

'Happy accident' leads to art

Bananas and sunflowers are local artist's latest inspiration

One day out at the Lady Killigrew Café in Montague this winter, a woman tossed a couple of bananas and a small bouquet of sunflowers into a patch of sunlight falling across a wooden table, wowing painter Susan Valentine.

"I asked, 'Can I please take a picture of this?'" Valentine recalls.

She ended up taking several photos from different angles and collaging them together to create the inspiration for a large still life, "That Day at the Lady K," that she's been painting for her upcoming annual Open Studio and Gallery Exhibit.

Valentine's exhibit will be on display at the Barnes Gallery at Leverett Crafts and Arts for the month of May,

with an artist's reception Saturday, May 7, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The exhibit will include the Leverett painter's recent series of daisy paintings, still lifes, landscapes, and the large flower portraits for which she is well known. Last year's exhibit was cancelled because she was undergoing treatment for breast cancer, Valentine says, so there will be many paintings in this year's show that haven't been seen before.

She's six months clear of cancer treatment, Valentine says, and has regained her energy, especially for painting. The still lifes are a new direction. Valentine says that she's never felt that setting up still lifes was very interesting or successful for her in the past.

"But to find a still life!" she says. Having the bananas and sunflowers tossed down in front of her was "a happy accident," she says, and the start of a new approach toward still life.

She chose to include a wallet and laptop computer in the composition because it helped to create a sense of place and time.

"There's this quietude of bananas

and sunflowers hanging out in the sun together, but then they have this bustle of activity all around them," Valentine says.

She kept the thumb sticker on the banana because it also places the painting in time.

"This is modern life," Valentine says.

The painting's various textures — the firm, shiny table; soft, bruised skin of the banana; the more abstracted areas that include other furniture and partially seen people — gave Valentine an interesting array of problems to solve as she went along. She says she began by coating the canvas with a thin wash that she then wiped away with a rag soaked in turpentine, creating an underpainting in a method similar to what's called "grisaille."

In several of the still lifes, Valentine left the thinner underpainting toward the back of the painting, creating a softer contrast to the more detailed foreground.

"The further you come forward, the more paint there is on the canvas," Valentine says, pointing out the crisply rendered grapes in another painting, based on a photograph taken at a farm stand.

Her daisy series, which has never been shown, consists of over a dozen paintings in various sizes, some as small as postcard-size.

"You get a different relationship, more of an intimacy with these little guys," Valentine says of the small paintings. And hanging them in clusters creates relationships between them.

Valentine photographed daisies over a roughly three-month period, capturing images of all the different varieties of that flower through the summer and into the fall, ending with the tiny Montauk daisies that bloom in October. She spent part of that time and into the winter paint-

ing them.

Working with so much white was challenging.

"There's very little white in white," Valentine says.

Looking closer, traces of blue, pink, green, gray — almost every color, really — can be seen in the delicate daisy petals. As in all of her flower portraits, Valentine has captured perfectly the sense of sunlight filtering through petals or water drops glistening on them.

You can see more of Valentine's work at: www.susanvalentineart.com

Cancer treatment meant that, "There was almost a solid year where my life was revolving around doctor's appointments and procedures," Valentine says.

During that year, she had to stop teaching yoga for about six months, but she never stopped painting.

Did painting help? Valentine pauses. Then smiles. "I'm going to say 'yes,'" she says. "Because if I wasn't painting, I would be — what? Lying in bed? Feeling sorry for myself? Painting always helps. Doing your art always helps."

There's a field called "art therapy" for a reason, she says. Though, as you get deeper into a painting, the stakes get higher, altering that sense of play you might feel at first.

"The first layer is art therapy. Everything after that is angst," Valentine says with a laugh.

Where to see it

Barnes Gallery at Leverett Crafts and Arts, 13 Montague Road, Leverett. Hours: Thursday through Sunday, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Contact: www.barnesgallery.org; barnes-gallery@gmail.com; 413-992-5554.

Up through the end of April at Barnes Gallery is "The Birdwatchers," a show by and about birdwatchers and what they create from a hobby that often borders on obsession. Curated by Macaylla Silver. Feeders set up in the trees close to the building especially for the show's duration bring lots of real birds to the grounds, Valentine said.

Call for photographers

As gallery director, Valentine is looking for one or two women pho-



FOR THE RECORDER/TRISH CRAPO

Susan Valentine's portrait of sunflowers and a banana in the sunlight.



FOR THE RECORDER/TRISH CRAPO

Susan Valentine will show at Barnes Gallery through May

tographers to join a group show, "Camera Materna: Revealing the Artist behind the Nurturer," at the Barnes Gallery for the month of July.

Valentine is looking for women photographers at any stage of mothering, whose children are still young, or are grown and out of the house, or women who are grandmothers, whom Valentine sees as engaging in another, fascinating phase of mothering.

Content of the photos need not be children; the idea is to honor the work that nurtured these women so that they could continue to be nurturers themselves. Currently, the show includes photographers Sara Lechner, Maren Vigeland, Sara Acton, Trish Crapo and Kate Hunter.

Contact Valentine at: barnes-gallery@gmail.com; 413-992-5554



Trish Crapo is a writer and photographer who lives in Leyden. She is always looking for writers with recent publications or interesting projects to interview for her column. She can be reached at trcrao@me.com.



TRISH CRAPO
ARTBEAT

CALENDAR

CALENDAR FROM C3

Gospel Choir, others. \$15. First Congregational Church. 47 Silver St., Greenfield.

