



December 2020

Newsletter

KEEPING THE ARTS HEALTHY

CONTENTS

- Good Riddance 2020!..... 1
- Volunteer of the Year..... 2
- 2020: To Exhibit or Not To Exhibit..... 3
- Finders Keepers..... 4
- Creativity Overcomes All Obstacles 4
- Keep Challenging Your Kids..... 5
- Pottery in the time of COVID 6
- A Note from Our Board President..... 7



And the Volunteer of the Year award goes to...



PAT LEDOUX!

"I volunteer because helping others benefits me," Pat said. "My profession in nursing brought me the same comfort." Running Finders Keepers was no small feat, and we couldn't have done it without the help of volunteers like Pat. She was always happy to step in and help - from stocking shelves and pricing, to accepting inventory and assisting customers.

What did Pat love most about volunteering at the store? "Meeting/ dealing with so many friendly patrons," she said. "It brightened my day, as I hope it brightened their day in what was a very different season for Clayton and TIAC."

Thank you, Pat!

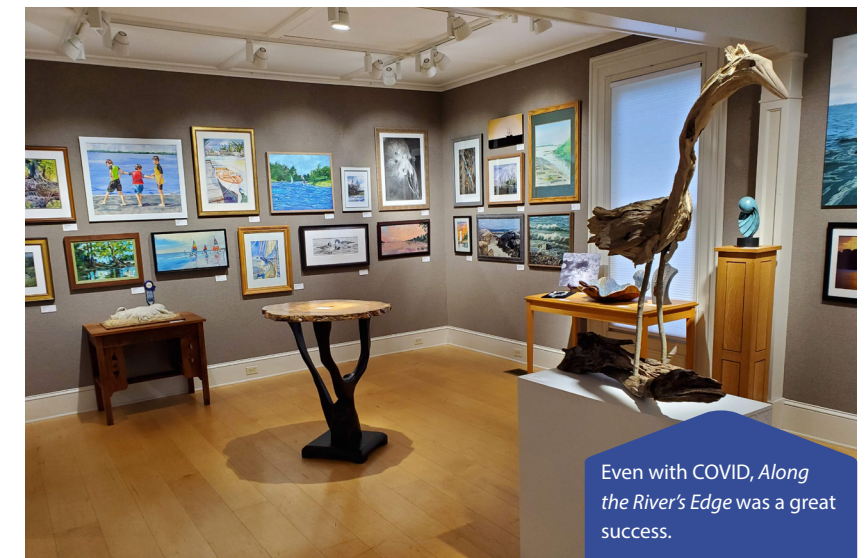
(continued from page 1) tied with the best ever results – in the quality of the work and sales – all despite COVID! And, once again, Marina Loew installed one of our finest-ever exhibitions, with visitors and patrons taking notice like never before.

And with reduced revenues, we reduced expenses accordingly. Under Alan Hutchinson's watchful eye, we couldn't even buy a paper clip - only Lysol, masks and hand sanitizer!

And last but not least, it is you – our very devoted members and supporters – who really made 2020 a year to remember – and not

just for the pandemic. Not only did members renew early and at increased levels, but our *Keep the Arts Healthy* Campaign announced in October with a goal of \$29,500 to close our budget deficit exceeded our boldest expectations. As of this writing, the Campaign has raised over \$40,000 from more than 100 donors.

As I begin my ninth season with the Arts Center next year, I am ever mindful and grateful for my steadfast staff, supportive board and dedicated members. When things looked so bleak in the spring, you all stepped up on many levels, and because of that, 2020 is ending on a very high note.



Even with COVID, *Along the River's Edge* was a great success.



Will Salisbury's crow arrives at the Arts Center for the exhibition *Will Salisbury, Sculptor: A Retrospective*.

Thanks to you, the Keep the Arts Healthy Campaign exceeded our goal!



Good Riddance 2020! Brighter Days Ahead!

