

ART EXHIBIT

The Brush/Lens Project: A picture of friendship

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Currently, art lovers and travelers alike can enjoy the result of this artistic duo's immense talents as well as inspiring friendship. Eight pairings of the artists' paintings and photographs are on display at the Atrium Gallery at Long Island MacArthur Airport in an exhibit presented by the Islip Arts Council.

In addition to the art show, the two will host a slide show and talk at the Bay Shore-Brightwaters Library Aug.23. The event will allow art aficionados the chance to ask Hooper and Gordon about their collaboration as well as their process for perfectly pairing their works of art.

The alliance began on social media after a mutual friend introduced the two. Gordon said she looked at Hooper's work online and found he had painted similar sites and themes that she had photographed. She realized the two not only shared an interest in creating art but also an appreciation of the landscapes of Long Island.



Ward Hooper

The Dove-Torr House



Holly Gordon

The Dove-Torr House

“For the past 50 years we have been destined to connect, because we have so been living parallel lives independently, and so three years ago they converged,” Gordon said.

A painting of Hooper's that he created of Long Island City during his commuter days from Northport to Manhattan especially stood out to the photographer. The image reminded her of a photo she had taken along the New Jersey Turnpike, and she posted it to Hooper's Facebook page.

When Gordon was preparing for a tulip photography exhibit, while Hooper was teaching how to paint the flower at an art class

in his home, the artists experienced a bit of synchronicity once again. Noticing a number of similarities in their lives and work, the two decided it was time to meet in person.

The pair said they began meeting every Tuesday, and Hooper would have an itinerary of places to visit as well as a route planned out. They started in Northport at a Victorian house off Woodbine Avenue and then branched out east, according to the painter. "So every Tuesday, it was an adventure," Gordon said.

At first Hooper would stay by the car or sit on a bench while sketching. Gordon said he would instruct her as to where to go to capture interesting images based on his memories from past excursions with fellow artists, some of the trips made as long as 20 years ago.

"It was very nostalgic to me, remembering fond memories of those outings with friends who are no longer around, so it was very special. And being there with Holly, she was looking at it with fresh eyes, so I was so anxious to see what Holly came up with every week," Hooper said.

When they began presenting their work under The Brush/Lens Project name, Gordon would photograph spots based on existing paintings of Hooper's if she didn't already have an image. Hooper said he hadn't painted for years when he met the photographer due to the passing of his wife, Dolly, and being her primary caregiver.

"When this lady dropped into my life, it was very special and wonderful at exactly the time it was truly meaningful to me. And here we are," the painter said. Gordon said she understood his pain but also knew the healing power of creativity. After suddenly losing her husband of 20 years in 1996, the photographer said she had held onto her camera like a life preserver to come to grips with her loss.

Hooper quickly became inspired to paint again and recently has created new work to pair with Gordon's. "Creativity is a blessing. I can't imagine a life without creativity," the painter said. Gordon has noticed the difference the collaboration and friendship has made in both of their lives. "He really in many respects has given me a crash course on the earlier part of his life, and he has taken me into his world, and it's really expanded what I am doing today creatively, but it also has given Ward an enormous verve and enthusiasm to move on and do new things," she said.

When it comes to Hooper's paintings, Gordon said, "His paint brush is jumping and dancing all over the place. It is ageless. It is just filled with so much vitality and verve." The admiration is mutual as Hooper describes Gordon as "an amazing photographic artist" whose work is easily recognizable due to her unique, "imaginative stamp" she puts on each of her photographs. He said of her work, "It jumps off the wall and dances."



Immediately after their exhibit at the airport, The Brush/Lens Project paintings and photographs will be on display at the Islip Town Hall Rotunda Gallery, 655 Main St., until Oct. 5. The painter and photographer hope local residents will take the opportunity to view their different interpretations of local areas and maybe see Long Island landscapes in a different way.

“We put ourselves out there for all to see and hopefully they’ll come away with an interesting visual experience,” Hooper said. Gordon added, “I hope that they will see more clearly themselves. Take more time to see and appreciate what’s out and in front of them, because so often people are just so scattered that they don’t focus. And, also to see how wonderful creativity is, because here are two people who can look at the same subject but be affected to respond to it differently.”

The Brush/Lens Project exhibit will be on display at the Atrium Gallery at Long Island MacArthur Airport, 100 Arrival Ave., Ronkonkoma, until Aug. 30. Hooper and Gordon’s talk and slide show takes place Aug. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Bay Shore-Brightwaters Library, 1 South Country Road, Brightwaters. To reserve a spot for the free event, call 631-665-4350.

For more information on The Brush/Lens Project, visit www.brushlensproject.com