

Strolling through the minds of Lyons' artists

Lyons Studio Tour- June 28th and 29th

By Kathleen Spring

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There's no need to travel to Boulder, Sante Fe or Aspen to see an amazing art tour. This weekend is the Lyons Studio Tour where Lyons residents and tourists will rub shoulders as they visit artists' studios and homes, delight in landscaped gardens, and inspect art displayed in businesses downtown. It takes place this Saturday, June 28, and Sunday, June 29, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A list of artists and the stores that will display their works was published in the June 5 *Lyons Recorder*. The free event's color maps and guide is available at The Stone Cup Café, the Visitor Center, and at many of the artists' venues. Each venue will have a street marker to identify it.

"The art walk evolves each year and moves from hand to hand," said Priscilla Cohan, who ran the first couple Artique events, with a large volunteer group. In 2007 and this year, the tour is run loosely by the artists themselves. "We have kept the administration to the absolute bare minimum. I hope it continues to be successful. If it remains in this style, I would like to see someone coordinate more community events. I did the graphics end, and if anything is lacking, it is contact with the other artists involved and a sense of community. I miss that."

This year, thirty-seven artists will have scattered their expansive variety of art over the wider-Lyons area. The exhibits include paintings, photography, pottery, sculptures, paper art, handmade books and purses, bonsai, and more. Participants can also see where many of the artists work and ask them questions about how they created their art, both in a concrete and spiritual sense.

The 2008 art walk took place on Apple Valley Road. This year, it has been brought back to include the streets of downtown Lyons. New in 2008, people can access the homes on the tour by boat, inner tube or kayak. Five of the homes have docks along the St. Vain River and more homes are an easy walk away. Some homes have limited parking, so car pooling and bikes are a practical suggestion.

Ashley and Parker Johnson will again have music, art and kids' crafts. Margit Percival again invites visitors to see their stunning imaginative gardens and art work. The Lyons Depot Library will have its annual used book sale. As part of Good Old Days, the Lyons Historic Society is sponsoring crafters who, for the first time, will be in Sandstone Park and Bohn Park. The Lyons Golden Gang is combining their Good Old Days motorcycle events, a big raffle, and snow cones with the art trail event. They will be selling natural landscape paintings by Toni Biter at reasonable prices, with all proceeds going to the meals-on-wheels program.

"All artists' work represents the artist's personal vision and mastery of their crafts," said Susan S. Peirce. Visitors can be art critics for the day and perhaps bring home a locally made piece.

To see a sample of the artists' work, go to www.lyonsstudiotour.org. To discuss future art tours contact Cohan at (303) 823-5655 For information on the future of Sculpture Trail call John King (303) 823-6828.

FINDING HER ARTISTIC PATH

At nine years of age, Karen Conduff realized that she wanted to be an artist. In the past, her mom had bought her brother and her paint-by-number kits. Her brother would point out to her that “you’re suppose to put red in the number two spot, not yellow” but she continued to do what she thought was best. Her mother supported her freedom of expression and bought her a set of oil paints to do with what she wished.

“I’ve always been interested in representational art,” said Conduff, “but when I went to college, the teachers were all doing abstract art.”

As part of her college requirements, she had to supplement her classes with non-painting classes, so she took a pottery class. It changed her life. She did pottery for 12 years until carpal tunnel stopped her.

“I think it was the thick juicy quality of it that attracted me,” said Conduff. Today she does oil paintings that she describes as being three-dimensional, with a sense of volume. “I like paintings that look like the artist was playing with the paint, enjoying the tactile quality of it...like icing on a birthday cake.”

Twenty years ago, she met her husband and started a family. When her daughter was three, she started looking into signing her up for a variety of art classes. Her husband asked if the classes were really for the child or for her needs. It made Conduff reassess her life, and she started taking art classes again. The oil painting lessons were what struck a cord with her, and she started to do it professionally in 1993.