Leslie Rowland, Executive Director

WHAT A YEAR! Like the rest of the world, ours was filled with highs and lows. Life as we knew it came to a screeching halt on Monday, March 16, and we anxiously adjusted to the new normal one day at a time.

On Tuesday, we quickly regrouped, learned how to Zoom, set-up our home offices, reduced compensation, and carried on. We cancelled classes and some events, and rearranged our calendar in the hope that the virus would subside later in the summer and we could have modified events. While that wasn't the case on all events, we had many successes.

We turned lemons into lemonade when our 321 James Street tenant pulled out and we opened Finders Keepers, an eclectic resale shop stocked with donated

merchandise and staffed by trustees and volunteers. Under the very experienced retail hands of Joy Rhinebeck, the results have exceeded expectations.

We were fortunate to receive federal stimulus money allowing staff to return to normal levels. We got creative, finding alternate class locations that would allow physical distancing and holding classes outdoors as much as possible. Marcia Rogers diligently rearranged classes, calling registered students on a daily basis and reassuring them of our strictly enforced safety protocols for students and instructors alike.

We pushed back the ever popular *Along the River's Edge* exhibition to late summer and ended up virtually



Will Salisbury with Charlie Tebbutt (I) and Thomas.



This year's *Along the River's Edge* featured artists Rose Popper and Pat Brown.

2020: To Exhibit or Not To Exhibit...

Marina Loew, Curator

COVID MADE ITS WAY TO THE US and the Arts Center closed down in March. At the time of our closure, a textile exhibit installation was underway to coincide with our 26th Annual Weaving History Conference in May. Soon, we had to make the difficult but wise decision to cancel both the exhibit and the conference. The textiles were put back into their boxes, returned to the collections, and the exhibit was pushed to next year.

The next exhibit on the schedule was our juried annual show *Along the River's Edge* (ATRE), which was followed by summer headliner Will Salisbury, sculptor and Northern New York Renaissance man. With the arrival of COVID, the Board and staff suddenly had to have some serious discussions about whether or not the exhibitions could take place. Would we be able to effectively enforce safety protocols? Would the museum be open to visitors by then and more importantly, would they even come? We already cancelled our textile exhibit...should we just postpone until next year?

While we were stuck in limbo, I optimistically spent time in the galleries (when no one else was around, of course!) prepping things in the hope that we'd soon have visitors.

I applied new coats of paint on all the pedestals and vitrines, patched holes in the walls, and took inventory of exhibit furniture and props. After careful consideration it was decided: we would push ATRE to late summer and continue with our plans for Will's show. He deserved to have an exhibit - a retrospective of his life's work - as we would be doing him (and the community!) a disservice if we postponed it. It was also a good test - we would be able to determine if having an exhibition in our galleries during COVID was even possible.

After so many weeks of fear and uncertainty, it was nice to have something positive to focus on and look forward to, something that would bring us a little closer to "normal." One good thing about installing during the lockdown was that the roads were cleared for Will's guys to truck in the *Moonwalkers* and other sculptures that soon decorated our grounds. Over the next month or so - and under the guidance of the artist himself - the rest of the pieces began to show up at the Arts Center and the show was gradually installed. From a curatorial perspective, I can't tell you how refreshing it was to be able to *gradually* install an exhibition!

Will's show was a huge success - even

better than we could have hoped, given the circumstances. Having pieces outside drew people in, but also offered a safe alternative for those who were wary of entering the building. Thanks to the small size of our museum, we were able to easily follow and enforce safety measures, and we had a steady stream of visitors throughout the summer and fall.

This exhibit showed us that we could do it. At a time when about one-third of US museums have closed or are at risk of permanent closure, we've been able to stay open, host exhibits in a safe way, and provide an opportunity for our community to appreciate some great art. And we just recently ended our season with ATRE, another resounding success! If we've learned anything from this crazy year it's this:

We all need an outlet for our creativity, a chance to learn new things, and a safe place to escape to and just be.

I'm happy that TIAC can be that place, and I can't WAIT for you to see what we have in store for next year. Stay tuned!



