

FEATURED

Art guild thriving despite pandemic

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Pam George, Art Guild of Tellico Village activities chairwoman, works on her art journal.

Jeremy Nash | The Connection

Art Guild of Tellico Village members are finding unique ways to express creativity and interact in meaningful ways even as they remain apart.

The group went virtual in September, Perry Flanagan, co-president, said.

“When it became apparent that we were not going to be able to meet at the Yacht Club with local artists as presenters, we decided to embrace it as an opportunity to showcase nationally and internationally known artists,” Flanagan said. “We have had presentations from Canada, Texas and New York on a wide variety of topics from watercolor techniques to Native American portraiture.”

The next presentation is Feb. 18 with a family from Krakow, Poland.

“All three of them are graduates of the fine arts academy in Krakow and three of them pursue art in similar but different ways and so it will be really interesting to hear about how three members of the same family tackle similar subject matters in different ways,” Flanagan said. “For us, from Tennessee, it will be very interesting to hear them speak about the challenges that maybe they’ve had in Poland during COVID and photos of their art studios and to understand the differences in perhaps even our international cultures in our efforts in art.”

While there have been challenges, Flanagan said the last year has offered advantages.

“We as students would not be able to have as many classes available to us as we do now on Zoom platforms and YouTube Live platforms,” she said. “As a student, it’s a very different experience in a workshop on Zoom ... but a great advantage is the camera allows us to see very closely what the teacher is doing and we can work in our studios with our own equipment and we have access to national teachers that we would normally not be able to afford to study from.”

The guild has provided classes and workshops online by local and national artists.

Upcoming classes include Introduction to Art Journaling with member Cindy Moser of Knoxville, Elements of Art/Principles of Design class with member Jack Retterer of Lenoir City and a two-day Vibrant Watercolor workshop with internationally known artist Soon Y. Warren of Texas.

“The vast majority of our members are hobbyists learning new skills,” Flanagan said. “We welcome experienced and novice artists and those who want to support the visual arts in Tellico Village and East Tennessee.”

For more information, visit www.tellicoartguild.com.

Exhibits ongoing

Going fully virtual brought to the forefront the guild’s need for a better website.

KC Babb, guild webmaster, indicated early on the website wasn’t robust enough to showcase members’ artwork.

A new web-hosting service and other website additions have provided a “richer experience,” Flanagan said. A “What’s On Your Easel” virtual exhibit was held in the fall, which she considered successful.

A Midwinter Art Exhibit is expected this month. Babb collected member artwork through Sunday and hopes to have the exhibit up in about two weeks.

“With phone technology these days I think a lot of people are just taking pictures with their phones and then it’s really easy to forward them on,” Babb said. “We actually have a form on the website where they can put in the information about their different artworks and they can say what its name is and what media it is and things like that and then they can upload the file from that form right up to the cloud where I can grab them and bring them down.”

For the first time in 23 years, the annual spring art show will be virtual.

“It’s going to be a challenge for us because one of the things that we do in the spring show when it was in person was the artist could sell their work if they chose to, so our challenge is trying to figure out how to display the artwork and then provide contact information if someone decides they would like to purchase it,” Babb said. “But it’s going to be I think a little bit of a challenge to just publicize it and make sure that the community knows about it and knows how to take a look at it and then do they get in touch with the artist if there’s actually something they want to buy. We’re not going to have it via store, it’s going to be the exhibit and contact the artist on your own.”

Logistics are still being worked on for the May show.

“I’m guessing it won’t be as big as it has been in years past just because not everybody will be maybe comfortable or will want to show it on the internet, but we’re hoping we’ll get pretty good coverage from our members,” Babb said. “Last time we did it in 2019, I want to say we had art from 60 to 70 members, so we may not get quite that many but we’re hoping we get a lot. ... I think we still wanted to give our members the opportunity to showcase their art and also give the community an opportunity to see what we’re all doing. I mean it was a wonderful show when it was in person; I mean it was just phenomenal. It’s not as good as being in person, but we’re hoping that it’ll provide some of the benefit.”

Keeping connected

Members have been creative to stay connected, including art journaling and an artists trading card exchange.

“These both are just starting because we felt there’s a need out there,” Pam George, activities chairwoman, said. “People are bored and there’s people that are wanting to paint and they’re excited to try something new.”

George said art journaling can be a way to paint with others safely. She started journaling five years ago.

“It’s something that I’ve always found so fun,” George said. “I mean I do watercolor and acrylics and textiles, but art journaling is just playing in paint.”

The art journaling group will meet twice a month via Zoom until safe to return to the classroom. The guild’s first journaling meeting is Thursday, with a follow-up meeting Feb. 25, George said. Membership is not required.

“To just be inspired by others and learn new techniques,” George said. “Some of the people, for example, haven’t painted in ages, even have professional careers as artists, but one of them actually said to me that she just needs to get started again and this is a great way to get you back into feeling comfortable because nothing has to be serious with art journaling. You can portray anything that you want to and you don’t have to show your work or you can share with everybody.”

Flanagan hopes the artists trading card experience will keep members together when they must be apart.

“It’s kind of fun because the miniature artwork is unique and will be swapped the old fashioned way by snail mail, so that’s a way to stay connected,” she said. “Our members will get something in the mail and be excited to have a new piece of artwork from someone we know or may not yet know who’s in the community.”

George said she is providing 2.5-inch by 3.5-inch cards. The deadline to turn in for this month is Feb. 20.

“You can do any medium you want on them and they will take cards, blank cards, take them home, paint them the way they want to, collage them, whatever they want,” she said. “Then they come back to me and everyone that participates I disperse them out to everyone. You don’t get your own, you get art from everybody. It’s a collection of very small paintings, and it’s huge internationally, it’s huge all over the world.”

In addition, the guild is planning a Plein Air group to meet outside and create art when the weather warms up.

“We are going to try some small classes, too, such as needle felting, glass fusing and what we call ‘art hors d’oeuvres’ – little teeny art classes where we can get together outside eventually,” George said. “Those are in the future once we can safely be outside together.”