



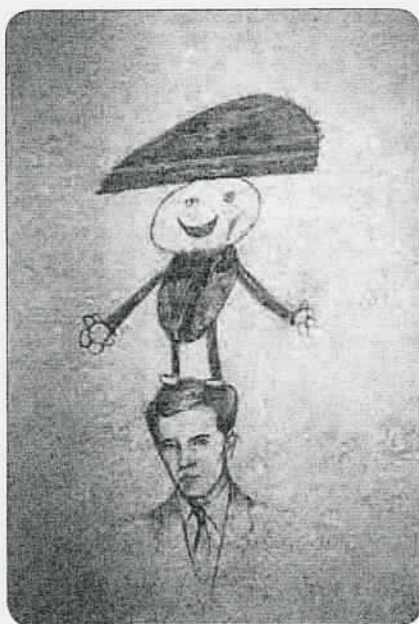
Creative burst

Something's happening to the art scene in Stone Ridge

Something major's been happening over at the Ulster County Community College besides an internal name change to SUNY-Ulster. It started a few years back with the building of a major new addition to the classically nondescript Vanderlyn Hall that included new art department facilities — pristine darkrooms, digital computer labs, art classrooms and even a gallery. And it's taken several steps further this year with the hiring of a new full-time art star to head the department, the strengthening of part-time staff, and the inauguration of what has turned out to be the 40-year-old institution's first-ever faculty art show.

And what a show it is! Mixing various media, from documentary and digitally-manipulated photography to straight-out painting and a healthy bit of conceptual sculptural fun utilizing video and cassette tape, the exhibit shows off a well-rounded and adventuresome faculty that any student, let alone county, should be proud of.

According to students and faculty spoken to, art at SUNY-Ulster languished a bit in recent years, caught with a faculty that lacked many real working artists who could lead and inspire in-



IAIN MACHELL

quiring students, excited by the resurging national and regional art scenes. Gradually, though, an adjunct faculty of working artists, showing around the area and ready to bring the lessons they'd learned from other art schools, started building up an inward momentum within the department. Then, this past August, the school hired Scottish artist Iain Machell, who has been commuting up to the Stone Ridge campus from Brooklyn and is currently looking for a home here... although he adds that, as a working artist, he will attempt to keep homes in both places.

"It's been really good, all of this. The department's been full of potential and this incredible sense of opportunity all autumn," Machell said. "What I'm picking up is that the incoming students

have been picking up on the new energy and have started showing greater interest in taking their work further, finding what it takes to go on to four-year schools, or to enter the larger art market. And they're changing the mood of some of the students who have been here longer."

Josephine Bloodgood, who also serves as a curator at the Woodstock Artists Association, said one of the signs of something happening has been the new Arts Club that she and Machell have started for students, plus the fact that student work is starting to show more around the area; several student pieces will hang in a new state show opening up in Albany later

water, a pensive moment captured perfectly, tensely. Another is of legs moving away, a pale being carried. Is it a man or a woman? It's hard to say, but the whole work carries an inner narrative as powerfully as any work I've seen in the region of later. Lastly, Bloodgood's "Three States of Being," a watercolor, displays several layers of complexity in as clear and lucidly thought-out manner as I've seen anywhere this last year. Feet up front, at bottom foreground; a deer fleeing at the top; a halting shadow in between, over decorative natural depiction. Stunning work, really.

Machell's work is also a highlight, from his cage-like construction of cassette tape, hanging from the ceiling, and his



"THREE STATES OF BEING," JOSEPHINE BLOODGOOD

this month.

"We've now got four Basic Drawing classes, each with about 18 students in them," Bloodgood said. "And I love the mix of students we're working in, from adults getting back on track to some really ambitious kids using this as a stepping stone to what could turn into some major art careers."

Susan Jeffers, a photographer who runs the campus gallery and curated the current show, added that although she's been planning something of this sort for some time, having noted the successes of the regular faculty exhibits at SUNY-New Paltz's Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, everything came together perfectly this year, what with the burst of new energy coming out of the Vanderlyn wing's studios, offices and darkrooms.

So what to expect from the show? A potpourri, to start — things to please, things to wonder about, things to not like. A strong show, in other words, bound to leave a viewer with more than one might have expected.

Among my own favorites are Bloodgood's three works — two oil on board, the third a watercolor. Unlike the moody moonscapes she's been showing in Woodstock over the last year, these works are larger and more realistically rendered. One shows feet in running

tree-of-life-like arrangement of videotapes on the floor to works from his "Growing Pains" series that he describes as, "drawings constructing an obscure personal narrative that connects the present with an ancient past, with my childhood hovering somewhere in the middle. Drawings and photographs that I made as a boy are recombined in an empty, white drawing space with family photos and images of significant monuments from the prehistoric landscape of my British upbringing. A metaphorical struggle of images on the paper tugs at my roots and stirs up issues of exile and a sense of place." Suffice to say the stuff is haunting and unlike anything else we've seen around the area in recent years.

We could go on about Larry Berk's atmospheric color xerox collages, Julie Edelson's street photographs of Brighton Beach, Marie Mastrorlando's other-worldly yet warm ceramic vessels, Peter Correia's strong photographic work or Jeffers' own color photo work and enigmatic "Drag," a sculptural piece that includes "lake bottom stuff."

The point is to get there and start keeping an eye on what's coming out of the campus hidden away in Stone Ridge.

SUNY-Ulster's exhibition of faculty and college staff will be on view through December 5 at the Muroff-Kotler Visual Arts Gallery, Vanderlyn Hall, on the college's Stone Ridge campus. Hours are usually Monday through Friday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., but the gallery will be closed November

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