Finders Keepers

Joy Rhinebeck, Events Coordinator

MY INVOLVEMENT WITH TIAC began when I moved to Clayton from California in 1995. First taking art classes, then joining the board and becoming the treasurer vice-chair, and eventually board president. I was then hired as an employee five years ago as the events coordinator.

As many of you know, two of our biggest events and fundraisers, the Antique Show and the Arts and Craft Show were canceled this year. We also lost our tenant at our James Street property. With the direction of our Executive Committee, the idea to open an upscale thrift shop at our empty James St. location with donated items that were to be sold at our Annual Antique Show, our shop Finders Keepers was formed.

We had no idea how this was going to turn out but we didn't have anything to lose and what a great success it was this summer! We had many volunteers who stepped up to work store shifts and we also had wonderful items donated from our members and the surrounding

community. Our store was very well received with a lot of positive feedback and we well exceeded our expectations and goals. I want to thank everyone again who helped make our first season with Finders Keepers a real treasure and success.

If you missed us this summer, do not worry, as we will be opening for another year of upscale thrift shopping with lots of new bargains for you to find beginning mid-May 2021. Please contact me with any questions at joy@tiartscenter.org, or if you would like to volunteer a few hours or donate goods.

I hope you can stop by and check it out!



Creativity Overcomes All Obstacles!

Marcia Rogers, Education & Membership Coordinator

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE YEAR this has been. We started out the year like usual with great expectations of an exciting year ahead, having spent the winter months mapping it all out. We looked forward to seeing our local friends come out of hibernation and our summer friends return - gathering to enjoy the arts in its many forms. But all of that quickly faded as COVID started rearing its ugly head in the early part of the year.

As we scrambled to figure things out and make new plans, we tried our best to keep our members abreast of all of our efforts and activities. While all classes were cancelled through June, we were able to salvage some of our scheduled classes in the latter part of the summer and early fall, albeit with much smaller attendance, masks, and lots of Lysol! A notable class highlight this summer was bringing in nationally known artist David R. Becker of Chicago to teach a watercolor class. David studied at the American Academy of Art in Chicago and is highly recognized for his work in and around the Windy City. While here, he taught to an enthusiastic group of watercolor artists at Lucky Star Ranch in Chaumont.

Our After School Arts program has undergone many changes this fall season. We are currently hosting more kids than ever before and are enjoying seeing so many new faces in the program. We also welcomed new after school instructor Shannon Walter this season and are very excited with all she brings to the table. Beyond that, we changed our traditionally scheduled time to meet the needs of local parents and feel fortunate that we're still able to provide this wonderful program.

(continued from page 4) Hearing the kids' laughter and watching these little budding artists is a huge treat. We couldn't do all that we do without the generous support of the Leonard C. & Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation; RBC Wealth Management; and a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature and administered by SLC Arts. These generous donors help bring everything to life.

As we approach winter and settle into catalog planning, I'm optimistic for the new year. While we've discussed the possibility of a virtual format for some classes that might be a logical fit, we'll mostly plan for the in-person learning experience as we have in the past. There's no better way to learn!

There's nothing like learning and creating in the company of friends.

So here's hoping that 2021 brings all of us together again to do just that. I look forward to seeing you, sharing new teachers, new classes, new artwork, new experiences, and above all, smiles and laughter – a much needed commodity right now.

Enjoy your holidays, friends.



Keep Challenging Your Kids

Shannon Walter, After School Arts Instructor

AHH, DECEMBER: a time of magic and wonder, peace and goodwill towards men...and finally the end of 2020. For so many of us, 2020 has been an unusually challenging year but I think we owe it to ourselves to celebrate just how tough we truly are.

During my time teaching the After School Arts program, I have had the pleasure of getting to know your children. Every class, I ask your kids to share one good thing that happened at school and one not-so-good thing. I get the usual answers, "I got to go on the playground today!" and "My math test was hard," but many times the best part of their day was just going to school. They don't complain about the masks or the hand sanitizer smell. They don't get frustrated when the video feed glitches. They understand that grownups are doing their best to keep everyone safe, even if it means that birthday parties are drive-by events now and sleepovers are a distant memory. Our kids are tough and pretty happy.

