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Brush and lens come together at Art League of Long Island

Arts & Entertainment Times of Huntington-Northport

by TBR Staff - August 7, 2015



Ward Hooper and Holly Gordon display similar pieces of art — from left, a painting and a photograph — both titled 'The Boys of Summer.' Photo by Talia Amorosano

By Talia Amorosano

When photographer Holly Gordon was asked to describe her relationship with painter Ward Hooper, she relayed a Hopi Native American tale about a paralyzed clown and a blind mudhead who are only able to flee their village when disaster strikes by individually compensating for what the other lacks: the mudhead provides mobility by carrying the clown on his back and the clown provides direction by acting as a set of eyes for the mudhead. “[Ward] was opening up my eyes, and I was using my camera to bring him the visions,” said Gordon. “There’s really such a synergy between us.”

For Hooper and Gordon, who met on Facebook through a mutual friend and typically get together once a week, the term “synergy” applies to both life and art, realms which, according to Gordon, are often indistinguishable from one another. Hooper plays the role of navigator for Gordon, who drives them both to diverse locations along the north shore of Long Island, including Huntington, Northport, Centerport, Kings Park and Cold Spring Harbor, some of which Hooper “hasn’t been to in 20 years.” The result is individual reinterpretations of the same settings made more complete by access to each others pre-existing work.

Sometimes Hooper’s paintings provide the initial inspiration, and other times Gordon’s photographs play this role. “That’s the beauty of our collaboration,” said Hooper. “Holly would show me something and challenge me to create something compatible with what she selected.”

“[When using Ward’s painting as the initial artistic reference] I knew that I was going to have to stretch my vision and stretch my technical skills to make my work even more fluid than it was previously,” said Gordon. “Art is usually a solitary thing, and among some artists you find a certain competition, but Ward and I have just been so supportive in sharing and helping each other grow and evolve and develop and create. It’s been an absolutely magical experience.”

52 of the artistic results of this experience – pairing the new photographic art of Gordon with the watercolor paintings of Hooper – will be on display at the Art League of Long Island’s Jeanie Tengelsen Gallery, from Aug. 8 to 23, in an exhibit appropriately titled The Brush/Lens Project.

“We’re hoping that viewers will be inspired,” said Gordon, “that they will come to see and appreciate the beauty that is right here on Long Island [by viewing art that was largely created in and inspired by Long Island].”

The exhibit will highlight versatile pieces of art, arranged in 26 sets, which encompass all four seasons and a variety of subjects. “We overestimated the number of pieces [that we would be able to include in the exhibit],” said Hooper. “Between the two of us, we have nearly 100 years of art,” continued Gordon, “there’s a book here.”

Both Hooper and Gordon are grateful that they have been afforded the opportunity to work with one another and plan to continue to do so in the future: “When you put yourself out there and you’re not afraid to share and interact, there’s so much beneath the surface to discover,” said Gordon, on her rewarding decision to reach out to Hooper. “Art brought [Holly and me] together,” Hooper emphasized. “We think, on many levels, the same way.”

With Gordon in the driver’s seat and Hooper as navigator, there’s no telling where their artistic visions will lead them next. “There’s no end to this journey. There’s no road map,” said Hooper. “We’ll just see where it takes us.”

The Art League of Long Island is located at 107 E. Deer Park Road, Dix Hills. Hours are Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The community is invited to an art reception on Aug. 9, from 2 to 4 p.m. The artists will take part in a Gallery Talk on Aug. 16, from 2 to 4 p.m. For more information, call 631-462-5400 or visit www.artleagueli.net.

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