

Arts and Entertainment

Art scene alive and well in Bellefonte

by Emily Tarconish

There are times when State College, with its big university and bustling streets, overshadows the quieter, more stable Centre County seat, Bellefonte. And there are other times when Bellefonte's quaint beauty, well-preserved historic architecture and small size make it shine beyond county borders.

Bellefonte's history as an artist-friendly community helps give that shine its power. Founded in 1795, Bellefonte has retained much of its Victorian architecture against a backdrop of natural landscape that inspires, local artists say.

The environment presents enticing subjects for many painters and photographers. Painter and Bellefonte resident Susan Nicholas Gephart often features Bellefonte's landscapes on her canvases.

"There are so many awesome vistas around here, such as sweeping fields that reach out to the mountains, farmlands, fresh air and water," she said. "Painting Bellefonte is my quiet voice's way of supporting and caring for the environment."

Local artists Sharon McCarthy and Mary Vollero also depict the local landscape. McCarthy works with a range of mediums, including water colors, pastels and oils, and sometimes constructs collages, combining her own strokes with print.

Vollero, a digital imagist and graphic artist, focuses much of her work on political

issues. She often combines paint and photos to create striking images with meaning. Her work includes portraits of soldiers who have died in Iraq and the bloody head of Jesus Christ painted on a shower curtain (*Voices* cover, November 2007), a symbolic protest of war.

But all artists need support: an affordable place to live, a community that appreciates them, grants and loans to help them continue their work and places to display their wares.

Jim Dunne, a member of the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association, helps many local artists promote their work.

"It's always been a big trend in our area," Dunne said. "The art scene has more and more places to display itself in our community, and we all try to contribute to that."

The Bellefonte Borough promotes the town's art scene, supplying funding from its own coffers as well as soliciting grant money from the state. This year, the borough won a \$13,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts.

One project that the grant funded includes a photography exhibit by Vollero on recent Bellefonte fires that have destroyed historic buildings.

Photography seems to be a popular skill among locals.

Steve Heverly, a Bellefonte photographer, concentrates on still life, architecture and landscapes.

"It's interesting when I see old photos and



Photo by David Silber

Victorian House Antiques and Artisan Gallery is among the many art-oriented businesses and groups contributing to a thriving art scene in Bellefonte.

am able to look at the same buildings from the same angles and to see the differences that have occurred over the years," Heverly said.

Mark Houser, another photographer in the area, has created a series of panoramic photographs of downtown Bellefonte.

In addition to paintings and photographs, some Bellefonte artists work with three-

dimensional mediums, such as jewelry, sculpture and pottery.

The mother-daughter duo True and Talley Fisher run Rob Fisher Sculpture, which was started by Rob, who passed away, leaving the business to his wife and daughter. True

see Bellefonte, pg. 21

Women authors find encouragement in writing group

The Centre Women's Writing Group brings together local female authors to discuss their work and support each other as writers in the community.

In addition to composing creative fiction, nonfiction and poetry, CWW members also discuss ways to influence women globally. The group hosts readings and invites other community members to participate in their craft.

Voices talked to CWW members about individual aspirations, group dynamics and the collective project called writing.

VOICES: How did the group get going?

MARIAN DORNELL: It started when Judy and I took a course together in January of 1998, and we each got into local groups

Writers are notorious for always putting things off. (Meeting) makes you write ... Even if it's once a month, you've got to produce.

--Mary Rohrer-Dann

around town. Judy knew a group in Centre Hall, and I did visit that group, but I was still curious about others.

We started taking classes, and Judy later took a class from Sheila. When Judy described Sheila and the course, I was so jealous! I thought, "I am going to take a class from Sheila Squillante!"

Then I ended up taking a class with Gabe Welsch, and Kim was in it. It is all just a

result of taking those extra continuing education classes at Penn State that we slowly started meeting each other.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH: The HUB offered arts and crafts courses. Sheila and I both taught those, and that is where I met Gabeba Baderoon. She was a student. Then I met Cindy and Sheila in graduate school. Mary was my creative writing mentor.

VOICES: It seems like the group has multi-

ple centers, that no one person is responsible for getting the group together.

MARY ROHRER-DANN: I would actually have to credit Marian for being persistent.

VOICES: What is the goal of getting together?

DORNELL: It makes you write, even if we are not meeting biweekly, which we were doing for a while. Even if it's once a month, you've got to produce.

Writers are notorious for always putting things off. We are all incredibly astute and incredibly sensitive readers, and we all get, kind of, what we are each trying to do with

see Writing group, pg. 20

from Writing group, pg. 19

our work. I think that makes the feedback we provide each other not only nourishing, but truly helpful.

