," Gilreath said. "These seemingly mundane and irrelevant objects are the indexical records of family and human history. Accumulating visually in layers and decaying with the passage of time, these remnants of our physical world provide tangible reference points for how we understand one another and ultimately ourselves. It is my belief that books, furniture, clothing, and even silverware can influence the dynamics and relationships between past and future generations."

Elizabeth Bagwell is a native of Spartanburg and a graduate of Presbyterian College in Clinton, SC, with a degree in history and art administration. She has been creating her entire life and pursuing her creative efforts professionally for several years now. She is a juried member of the Artists' Guild of Spartanburg and a member of the Guild of American Papercutters, the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators, and Spartanburg Downtown Association. In winter 2017, she was a guest artist at the SC Governor's Conference on Tourism & Travel held in Spartanburg, where she cut pineapple silhouettes live.

Bagwell is inspired by artists such as Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Perle Fine, and silhouette artist Carew Rice.

"I am fascinated by shapes, lines — thick vs. thin; light vs. dark — and creative use of negative space in my work," Bagwell said. "In particular, I love circles and bold, thick, super-dark lines that ooze energy and movement. I like to work with contrast — that push-and-pull of quiet



Work by Elizabeth Bagwell

vs. movement and energy in a piece, and you'll often see that I work frequently in black and white with subtle shades of tan, cream, and gray to soften the palette. Laying down that first instinctual mark or making the first cut of a silhouette brings excitement and fear at the same moment, but teaches me to slow down, enjoy the experience of creating, and to discover beauty in the small details — some planned, some unplanned. I work in several mediums and focus on freehand-cut silhouettes, abstract expressionist paintings, watercolor illustrations, and mixed media works."

Chuck Reback was born in New York City and raised in southeastern Massachusetts. After attending college in Philadelphia, he moved to Boston and began a career in banking and finance. In 1996 he and his wife Melissa moved to Spartanburg, where they have lived ever since. A few years later he earned a doctorate in economics from Clemson University and began a second career as a college professor. In late 2016, he retired from teaching in order to spend more time with family, traveling, and pursuing his life-long interest in photography. He joined WMAC in early 2017. In addition to photography, Chuck enjoys hiking, cooking, and serving as a cat bed.

"My photographic interests are eclectic and opportunistic," Reback said. "Inspired by the world around me, I photograph anything from an abstract of a single leaf to a scenic vista to an industrial landscape. Over the years, my style has evolved from a literal depiction of the subject to a more personal interpretation — encouraging the viewer to experience the moment as I did."

John Lever has been an avid photographer since the days of film photography. He has augmented key skills and aesthetics learned through Tulane University, Spartanburg Photographic Guild, and Carolina Nature Photographer's Association with extensive reading and experimentation. He expects to keep developing as a photographer forever.

"The inspiration for my photography comes from my desire to share my views of my travels and of the natural world," Lever said. "Whether this takes form as a snow-covered mountain, a tropical island or a bird in flight, the theme is the same: connect the viewer with my personal view of the world. During the past seven or eight years, a big part of my photography has been while sailing aboard S/V Georgia with my brother Paul and sister-in-law Chris. This has taken me to places I might not easily get to and affording me a unique platform to see these places."

"Another major influence on my photography has been travel to the iconic parks of the American West — Yosemite, Sequoia, Banff, etc.," adds Lever. "To a person who spent his formative years on flat ground, the mountains hold a special feeling for me. One final influence I will mention is birds and especially hummingbirds. So visually appealing and so hard to see: they are a natural challenge to photograph."

Rachel Child was raised in Kentucky. She comes from a long line of makers: cooks, woodworkers, designers, and paint-

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ers. As her grandmother would say, her "art-line" runs deep. The first time she sat down at the potter's wheel, she knew she had found her path. She studied at Western Kentucky University, where she received her bachelor's degree in ceramics in 2014.

During her time at school, Child and her classmates built a wood-firing train kiln under their professor, renowned wood-firing artist Lindsay Oesterritter. With this exposure to gas, electric, and wood firing, Child does not feel tied to one style. She explores each opportunity as it presents itself. After graduating, she moved to St. Augustine, FL, where she set up her first home studio and began her small business, Heirloom Pottery & Co. Child now lives in Spartanburg with her four-year-old son.

