

Art Blooms in Yonkers—A Review of the 7th Annual YoHo Artist Open Studio Weekend, April 17–18

By Amanda Jane

Visiting the YOHO open artists' studios is like falling through the rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland.

Outside is a grim, repurposed factory; inside is a world of startling color and beauty. Over fifty artists rent space in this huge building at 540/578 Nepperhan Avenue in Yonkers. The level of their talent is extraordinary.

YoHo
at the Artist Studios
Alexander Smith Carpet Mills Building



Miho Goto

These are not young, starving upstarts, but instead, seasoned artists whose average age is around fifty. Almost all of them reside in Westchester. They represent a wide variety of art -- oil paintings, plaster sculpture, metal sculpture, portrait photography, pop art, folk art -- to name but a few. There is a fascinating story behind every studio door.

Michelle Frick builds sculptural pieces from expired medical products. She fashioned expanding lungs shaped like birds and lithographs of the heart that meld anatomy and art. She was inspired to explore these subjects after her son endured three heart surgeries before the age of four.

Ervin Chandler, originally from Trinidad, paints deeply evocative natural scenes reminiscent of his native land.

Kevin Gordon is a well-known and respected portrait artist with whose works hang in hospitals and boardrooms around the country. He indulges his passion for murder mysteries in detailed, glowing oil paintings.

Laurie Vagoda, daughter of an artist and niece of veteran actor, Abe Vagoda, recently made the transition from representational art to curvaceous, striking abstract forms while she ponders college admissions for her children.

Barbara King creates flowing, sheets of cut-out shapes that stretch for yards on end.

Pulitzer prize-winning photographer, George Gutierrez, paints highly original scenes of Manhattan water towers.

Ginny Fox applies acrylics on unusual media, clayboard and duralar, to create layered, deceptively geometric art entirely drawn by hand.

R.J. Dibenedetto paints metal for motorcycles like the top stuff featured by Paul Tuttle, Jr., formerly of Orange County Choppers, or Chip Foose in "Overhauledin'."

The Nepperhan Avenue building, renovated in 2003, is a designated area of the Empire State Development Zone which subsidizes rents and provides tax rebates for jobs created in the zone. The artists' community formed at YoHo was recently joined by musicians and craftsmen and continues to expand.



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R.J. Dibenedetto

Exemplars of all the artists' works can be seen at the YoHo website, www.yohoartists.com. Space limitations make it impossible mention all the remarkable artists whose work merits mention. Westchester art lovers who attend the next open house will be richly rewarded.



Ginny Fox



Miho Goto



Michelle Frick