Roald Dahl's "Willy Wonka": April 30, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Greene Room Productions presents musical. \$17 to \$23. Academy of Music Theatre. 274 Main St., Northampton. aomtheatre.com

Sambadene: April 30, 8 p.m. Sambadene recreates the local music scene in Salvador mixing rhythms such as coco, maracatu, jongo and afoxe Free. Chapin Hall, Williams College. 54 Chapin Hall Drive, Williamstown.

Songs from the Spirit Café: April 30, 7:30 p.m. an Morigan performs with John Cabán and Tony Silva on guitars, Rudi Weeks on bass, Michel Moushabek, percus-

sion, choreographer/dancer, Michelle Marroquin, and spoken word by Andrea Hairston. \$10 to \$20 at the door (Smith students free). Hallie Flanagan Studio Theatre. Smith College, Northampton.

Sunderland Community Sing: April 30, 2 p.m. All ages and abilities welcome. Free. Sunderland Library. Sunderland. 665 2642, www.sunderlandpubliclibrary.org

THEATER

The Garden of Eden: April 30, 7:30 p.m. Staged reading of new comedy by Alan Harris. Donation. The Arts Block. Greenfield.

Othello: April 30, 1 and 7 p.m. UMass Department of Theater and the University Museum of Contemporary Art present Shakespeare. Free. University

Museum of Contemporary Art. UMass., Amherst. umass-othello.eventbrite.com

FESTIVALS & FAIRS

2016 World Tai Chi & Qigong Day: April 30, 10 a.m. Free to the public. Prior experience not required. Behind Thornes Marketplace. Northampton. www.ymaawesternmass.com

3rd Annual Spring/Summer Women's Clothing Etc. Consignment Sale: April 30, 8 a.m. Quality spring/summer women's clothing, accessories, footwear + jewelry, linens, gift items, books, new cosmetics. Half-price sale Sat. 1 to 2 p.m. St. Philip's Episcopal Church Parish Hall. 128 Main St., Easthampton. To consign, Email Betty Snow at WCCS.128MainSt.01027@gmail.com More info at www.facebook.com/stphilipseasthampton. 7-9 p.m. 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Asparagus Valley Pottery Trail: April 30, 10 a.m. Nine western Mass potters will open their studios to the public. Free. hills. Northampton. asparagusvalleypotterytrail.com

Brookfield Farm Open House: April 30, 9 a.m. Help with transplanting, have snacks, explore hiking trails. Brookfield Farm. 24 Hulst Road, Amherst. info@brookfield-farm.org

Clean and Glean; Conservation in Action at the William Cullen Bryant Homestead: April 30, 10 a.m. All welcome to help the homestead come out of hibernation. Bryant Homestead. 207 Bryant Road, Cumington. www.thetrustees.org/volunteer

Easthampton Bottle and Can Drive: April 30, 9 a.m. Easthampton Dollars for Scholars sponsors drive to benefit scholarships for Easthampton residents. Cernak Buick Parking Lot. Northampton

St., Easthampton.

Gertrude P. Smith Trustees Award & Celebration of the new Forbes Elevator: April 30, 2 p.m. Presentation of awards to Bonnie Burnham and Peter Rowe. Forbes Library. 20 West St., Northampton. RSVP director@forbeslibrary.org

Holyoke Garden Art Fair: April 30, 10 a.m. Exhibit of original artwork including sculpture, painting, photography, more. \$5 suggested donation. Wistariahurst Museum. 238 Cabot St., Holyoke. wistariahurst.org

Independent Bookstore Day: April 30, 10 a.m. Parties, author readings, in-store events Odyssey Bookshop. South Hadley. 534-7307.

Massachusetts Birds of Prey: April 30, 2 p.m. Live birds of prey presentation by Julie Collier of Wingmasters. Free. Barnes Gallery. Leverett Crafts & Arts., Leverett.

Northampton Spring Reuse and Recycling Rally: April 30, 8 a.m. Collection for reuse and recycling. Smith Vocational School. Northampton. 587-2576.

Pioneer Valley Cohousing Community: April 30, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Open house with tour and workshop. Title Pioneer Valley Cohousing Community. 120 Pulpit Hill Road, Amherst. 549-1747.

TALKS & LECTURES

"Eating New England: Key Foods of the Commonwealth": April 30, 2 p.m. Robert Cox speaks. Historic Northampton. 46 Bridge St., Northampton. historicnorthampton.org

"Bartlett and Allen Historic Dams: Our Industrial Past and the Ongoing Restoration of Amethyst Brook": April 30, 10 a.m. Pelham Historical Society hosts presentation and tour. Pel-



COURTESY PHOTO/SETH OLENICK

Comedian Tig Notaro will perform Sunday at 8 p.m. at the Academy of Music Theatre in Northampton.

ham Library. Pelham. Bruce Klotz, 413-695-1797.

Joy Friedman Pottery - Spring Sale: April 30, 10 a.m. Joy Friedman Pottery Spring Studio Sale. Saturday, April 30th, 10 to 5 p.m. Leverett Crafts&Arts Free. Leverett Crafts and Arts. 13 Montague Road, Leverett. 1-413-548-9673. joypots@gmail.com

Lithuanian Egg Decorating: April 30, 11 a.m. Ages 12 to

adults. Whately Library. Whately. Please RSVP at 413-665-2170.

Playing with Time: April 30, 7 p.m. Student musical. \$5 general; \$3 students and seniors. Chestnut Hill School. 59 State St., Belchertown. 323-0437.

"Something Else": April 30, 11 p.m. Free. Shelburne Arts Cooperative. 26 Bridge St., Shelburne Falls. 413-625-

SEE CALENDAR C5

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