"I aim to create contemporary heirlooms," Child said. "I believe that using something made by hand and choosing to make thoughtful decisions about the objects that we let into our lives links us to the past and adds meaning and depth to otherwise ordinary experiences. I hope to make pottery that passes the test of time, that can be held by the same family for generations. In this pursuit, I encourage people to feel a sense of connection with the things they fill their homes with. May that be a mug that is incorporated into a morning ritual, which allows us to slow down and be still, or a set of whiskey sipping tumblers used to toast an important moment in time. With my minimal forms and soft-toned glazes, I hope to evoke a sense of comfort. I picture my pots fitting seamlessly into our daily lives: the quiet, chaos, and everything in between. My pottery is meant to bring people together. Imperfections are celebrated."

Tom Lorimore has lived all over South Carolina. Educated at Wofford College, Duke University, and University of South Carolina, he spent his working life managing information technology for public libraries. In retirement he returned to photography, which was an early love. His first camera was bought with Bounty paper towel labels and \$1.95 for shipping.

"Aristotle wrote, 'The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things but their inward significance,'" Lorimore quoted. "One method for disclosing the inward significance of things is described by the painter Mondrian: 'I wish to approach truth as closely as is possible, and therefore I abstract everything until I arrive at the fundamental quality of objects.' Take away dimensionality; take away color; choose a point of focus; impose your own perspective; and see things in a new way. A leaf becomes a triangle; grains of gray become flesh and bone; a concrete wall becomes a spiritual barrier between old and new. As Thoreau said, 'It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.'"

Barbie Workman is a recent transplant to South Carolina by way of Florida. She began her studio art training at the University of Central Oklahoma and finished at the University of West Florida. Intrigued with combining techniques of several different mediums led her to a mixed-medium focus. Using the pliability of encaustic medium allows for the fusion of all these different techniques into complex compositions. She quoted the famous



Works by Rachel Child

French impressionist Edgar Degas, "Art is not what you see, but what you make others see."

Workman added, "I find inspiration in the natural and spiritual world around us. I seek to take the viewer on a visual journey with the purpose of imparting a sense of beauty in all its expressions." Still in the beginning stages of building a professional art career, Workman said she is being molded much like the wax she uses into an established artist. She quoted American Congregationalist clergyman and social reformer Henry Ward Beecher, "Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures."

Sometime around the age of 7 or 8, slightly after the institution of the touch-tone telephone, Yusif began to draw because he had dreams of being a video game fan artist. He would draw and draw for days, hours on end, getting in trouble for it. In high school he would tell people that he dreamed of becoming a starving artist. This was the first time an experimental concept that he drew all over everything (like his school desks) ended up in an art show. His photographic exploration also went the same direction. Several of his sports shots ended up in the yearbook, attributed to someone else's name.

In college, Yusif gained an associate degree in fine art from Spartanburg Methodist College. His art teacher urged him to pursue art. Interestingly enough he did pursue graphic design but never got a degree. However he got a lot of life experience, thanks to drugs and alcohol, he said. However, he was reunited with his love for photography. He also picked up a few music production skills and connections along the way, before finally deciding on sobriety and film production. Now he works as a typical audio video producer, screenwriter, designer, and general artist. He doesn't do much outside of things directly related to video and photography, but is well capable of other things.

West Main Artists Co-op is a nonprofit and all-volunteer arts agency located at on West Main Street in Spartanburg. It has three galleries, two retail shops, and studio space for about 50 artists. It is a grassroots arts agency that welcomes everyone, and it has a philosophical slant toward "Art by the people, for the people."

For more information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Co-op at 864/804-6501 or visit (WestMainArtists.org).

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Features Works by Carol Story

The West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present *The Role of Shadows*, featuring oil paintings by Carol Story, on view from Feb. 15 through Mar. 11, 2018. A reception will be held on Feb. 15, from 5-9pm.

The some-20 pieces in the exhibit will be mostly landscapes from locations around the world, and they will explore the influence of shadows in her compositions and imagery.

"I am exploring the role of darks and shadows in paintings because I seem to be drawn to scenes that have distinct shadow patterns," said Story, a retired school teacher. "When I translate these onto canvas, I find they serve various purposes: to contrast and set up the lighter colors, to create interest or drama, to direct the eye

through the painting, or to merely create a void for the viewer's imagination to take rein."

All of the paintings in this collection were created during the past two years, with most of them having been done during the past year. Although most of the paintings are landscapes in Upstate South Carolina, some are from international locations, such as Italy and New York. They will be available for purchase and will range in price \$150 to \$350.

"I would describe my work as realistic impressionist," the WMAC member said. "I am wired to capture a scene as realistically as possible, duplicating what is actual in shape, relationship, and color. However, my heart desires to paint more

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