

Toe River Arts Council

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Keenly aware of the great role art plays in forming awareness and skills of our youth, TRAC views arts education as an integral part of its mission. Involvement in the arts results in gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning improves motivation, concentration, confidence, and a promotes a teamwork mentality.

According to the Rand Report, the intrinsic pleasures and stimulation of the art experience do more than sweeten an individual's life. It "can connect people more deeply to the world and open them to new ways of seeing." This simple link creates the foundation to forge social bonds and community cohesion.

Throughout the year TRAC, with funding from local and state agencies, sends teaching artists into both county school systems to offer in-depth arts education to the children. And once a year, in both TRAC galleries, they host an exhibit of student work of all levels and from all schools (including home-schools) in the two counties.



Work on view at the Spruce Pine Gallery

The exhibit will overflow with dazzling colorful examples of youthful creativity. Every inch of the room will be covered with gifts of imagination. Art from public, private and home school students in grades elementary through high school will fill the walls. Work of future Toe River Valley artists will shine among the 300 plus pieces on display.

Also, Penland School of Crafts' teaching artist Meg Peterson collaborates closely with Mitchell County Public Schools to provide curriculum-integrated arts opportu-



Work on view at the Burnsville Gallery

nities to students, whose journals and books will be on display. The student art exhibit is an excellent learning experience and a way to boost youthful self-esteem. It raises awareness of the importance of art to the community.

We celebrate the work of the hardworking art teachers in both counties — Samantha Hundley and Amy Masterman in the elementary schools, Leslie Dickerson, new to the middle schools, and Jennifer Robinson at Mitchell County High. Yancey County has mirrored teachers Marcia Huskins for grades K-5, Keli Miller at the middle schools, and Christy Edwards at Mountain Heritage High.

These individuals spend the entire year developing curriculum-based projects and teaching arts to over 4,000 students annually. And these yearly exhibits continue to demonstrate their dedication to their students and their support of arts in education. And arts education is linked to what we want for our children and demand from our schools: academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity.

TRAC is a non-profit organization founded in 1976 to promote the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties and funded in part by a Grassroots Art Grant, through the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency, the United Way of Mitchell County, and the Yancey County Community Fund.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Council at 828/682-7215 or visit (www.toeriverarts.org).

Upstairs Artspace in Tryon, NC, Offers Several New & Continuing Exhibitions

The Upstairs Artspace in Tryon, NC, is offering several exhibits including: *Andrew Blanchard: Prints*, on view through Mar. 14; *Mark Flowers: Paintings*, on view through Mar. 14; *Carolina Camera Club: Photography*; on view through Mar. 14; Mar. 21 - May 3 - *18 Ways To See: Selected Bold Life Artists*, curated by Rimas Zailskas and Mary DiOrio, publishers of *Bold Life* magazine, with a reception on Mar. 22, from 5-8pm; and Mar. 21 - May 3 - *Richard Russell: Collage*, with a reception on Mar. 22, from 5-8pm.

Andrew Blanchard's current body of work reinterprets, in his words, "various places on the periphery of Southern towns and cities on the fringe of society." His work represents an honest social commentary on the Southern landscape and way of life. He writes, "With an overarching theme of fun, thematic interests are incorporated into the visuals, including socio-economics, race relations, literary references and environmental planning."

Blanchard earned an MFA from The University of Mississippi in Oxford, MS, and is currently Associate Professor of Printmaking and Photography at Converse College in Spartanburg, SC.

Mark Flowers uses images combined with sculptural shapes to clarify his relationship with the world. Repeated symbols form a visual vocabulary to create a narrative composed of insights and reflections of his experiences. He states, "In seeking meaning in the world, I am sharing my story in hopes of making connections with the viewer. Currently I am exploring the use of faces, figures and objects to create a more visual story."

Flowers received an MFA from Western Michigan University and currently works

from his studio, Mountain Tea Studios, in Alexander, NC.



Work by Daniel Allen Schmitt, from Carolina Camera Club

Downstairs at the Upstairs, twelve members of the Carolina Camera Club offer their work in a wide variety of subject matter and themes. Many of these artists came to photography at a very young age and developed an increasing passion for the medium into adulthood. Whether exploring the natural environment, finding art and beauty in the often overlooked scenes from everyday life, or attempting to blur the line between painting and photography, these works present a focused exploration into the very nature of light itself.

Opening on Mar. 21 and continuing through May 3, is the exhibit, *18 Ways To See: Selected Bold Life Artists*. The exhibit is curated by *Bold Life* publishers Rimas Zailskas and Mary DiOrio, who selected 18 artists from more than 100 featured in *Bold Life* in past 10 years of its publication, with an eye for the off-beat and the semi-surreal, curated by the magazine's publishers. The exhibition includes painting, photography, mixed media.

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A panel discussion will take place at the gallery Tuesday, Apr. 8, at 7pm, by Rimas Zailskas and a select number of artists featured in the exhibition.

Also from Mar. 21 through May 3, Upstairs Artspace will present *Richard Russell: Collage*. Russell draws on a specific litany of imagery - anatomical and medical illustrations, flora and fauna, art history, landscapes, furniture and drapery, decorative endpapers, vintage porn and beefcake magazines, antique engravings and Victorian scrapbooks - to compose new bodies, new species, creations that bring to life new relationships and meanings.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the gallery at 828/859-2828 or visit (www.upstairsartspace.org).



Work by Grace Carol Bomer, from *Bold Life*

Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC, Offers Pottery Collected by Joan Byrd & George Rector

Pottery from the private collection of Joan Byrd and George Rector will be on display through Friday, May 9, 2014, at the Fine Art Museum at Western Carolina University. An artist's talk and reception is set for Mar. 20, beginning at 5pm.

The exhibit, including pieces by some of the world's most celebrated potters, coincides with the conclusion of Byrd's long career as a professor of ceramics at WCU. She will retire in May after teaching for 46 years on the art faculty. Rector has taught ceramics at WCU for more than 20 years. He will continue to serve as an adjunct art faculty member in the WCU School of Art and Design.

Both Byrd and Rector were collectors before they met in the 1970s. They combined their collections when they married 30 years ago and continued to acquire new pieces in their work and travels. The works to be showcased are mostly American functional pottery, including teapots, cups, plates, platters, bowls, jars and boxes.

"In a way, this exhibit tells the story



The first piece purchased by Western Carolina University art professor Joan Byrd, a teapot by the English artist Michael Cardew.

of our lives," said Byrd. "The works were made by our teachers, our students, and our friends and acquaintances. They are pieces we have lived with and cherished for many years."

Among the works to be exhibited is the first piece that Byrd purchased, a teapot by the English artist Michael Cardew. A former Peace Corps volunteer, Byrd met Cardew while serving in West Africa and bought the

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