

Former Wayside Inn Now an Art Co-op with Global Plans

News By Robyn Hager



Inn Way Side Art Co-op. Courtesy

ELLENVILLE - The location of the former Wayside Inn Hotel, at 7 Liberty Street is undergoing a transformation into a workshop, studio, gallery, event space, and more. The Inn Way Side Art Co-op is championed by Robyn Squires, a trained architect and lifelong artist looking to “bridge the gap between upstate and downstate artisans and makers” in a comfy niche right in downtown Ellenville.

Squires is an East Coast native. She has been visiting the area for a decade, and spent most of the pivotal years of her thirties creating art and connections in and around Ellenville. Her roots to the area go even further, she says, to when her mother used to pick blueberries on the ridge when she was young.

In Summer 2024, Squires, under the name RYSQ, had a pop-up at Inland Objects, an art co-op and pop-up space at 159 Canal Street.

That became her proof of concept for what is now underway at Inn Way Side, an art concept she’s been developing for the greater part of this year. The idea is to use her Ellenville co-op as a springboard to create art co-ops in the world’s blue zones.

Blue zones are the five places in the world where, statistically, people have the longest lifespans. They are Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Okinawa, Japan; Loma Linda, California; and Ikaria, Greece. Squires’ hope is to one day create enough buzz with the Ellenville space to get investors to assist her in making this dream become a reality.

“How can I build these art co-ops in other countries,” Squires says, “if I can’t manage in upstate?”

Inn Way Side Art Co-op, then, is not just a creative space – it’s an experiment for Squires, who is relying on community feedback to see what people want from the space. Squires assures that she wants to “respond to what the community wants or needs,” and is open to having the space be rented out for events or workshops or as a studio space for local artisans to collaborate or develop their own projects.

The 3,000 square foot (plus outdoor space) floor plan of the former Atrium Lobby of the Wayside Inn is being developed under Squires’ new name, Sqrypt Atelier. Sqrypt, as opposed to RYSQ, is about “scaling art,” according to Squires.

Right now, the space is still “bare bones,” according to Squires, who had their soft opening the first weekend in November, highlighting their first gallery show in the space, which can be seen on the front-facing windows of the building. A “legacy project show in honor of my uncle who worked at a post office in New Jersey,” Squires said, is also an homage to her new neighbors – the Ellenville Post Office.

“He travelled three months out of the year all around the US and Canada and sent us postcards from all over,” Squires said, “I scanned them... and decided that any show I want to do in the window should be a legacy project in honor of my family.”

For opening weekend Squires set up a postcard writing station, where people were provided postcards and stamps that could be written on and dropped off right next door at the post office.

“It’ll be like a time warp,” Squires said of the space, with an emphasis on turning off your phone in the space and keeping things very DIY, with just “some tables and chairs,” and “a few boxes from my studio,” currently in the space. Squires hopes to support local yard sales and helping locals declutter their storage units and giving the items “TLC and recreate them in a mid-century modern vibe.” This aesthetic is directly linked to Ellenville’s history as a part of the Borscht Belt, which Squires is working towards recreating in a contemporary way in her space.

If you haven’t yet seen Inn Way Side, the co-op is preparing for an upcoming Holiday Bazaar featuring “New York Based Artisans + Makers & Intergenerational Workshops,” according to the flyer posted on [Sqrypt Atelier’s Instagram page](#). The event will be from 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. on December 7th and 8th and will offer quick, informal workshops led by local makers.

After the Holiday Bazaar, Inn Way Side will be open by appointment and on select days until January. At that point Squires will be taking a hiatus, from February – April, as she travels to Japan to work on another project. In May, the ball will start rolling again, and the warmer weather is going to lead into new concepts for the outdoor space.

“I’m working with a landscaper who does various sculptures,” Squires said about an art installation she is planning for the front yard. Along with this, there will be more regular hours and consistent workshops come next summer, and Squires even mentioned an exchange program for artists living abroad.

To keep up with Inn Way Side Art Co-op during its development, check out Squires’ Instagram page, [@sqrypt_atelier](#).

Ellenville • 825 words • 1 photo



There are 3 comments