

THE RIVER REPORTER

YOUR AWARD-WINNING NEWS SOURCE FOR THE UPPER DELAWARE RIVER VALLEY REGION SINCE 1975



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Women... can't live without 'em



Fabric, copper and cork are some of the components used in artist Ellen Kantro's panels at the DVAA.



Jonathan Fox

Jonathan Fox currently lives in Sullivan County. Having written for film and television, he now concentrates his efforts on novels, plays and assorted periodicals, along with his weekly "Humble Opinion" on life in the Catskills.

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- The Big Chill
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- The reviews are in!
- Button up your overcoat
- Trick or treat?

In My Humble Opinion

February 27, 2013 — Making up more than half of the population in the United States, women are now considered by many to be the driving force behind the nation. Outnumbering men by almost eight million, female influence on the American way of life is no longer in dispute, but the rest of the world still has some catching up to do. March is National Women's History Month, and although its roots date back to March 8, 1857, when women from New York factories staged a protest over working conditions, it wasn't until 1981 that Congress established National Women's History week, which was eventually expanded to a month by presidential proclamation in 1987 (www.census.gov).

The numbers alone are pretty impressive: women dominate in the work force, representing close to 72 million, and there are currently fewer men working in management, professional and related occupations (www.bls.gov/home). Millions of women own businesses and the revenue from women-owned companies exceeded one trillion dollars in 2007 (www.factfinder2.census.gov). Little wonder then, that I found myself immersed in the world of women, once inside the doors of the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance (www.artsalliancesite.org) last weekend while out and about with the pooch.

The gallery's newest exhibit titled "Aph•O•Risms: Exploring the Economy of Form" is just that, but (I hate to admit) I was unfamiliar with the term. Instead of my usual pre-show research, I decided to head out swathed in ignorance and discover what I might learn along the way.

Before perusing the artwork, I stopped to greet curator Rocky Pinciotti, who pointed me in the direction of the program, where he had thoughtfully expressed some words on the subject. "Aphoristic creations are marked by the use of few words to convey much meaning or information," it read. "This exhibition features 10 artists working in a variety of mediums that exemplify this principle, either overtly or subconsciously."

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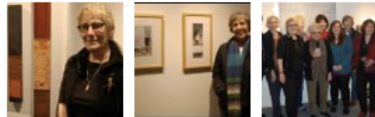


Home

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Nine of the 10 artists represented (pictured here with curator Rocky Pinciotti) at the DVAA were on hand to celebrate at the opening reception of APH-O-RISMS.



In My Humble Opinion

Pinciotti's observations went on to suggest that he often seeks a "common thread connecting the artists" when creating a show and that "this year, that thread was women whose work made strong, artistic statements with a minimal and concise artistic vocabulary." While there was no mention of Women's History Month, I'm left to assume that this was one of the "subconscious" connections that synchronistically came into being. It had not occurred to me that the art world was inhospitable to women, but I took a look on the Internet and discovered that "women artists faced challenges due to gender biases in the mainstream fine art world. They have often encountered difficulties in training, traveling and trading their work, and gaining recognition," and that "beginning in the late 1960s and 1970s, female artists and art historians created a Feminist art movement, that overtly addresses the role of women in the art world and explores women in art history," (www.wikipedia.org).

There may have been challenges addressed in the DVAA show (which is on exhibit through March 16) but I don't believe any of them stem from gender bias at this point. Phyllis Billick, Miriam Hernández, Ellen Kantró, Jessica Kinney, Hisako Kobayashi, Marjorie Morrow, Tiffanie Morrow, Lisa Strier, Ellen Wilkinson and Mary Grace Yanashot represent a wide spectrum of artistic interpretation and Pinciotti said that he was "struck by these artists' critical eye as well as their Spartan and fearless approach to their work." What struck me was not only the individuality of the women's work, but also how their processes varied, along with the mediums employed. Kantró's mixed media panels incorporate fabric, copper, wood veneers and cork, and although each is designed to hang vertically, she informed me that she "always creates them horizontally" and doesn't see them as the art observer does "until they are hung in the gallery." I found this aspect of the work fascinating, and although Kantró did explain that her panels are often so large that it's difficult to see the sum of their parts before completion, she smiled and shrugged when I suggested that she stand back from time to time.



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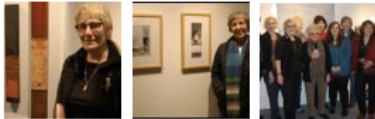
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Home

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Collage artist Mary Grace Yanashot surveys the whole, before creating a sum of the parts, in her work currently on exhibit at the DVAA.



In My Humble Opinion

Mary Grace Yanashot does the opposite. "Most of what I do is an experiment," Yanashot told me while explaining how her collages are created. "I paint large canvasses of paper and survey the whole, before selecting the parts that speak to me in one form or another." The finished products often complement one another, even though they may have been "completed at different times, often separated by months, or years." Equally fascinating and wildly different in their approach, each of these women have a unique perspective and it's clear that the "Feminist Art Movement" gave birth to an explosion of talent that (IMHO) continues to flourish and influence the world exponentially, or as my online dictionary defines aphorism: "A pithy observation that contains a general truth." Not only do women outnumber men, but their influence on the art world has become a driving force in the art world as well. If you listen closely, one can almost hear them roar.



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