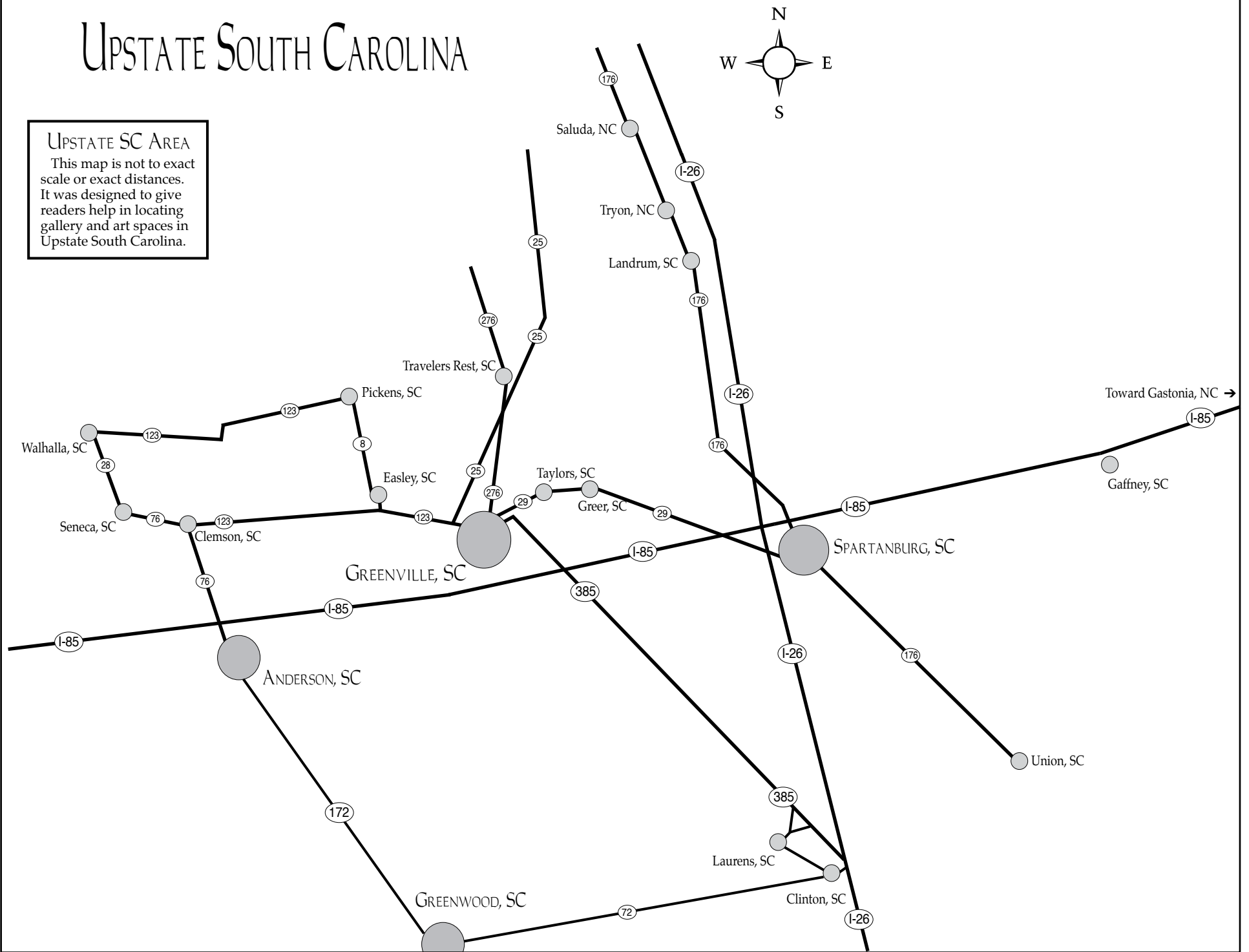


UPSTATE SOUTH CAROLINA

UPSTATE SC AREA

This map is not to exact scale or exact distances. It was designed to give readers help in locating gallery and art spaces in Upstate South Carolina.



Greenwood's Festival of Flowers

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work has been handmade by the exhibitors and must be their own original design and creation. See the creative process in action with several of our exhibitors demonstrating their craft in their booths. Something for every taste and budget with items from the

most contemporary to the most traditional.

Beside these visual art offerings there will be many other events taking place during the month of June.