SHEILA SQUILLANTE: I haven't actually written anything, nor have I really contributed anything by way of critique in a consistent way since my son was born two years ago. But these people have kept me coming, and for me, it keeps me in touch with writing as a thing in the world, or a thing in my world.

JUDY ANDRONICI: I totally concur with what Sheila said. I had a situation where my mother was very ill for a long period of time. I couldn't even think about writing, and when I did, I just collapsed.

I felt that I didn't want to participate because I wasn't writing, so people encouraged me, especially Marian, to just come. At least if you go, you feel bad about not writing, which is better than not writing and ignoring it completely.

WELSCH: At least for Mary and me, it helps generate ideas because we are both working on series. I am doing my *Poor Ugliest Children in Christendom*.

ROHRER-DANN: I am doing a story that takes place in Venice during Vivaldi's time, so it's kind of a historical thing.

WELSCH: We've been swapping manuscripts and giving each other ideas, so it's nice when we get together as a group. When you leave the group, you think, "OK, I need to write these two poems I've been thinking about that someone has given me an idea for."

VOICES: What members of CWW are not here today, and what do they bring to the group?

DORNELL: Gabeba Baderoon, Cindy Clem, and we have a new person, Georgi Johnson.

WELSCH: Gabeba doesn't read like anybody else. She is from South Africa and was working on her postdoctorate, and she wanted something else to think about, so she took up poetry.

When I approach poetry, I want to fix it; Gabeba wants to celebrate it. She looks at things with a completely different philosophical bent than I have.

It's useful to have that difference in a group. Cindy Clem does the same thing, too. I think we all do that—come at it from a different point of view, and different life experiences, too.

ANDRONICI: Cindy has an amazing background. Her father was a missionary, so she traveled as a child. We pick up a lot from each other's life experiences through our work.

ROHRER-DANN: It takes you out of the world you know.

VOICES: What kinds of things do you write about?

WELSCH: A lot about race and historical stuff. You sort of bounce around and write about all different kinds of things: family, travel, and all these different things. And I write about weird stuff.

I think you have really different aesthetics that come into the picture.

ROHRER-DANN: Georgi comes from a very different perspective, too, since she is a school nurse.

DORNELL: That's right, and she's written a lot of poetry about healing and helping ill people, and she also writes about nature.

I need to say something really important about this group as far as my own work is concerned, in terms of race. These women are very sensitive, and they hear the voices of my narrators—what they are saying, almost what they are feeling—and that helps me with my own authenticity, because they tell me whether the rubber is hitting the road in the right way.

I respect their critiques of my *African-American Women from the 1800s*. That's a poetry series I am working on about enslaved women who lived along the Susquehanna River.

I am using their voices to represent prejudice from the Northern point of view. People know about and understand Southern prejudice, but they say they don't understand what Northern prejudice, enslavement and racism were like.

ANDRONICI: At the Palmer Museum, I read about my childhood and about being a young, married woman.

I don't think I can characterize it. I don't think I can say I write about any one thing.

I write about my feelings. When I do write, it's something that strikes me as emotional. Sometimes I use poetry to express strong emotions. It's just the best way I find that I can do it.

ROHRER-DANN: I do drama, fiction and poetry. I've been working on two selections. One is composed of personal poems that reflect my life, childhood and now. But the ones I did with this group are art historical—the composer Vivaldi working with an orchestra of girls and women in the early-to-mid-1700s.

When I heard about that over a decade ago, it really captured my imagination. I thought I would write about it in young adult novel form, but for a lot of reasons, it got tabled.

Then I took a poetry class with Robin Becker two falls ago, and we were working on chat books. I love the idea of telling a story through poetry.

For me, the idea of telling a story in poems is so much more liberating than having to do it in prose, to write up a whole novel. I've always been terrified of length.

WELSCH: I write about things that I think are strange. When I started out, I began writing things about family, but I kind of bored myself.

At this point, I am much more interested in writing about things I think are strange or asking "what if" questions. What if the poorest children ... ? What if you sent them to a mall ... ? That interests me now.

I am not interested in writing first-person poetry for myself. I don't write from my point of view anymore.

ANDRONICI: She is expressing herself through the characters.

WELSCH: I just tend not to express myself through me.



Register for
Summer Classes

Art Alliance

Small classes for skill levels beginning to advanced.
Courses in oil painting, acrylics, watercolor, digital camera, clay tile designs, pastels, collage, sculpture, and stained glass.

Ask about our summer
camps for kids too!



