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YoHo Open Studios Spotlight: Susan MacMurdy

Jamie L. Rotante

 May 24, 2025*Susan MacMurdy's Collage Art Workshop 2025 – Photo Credit Jamie L. Rotante*

On the YoHo Artist Studios' fourth floor lies Susan MacMurdy's collage art workshop. Starting as a printmaker, MacMurdy has worked in paper crafts for many decades. Her mixed-media collages are inspired by nature, especially the beauty found in “urban nature,” like public parks and community gardens in upper Manhattan and the Bronx. The juxtaposition of city life and the greenery of nature, robust wildlife, and aquatic creatures can be seen in many of her pieces, like “Bronx Supermoon” and “Gone Fishing.”

*“Bronx Supermoon,” 36 x 24 in. Collage on Wood Panel, 2024 – Photo Credit Jamie L. Rotante**“Gone Fishing,” 36 x 24 in., Collage on Wood Panel, 2024 – Photo Credit Jamie L. Rotante*

For her practice, MacMurdy primarily uses magazine stock for her cut-outs. She prefers matte for her backgrounds, advises against using rubber cement, and cautions about working with glue instead of opting for neutral PH, like bookbinder use. She applies her adhesive using matte medium and foam brushes.

As for the actual cut-outs, “I never use exacto knives,” MacMurdy explains, to the surprise of many in her studio, “only scissors. I have a special set, but sometimes I just use regular scissors, though I do sometimes use a sewing mat for clean edges and a box cutter.”

“Shadow School,” 24 x 36 in., Collage on Wood panel, 2025 – Photo Credit Susan L. Rotante

It was after her time in printmaking that she developed an interest in collage. As she explains, “printmaking is all about negative space. Collaging is what’s left behind. I’m interested in that. I save everything, I sometimes keep both.” What also differs between the two is the need for a pristine white background in printmaking, versus color in collage. As a painter, MacMurdy has always worked in oil, and although she studied painting at school, she never felt she was good at it. Though initially timid, she began taking a paint roller to her canvases to create the color pattern backgrounds seen in her collages.

What’s especially noticeable is her vivid use of color. Interestingly enough, she sticks with two main colors as backgrounds for all her collages: ultramarine blue and burnt sienna. She thinks of complementary colors, like blues with oranges, yellows, or golds, various degrees of greens and reds, and builds from there. If a color pops, it’ll be added, like the hot pink origami on “Gone Fishing.”

“I worked in only black and white for a long time,” MacMurdy recalls her days in printmaking. “It wasn’t until I had my kids that I decided to incorporate color into my art.”

“Solitude Standing,” 24 x 36 in., Collage on Wood Panel, 2024 – Photo Credit Jamie L. Rotante

Susan MacMurdy’s work was most recently displayed as part of the “Ancestral Wisdom” exhibit at the Longwood Art Gallery in the Bronx. Learn more about it at BronxArts.Org.



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