

Patricia Christakos exhibits work in the ‘Art Lobby,’ a satellite of Stone Quarry Art Park

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Artist Patricia Christakos is exhibiting *Fields of Inquiry: Jeanne and Me* through Aug. 31 in the “Art Lobby,” Stone Quarry Hill Art Park’s (SQHAP) satellite space inside the Pewter Spoon Cafe building at 87 Albany St. Pictured: SQHAP Artistic Director Sayward Schoonmaker, left, and Christakos, right. Schoonmaker facilitated an interview at the exhibition reception on Aug. 13. **EMILY ZAENGLE**

Stone Quarry Hill Art Park (SQHAP) recently established the “Art Lobby,” its satellite space inside the Pewter Spoon Cafe building at 87 Albany St. in Cazenovia.

The downtown location hosts rotating artist exhibitions and projects, complementing the organization’s main sculpture park at 3883 Stone Quarry Rd.

Through Aug. 31, the space is featuring Patricia Christakos’ *Fields of Inquiry: Jeanne and Me*.

Christakos is a multidisciplinary artist working across photography, poetry, installation, projection, and experimental film.

Fields of Inquiry is an ongoing photographic and moving-image project inspired in part by the story of Jeanne Barret Dubernat (1740-1807), a French expert “herb woman” believed to be the first woman to circumnavigate the globe.

Disguised as a man aboard a French naval vessel, Dubernat assisted the expedition’s official royal naturalist, Philibert Commerson, in collecting thousands of plant specimens from around the world.

Christakos said she was initially drawn to the audacity of Dubernat’s story. Ultimately, however, she became more interested in everything that remains unknown about her.

“She was believed to be a skilled herbalist, but much of what we know about her life comes through the men who accompanied her on her journey,” Christakos said. “She left no words behind. That absence gave me a fruitful place to work as an artist. I’m not trying to reconstruct Jeanne or tell her story literally. I use her as a point of departure - a way into questions about history, naming, discovery, gender, plants, beauty, and who gets to be remembered.”

The exhibition features 15 photographs, 10 poems, and one experimental short video, titled “Waiting.” It also includes a small installation called “Afield Museum,” an imagined natural-history museum that grew from the artist’s poem “DIORAMAS, mainly.” Also on display are research materials, books, tarot cards, artificial bougainvillea, discarded drafts and poems, an antique doctor’s bag, and a wooden chest.

Christakos hopes visitors will leave the Art Lobby with a heightened sense of curiosity and wonder.

“Curiosity about Barret Dubernat’s life but also about the historical moments adjacent to her life - colonialism, Enlightenment, rebellion, and remembrance,” she said. “The exhibition moves between photographs, poems, objects, history, and invention, and I like that the viewer has to imagine their own connections. I’ve become very interested in how ideas migrate - through paintings, myths, voyages, plants, images, and stories - and how one thing can unexpectedly lead to another. I hope there is also a sense of wonder in the show. For me, the art begins there. I hope people leave wanting to experiment - to follow their own rabbit holes of wonder, curiosity, and critique.”

Christakos currently serves as the Art Park’s first Hilltop House Fellow.

Hilltop House is the former home of ceramicist, sculptor, author, preservation activist, and SQHAP founder Dorothy Riester (1916-2017). It was designed and built by Riester and her husband, Robert, with the assistance of local contractors. In 2014, the house, along with the original 23-acre property, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as a highly intact example of a mid-20th-century modern house and artist studio.

In 1992, Christakos worked at the park as Riester’s first assistant. Her current role enables her to engage with and share Riester’s artistic legacy within the creative living spaces that the artist and her husband built more than 60 years ago.

“Dorothy created a life in which art, landscape, architecture, hospitality, and experimentation all existed together,” said Christakos. “To return decades later as the first Hilltop House Fellow and be given permission to activate the house has been an extraordinary gift. What I value most is that I haven’t been asked to preserve Dorothy’s world. I’ve been allowed to be in conversation with it - to make work there, bring other people into the house, to ask questions, imagine new uses for the space. To literally project and share Dorothy’s dreams on the ceiling through my own experimental films feels very much in keeping with Dorothy’s own spirit.”

A reception for *Fields of Inquiry*, featuring an artist talk with Christakos, was held on Aug. 13.

According to SQHAP CEO Emily Zaengle, the space was “standing-room-only,” with about 40 people in attendance.

The show is the second event to be held in the Art Lobby.

The exhibition follows on the heels of artist Kiki Sciullo’s July 25 drawing workshop. Community members were invited to draw and learn about ants in celebration of SQHAP’s newest sculpture, *Ant Alice II*, a reproduction of a work by the late Syracuse-based sculptor and welder Arlene Abend.

“Just like Stone Quarry Art Park, the space supports artists interested in realizing experimental, conceptual, contemporary art projects,” said Zaengle. “Like its 104-acre outdoor art park, Art Lobby connects the public to art and artists through exhibitions, artist talks, hands-on art-making opportunities, and open access with no admission required - though donations are essential to our work and always appreciated. When the door of Art Lobby is open, anyone can wander in and enjoy the space.”

According to Pat Carmeli, owner of 87 Albany St. and the Pewter Spoon, SQHAP approached her about using her building as a satellite location.

The cafe had collaborated with the Art Park previously by hosting an artist speaker and providing coffee and snacks for events.

“At the cafe, we’ve always seen ourselves not only as a cafe but a space for community,” said Carmeli. “. . . We plan to keep up the ‘partnership’ to keep our community enlightened on visiting artists, as well as [to provide] space in our common hallway to feature local artists. I feel like it’s a good fit for us, and we’re excited that their secondary home at 87 Albany St. brings an aspect of the Art Park to the village.”

For more information on SQHAP, visit sqhap.org.

To learn more about Christakos and her work, visit patriciachristakos.com.

Kate Hill writes for the Cazenovia Republican and Eagle Bulletin.