State College
DOWNTOWN
FARMERS MARKET

Every Friday ~ 11:30am to 5:30pm
on Locust Lane between College & Beaver

The Place for Local and Fresh

fruits & vegetables ~ baked goods ~ honey ~ specialty foods
dairy products ~ cut flowers ~ plants ~ soaps ~ and much more!

Art Alliance of Central PA. 818 Pike St, Lemont
For more information: www.artalliancepa.org or 234-2740

from Bellefonte, pg. 19

and Talley create high-tech computer-designed metal artwork for hotels, banks and corporate offices.

Many of Rob Fisher's abstract sculptures are still displayed locally, including at the American Philatelic Society in Bellefonte, the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center on campus and the Allen Way

Building in State College.

In addition to an artist-friendly environment, Bellefonte also provides many outlets in which artists can display their work.

The Gamble Mill Tavern, a restored grist mill converted into a restaurant, is home to an art gallery. The gallery hosts four shows a year, each concentrating on a central theme.

Bellefonte businesses, such as Victorian House Antiques and Artisan Gallery, also

showcase local artists. Owner Mitch Bradley values the area's maintenance of artistic appreciation and culture.

"I want to help continue Bellefonte's promotion of the arts," he said. "I try to carry a nicer line of local antiques, and I want to compliment that stock with quality artwork, also made locally."

Bradley collects, restores and resells a variety of antiques from the area.

The eclectic store carries a variety of crafts, including Victorian furniture, pottery, toys, crystals and jewelry. Most of the goods are made locally; Bradley incorporates the work of 17 local artisans.

"Antiques are works of art themselves," he said. "So much more care went into them in terms of quality and aesthetics, and there was a lot more pride in the manufacturing process."

Short-term exhibits are prevalent throughout Bellefonte because many residents share the love of aesthetics. Some venues also host music and theater events,

facilitating another aspect of the town's art scene.

The Centre County Library Museum and Tallyrand Park hold multiple concerts every year, exhibiting a variety of music, including jazz and classical. These shows incorporate local musicians as well as many musicians from Penn State.

Theater performances are also popular in Bellefonte. Although the Project for the Performing Arts, a drama troupe headed by True Fisher, died down after the 1990s, other groups have sprung up in the area to sponsor theater workshops. One of the groups is Tempest Studios, which offers drama seminars for people of all ages and experience levels.

Bellefonte unites contemporary talent with old history, producing a thriving art community.

"The atmosphere here is like the idea of recycling," Nicholas Gephart said. "It encourages artists to take the old and use it in a new way."

Support Local Live Music
by American Federation of Musicians
Local 660 Members!

CHRIS BYRNE
w/Slugabone
Every Tuesday
at the Phyrst from
10 pm fill 2 am
and at
Summer's Best Music Fest
Allen St Stage,
State College
6:30 - 7:30 pm

ARTHUR Goldstein
and Quartet
June 6 and 20 from
9 pm - midnight at
Zola in State College
June 13 at DiSalvo's
from 7 - 10 pm in
Williamsport
June 28 at 9 pm w/
Rick Hirsch and the
Hirschtet at the House
of Jazz, DuBois

JAZZ BLUES

Every Sunday
from 6-9pm at the
High Street Pub in
Bellefonte

Every Tuesday
from 7-11 pm at
Home Delivery
Pizza Pub in
Bellefonte

Last two
Saturdays in June
from 6-9 pm at the
High Street Pub in
Bellefonte

JACKSON
with Blues Moon
Ronnie's Place, Mount Union
Sat, June 21 at 10 pm
Racers Sports Bar, Tyrone
Sat, June 28 at 10 pm
and
Thunder in the Valley!
Central Park Bandshell
June 27, 4:30-6:30pm

Rick Hirsch
w/Liquid Jazz
June 3 at 8 pm at
the All American Ale
House, State College
w/the Hirschtet
June 27 at 9 pm at
Zola, State College



Photo by David Silber

Bellefonte's Gamble Mill Tavern, a restored grist mill converted into a restaurant, is home to an art gallery where local artists can display their work.

A Musician's Most Valuable Instrument.

New Inner Ear Test
We now offer the most sensitive test of damage to the inner ear. This provides an early warning of loss of the ear's precise frequency-tuning capacity.

Musicians' Products

- Musicians' ear plugs
- In-ear monitors
- Custom ear pieces for iPods

Albrecht Audiology
814-867-HEAR (4327) • www.albrechtaudiology.com

Bellefonte Arts and Crafts Fair
Aug. 15 and 16, 2008

Booths line the streets of downtown Bellefonte showcasing the wares of painters, photographers, woodworkers and more. Live entertainment, food and children's activities, too.

For more information:
(814) 353-1115 or <http://bellefonte.com/calendar>