“I owe a lot to my husband for his support,” said Conduff who travels to classes and shows. She most admires the work of artists who have gone to the Art Center in Los Angeles, and she has been lucky enough to study under several of them. “If someone came up to me and asked what should I do to be an artist, I would say don’t get a college degree. Find artists who you admire and learn from them.”

Conduff, who lives on Left Hand Canyon, has an artist residency at the Zapata Ranch in San Luis Valley this week, but she will have some of her work on display at Betsy Burton’s home during the art tour. Her web site is www.karenconduff.com.

FINDING A NEW HOME

Lyons was home when Karen Strawn give birth to her daughter, but because of health reasons, she moved to Jamestown. Loving that small town atmosphere, she thought she had found a replacement, but pleasurable yearly visits back to Lyons kept tugging at her to return. Three months ago, Karen and husband Daniel brought their now 18 year-old-daughter back to town and a home on Apple Valley Road.

“We are renting a large studio in north Boulder but are working on expanding our garage into a working studio,” said Strawn, eager to have everything in one place. “I’m excited that Lyons has become a home for great artists.”

Karen and Daniel make furniture out of handpicked hardwoods under their business name Arcadia Design Studio. Their unique designs and multilayered, rubbed finishes make each piece museum quality. Daniel use traditional joinery techniques. Talking with their clients is crucial to the process, right down to leaving them with detailed instructions on how to care for the furniture.

They were way ahead of the green revolution, constantly educating themselves about new developments in the lumber and building industries. They seek out “small wood dealers, urban lumber jacks, and wood companies who can provide responsibly harvested hardwoods.” Twelve years ago, they started experimenting with non toxic, eco-friendly products.

Both of their parents had attended the University of Denver, the oldest private university in the Rockies, with extensive research and state-of-the-art technology, and they feel it influenced their lives. Daniel was raised in a family of painters and sculptors. He also went to DU for sculpture and followed it with 18 years of antique restoration. For the past 15 years, he has focused on the design of wood furniture. Karen specializes in fine metalsmithing, focusing on repousse copper detailing.

The Karen is sending out fliers to 50 of their customers to come and visit them in their new home and town of Lyons. They are a good example of how Lyons’ art tours bring new visitors to town. Their web site is www.arcadiadesignstudio.com

FINDING NATURE IN HISTORY

Susan S. Pierce worked around her parent’s restrictions on what they thought would be an appropriate college course of study to take. Susan wanted to be an artist but was told it was not a practical career. She started out in advertising design but changed to art history.

For approximately 25 years, Susan has been an art history professor. For 22 years she has lived in and out in Lyons. And, for 20 years she has been in color photography. All those double digits add up to twice the fun her parents had imagined for her.

While living in Flagstaff, Arizona, she took advantage of the Grand Canyon and Anasazi ruins and developed her style of crossing nature over with architecture. She might sit in a structure and take the photo through the window, including the edges of the window with the distant landscape, “seeing what the ancient world would have seen.”

As an art historian, she began taking images to use as teaching tools in her class. She began to document ancient art and went to the sites. She expanded her repertoire through some grants that allow her to travel and do research.

Susan moved to the Blue Mountain area of Lyons when her husband got a job at the University of Colorado in Greeley. She soon became the art historian at the Colorado State University in Ft. Collins’ art department. They chose to live in Lyons because of its natural setting and its proximity to Boulder.

“I love the small town ambience and the artists that are drawn to it,” said Susan. “The town reflects the congeniality. I hope to see the art community expand and the town purchase art objects, like public sculpture. I’d like to see an art center.”

Her exhibit at Betsy Burton’s house will include the Anasazi photos, pieces from a recent documentary shoot of California missions, and a combination of shots of nature near Lyons. They will emphasize “the abstract forms in nature, the magical quality of place, and the essence of architecture, like thresholds and doors, or transition zones.” Her web site is: www.canyonlights.com