You may wonder what this has to do with art...well I have a favor to ask you. This year, during the holiday break, keep challenging your kids. They are immensely creative and innovative; this year more than ever I've witnessed my students tapping into their imagination and creating incredible stories, artwork, and games. You may be tempted to purchase pre-packaged craft kits but I believe they limit your child's potential by focusing more on the end result of the project rather than the experience. Instead, give your children a pack of construction paper, scissors, and a glue stick, and I promise you they will be happy. Watch their imaginations run wild as they construct a castle out of paper towel tubes. See how a few sheets of paper and some markers become a treasure map leading to their blanket fort.

I tell the kids that there are no mistakes in art, only solutions that create something new. Challenge them and I promise, you will all be happy.

With wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a healthy New Year,
Ms. Shannon

Pottery in the Time of COVID

Kathy Morris, Staff Potter

THE POTTERY STUDIO HAS GROWN over the past year with a group of dedicated potters who enjoy coming to Open Studio weekly. When the studio was shut down in March because of COVID restrictions, we managed to stay connected and improve our skills with weekly Zoom classes. Together we watched videos and added to our collective knowledge of both wheel and hand building techniques. Getting together weekly was a great way to help us through some of the tougher aspects of isolation and quarantine.

When the Pottery Studio opened in July, we were delighted to get together with some old friends and welcomed a few new potters to classes and Open Studio. Although we have been working with some COVID restrictions, the layout of the studio makes physical distancing easy. We've limited the number of people in the studio at one time and we're all wearing masks to do our part to keep each other safe!

Through Zoom, we have been able to connect weekly with a member in California, Nancy Robins. She usually spends the summers in Clayton and much of that time at the studio. Nancy joins us for Open Studio weekly, working in her home studio. She even joined us for a teapot making class in July!



In October, students enjoyed learning all about raku.

Summer 2020 was different to be sure! Restrictions and social distancing resulted in less classes running, but it also created an opportunity for some pop-up classes for visitors to the region. A mother/daughter class produced delightful fish plates!

We hosted a raku workshop in October that brought some new folks to TIAC, along with the regulars who love the excitement of raku, despite the smoke and soot! It was such a success, we did a repeat at the end of the month.

We're looking forward to 2021! Winter in the North Country can be challenging and with other activities limited, having safe, studio time is important; we all need a creative outlet! We'll offer private classes for up to two people and continue Open Studio hours by appointment with day and evening options available throughout the week.





A note from Chris Murray, Board Chair

AS MY FIRST YEAR AS BOARD CHAIR DRAWS TO A CLOSE I find there is much to reflect upon. Back in January there was no way of foreseeing the challenges we would face this year. While the first several weeks of the pandemic were fraught with fear and uncertainty, our fabulous staff did not waver in their efforts to keep the center afloat during a most difficult time. There was, however, the proverbial silver lining. In the midst of canceled exhibitions, fundraisers, and classes, there was an opportunity for the staff and board to work together like never before to save our beloved arts center. And work together we did. We were able to showcase world class artist Will Salisbury with a retrospective that saw record attendance and wonderful reviews. We opened our wildly successful resale shop Finders Keepers. Six of our seven kids camps ran and ultimately 35% of adult programming was held. And lastly, thanks to the incredible generosity of you, our members, our Keep the Arts Healthy fundraising appeal was a resounding success.

This year I witnessed what can be accomplished when a board and staff work together for the common good. I am honored to be serving this organization. Despite the challenges that lay ahead, I look forward to the coming year with a renewed sense of optimism and hope. Thank you to our staff, board, and members and I wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season and all the best in the coming year.



Happy Holidays from your friends at the
Thousand Islands Arts Center ~ Home of the Handweaving Museum!

314 John Street, Clayton, NY 13624

(315) 686-4123

TIArtsCenter.org