

Meet artists, see performances at Yonkers Arts Weekend

By Alex Taylor artaylor@lohud.com 7:01 p.m. EDT May 1, 2014



(Photo: Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

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In a light-filled, fifth-floor studio overlooking the truck traffic on Nepperhan Avenue, Catherine Latson is readying a few of the delicate and semi-abstract corsets and ties she makes from natural, found materials like magnolia leaves, moss and feathers.

This is normally where she works, although she is preparing to open her doors to the public on Saturday and Sunday as part of the 11th annual YoHo Artists Open Studios.

Latson, 53, of Tarrytown, has participated in the event regularly since she moved into the former Alexander Smith Carpet Mills six years ago. Open studios have come to represent something of a rallying point for the diverse artistic community housed in the enormous, 19th-century industrial building at 578 Nepperhan Ave.

"You get the privacy," Latson explained. "But you also get noise, the music and the goings-on of the art world. You get the connections. You get the opinions. You get the feedback."

This year's show includes work by 50 artists and artisans on display, twice last year's number. The show is free, with the studios open from noon to 5 p.m. The art ranges from ceramics and sculptures to paintings and drawings, photographs, videos and installations.

This year, YoHo's open studios is running in conjunction with the greater Yonkers Arts Weekend. Other events include a fashion show from the Fashion Institute of Technology in i.Park Hudson; live bluegrass music by Sarah Lawrence College students at Untermyer Gardens; an exhibit of local artists at Yonkers Library; and exhibits and planetarium shows at the Hudson River Museum.

The city will provide free transportation from the downtown Metro-North station to each location.

The show gives visitors a chance to peek into the work spaces of local artists and learn a little about the creative process. For artists, it's an opportunity to show and possibly sell their work, keep up with trends and hobnob with galleries, curators and the curious alike.

Last year, more than 800 people came to check out the artwork, according to organizers.

"As an artist you want to network and show your work," said Adam Shultz, a painter and sculptor who is co-organizing the event. "You can work in any hole in the wall. But if people aren't looking at what you're making, it kind of defeats the purpose."

Shultz, 43, a refugee from rent-crazy Williamsburg who now lives in Irvington, made the case for Yonkers as an emerging — and affordable — hub for working artists and galleries priced out of New York City and other parts of Westchester.



Many of the 80 or so artists and artisans at YoHo ended up there after being chased from gentrifying neighborhoods.

He noted that David Hammons, a celebrated New York artist, and Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, have recently moved to the area.

"Those two things are turning points," Shultz said. "The main thing is City Hall is very interested in the arts as a model for economic development. Artists arrive and interesting things start happening. Investors seem to follow."

In a nearby studio, Meghan Orbek displayed several of her highly-textured acrylic paintings that incorporate rocks, leaves, flowers and grass to create thick and craggy surfaces.

A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Orbek, 28, has learned to savor what she called "the Yonkers flavor": a mix of urban grit and the "green shoots" of artistic endeavors that's "weirder than any place in the five boroughs."

"I love Yonkers," said Orbek, 28, grinning. "I mean, you couldn't pay me to live in Brooklyn."

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If you go

What: The 11th Annual YoHo Artists Open Studios

When: Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Where: YoHo Artist Studios, Alexander Smith Carpet Mills Building, 578 Nepperhan Ave., Yonkers.

Details: For more information, visit www.yohoartists.com (<http://www.yohoartists.com/>).

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