For further information visit (www.scfestivalofflowers.org).

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Offers Works by Shelley Sperka & Richard G. Debus

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present *Seeking Wonder*, featuring fused glass works of art by Tryon, NC, artist Shelley Sperka and Spartanburg, SC, artist Richard G. Debus, on view from May 1 - 31, 2019. A reception will be held on May 16, from 5-9pm, during the city's monthly ArtWalk.

Two members of West Main Artists Co-op will join forces in May to present a fused-glass exhibit that will seek to inspire patrons to wonder about the interplay of color, transparency, light, and creativity.

"I am always working on glass, and I am excited about this particular installation in May," Shelley Sperka, a 67-year-old grandmother of three, said. "There will be works different from anything I have yet created. There will be reinterpretations of older works. There will be pendants. I hope all who see it will enjoy it."

"I hope that they (patrons) see the fact that I like color and that the designs are my own," Richard G. Debus, a 67-year-old retiree from corporate telephone services, said. "The most important thing about this exhibit is that it is for everyone to enjoy."

"We (he and Sperka) seek wonder everywhere we look," he added.

In all there will be about 30 pieces of glass works on display, and all will be for sale. Sperka will present work that will differ from her past creativity, which has



Work by Shelley Sperka

been abstract and non-representational. In addition to her past style, she will present lampshades, curved plates using woven glass, and landscapes that are a combination of abstract and representational. On the other hand, Debus's work will be in line with his established style, which tends toward symmetrical patterns and landscapes in tabletop sculptures and functional dinnerware. Prices will range from \$30 to \$150.

"My fused glass art is a conversation with the viewer who looks at the work," Sperka said. "I say things about my world, my emotions, and my state of mind that I can't say with words. It is important to me to communicate with the world in this way. I use my glass as a palette, cutting, designing and placing pieces based on color, shape, the play of light, and what I am trying

continued above on next column to the right

ing to say. I am compelled to communicate in this way.

"The most important attributes that glass has for me are its transparency and how it reacts with light," she said. "I create landscapes, jewelry, functional pieces, and whimsical pieces. My pieces are often not pretty. They have intentional cracks and flaws. They sometimes have little pockets under layers of glass. They are organic and one-of-a-kind. I have tried to express my despair about the state of our planet. I celebrate the planet in others. Communication is among the most important things we do as human beings. Artistic expression is a sacred form of communication."

"After retiring in 2012, I took a class on how to fuse glass," Debus said. "During that class I found my passion. Fusing glass allows me to use my creativity while letting the glass guide me. Everything that I make is one of a kind. I love cutting and combining the colored glass and then letting the kiln melt all the pieces back into one creation."

Sperka spent her idyllic childhood in central New York state. She rode horses, and practiced various crafts including preserving food from her family's garden. Eventually, she and her family moved to Tryon because of her father's teaching position at Wofford College in nearby Spartanburg. Her mother, who painted in watercolors, acrylics and oil, was a major influence on Sperka's slow discovery of being an artist herself.

"I have had an interesting career," she said. "Early on I worked at a couple of difference radio stations. At one, I scheduled

commercials to air. At the other, I wrote commercials to air. I went to graduate school in the late 1980s to get a master's degree in librarianship and became a librarian at Wofford College. It has been a very fun ride. The best thing is discovering that I am an artist."

She discovered fused glass in the 1980s and immersed herself in the newfound medium. However, she took a break from art to rear her children. She returned to art in the early 2000s.

Debus is a native of Charlotte, NC, but has spent the vast majority of his life in Spartanburg. He has worked for Southern Bell, Bellsouth, and AT&T before retiring after 40 years of service. His love for the creative process began in childhood as he played in the woods and streams around Spartanburg. He has dabbled in many mediums, but has found his passion in glass. He began with stained glass, however he discovered the fused glass process, and now, does that exclusively.

"My love for art started at a very young age," Debus said. "I remember sitting in church, drawing rocket ships on the bulletin. My mother kept a crayon drawing that I did on the first day of first grade. My grandmother always encouraged me to create. In school, I could hardly wait to go to Art class. I have tried many different mediums: screen printing, pottery, paper mache, oil and acrylic painting. In the mid '70s, I took a stained glass class and thoroughly enjoyed it. For the next 35 years, I played with stained glass - making lamp shades and suncatchers. After retiring in 2012 I took a

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