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Inside Ellenville's Big Upstate Art Weekend Displays

News By Mia Altamuro



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Artful wooden boxes outside the Co-op. Mia Altamuro

ELLENVILLE - During this year's Upstate Art Weekend (UAW), Robyn Squires hosted an exhibit with everything from constructed boxes to jewelry to crochet and murals at her art co-op in Ellenville. But she said this installation was a team effort featuring two dozen artists.

The exhibit starts with a Zen garden made of stone by Tyler Borchert, who runs Stone Styling Workshop and Trestle Gallery.

"The goal was to create something that was one of a kind and draw your eye to make you want to come to see what was going on there and hang out," he said. "Any Zen garden is an energy place that you go into and relieve your mind and thoughts and stress. I live by a code of no stress, no involvement in stress."

Borchert uses "organic, natural materials that are never wasted" and is inspired by Japanese Zen gardens. Part of the garden was a table with two benches, and small rocks stacked atop. In the front, Borchert sculpted "Big to Small with a Bit of a Twist," with large rocks at the bottom that curve upward into smaller rocks that twist through a hollow log which people could look through and see each other.

Squires worked as an architect before pivoting to art, an influence evident in the wooden boxes constructed in her backyard. Each box has something unique inside, such as crochet by Ingrid Roze.

Roze has done "yarn bombing" for 10 years, draping crochet designs over spots in Ellenville. She says this "symbolically connects" people around the world, and makes them "just stop for a second and say 'Ah!' Or 'Hmm?'" She reached out to Squires when she heard about the exhibit.

Derek Stenborg, a visual artist and musician, said he was inspired to contribute to the project because of "the themes of compartmentalization, boxes and memory in Robyn's concept for the show."

He incorporated a piece called "Paint Shop," which he created while working on a TV show, "Spatchcock Martin" as a homage to a guitar he played as a touring musician that was destroyed by TSA, and "Blue Moon," a representation of young love, longing, and rebirth made of recycled blue glass bottles and LED lights.

Other art pieces include a 10-foot white, wooden sculpture called "Janela," Portuguese for window. It was constructed by Scott Assumpcao-Thomson, an artist and sculptor based in Jeffersonville, in the backyard where much of the exhibit is located. He said that art has "been woven into every part of my life", whether it's painting, 38 years of experience as a fashion designer, or, more recently, sculpting."

His role in this exhibit started when Barbara Hoff from Top Shelf Jewelry told him, "You need to meet Robyn Squires of Innway." From there, he participated in UAW for the first time.

"Janela is a collection of windows that appear to be searching for direction, yet whimsically and freely "dancing in the wind." The piece was born out of a personal period of soul-searching – an invitation to open the window and let the soul be free," he said. He also contributed smaller paintings and sculptures.

In the backyard, the fence panels are each painted with a mural. One with a collage by Scott Frost, two with horses walking forward by Adi Oren, others with more of a graffiti-like style with hand prints by the Community Hands Farmers Market. Matthew Canale painted a giant, linear lion standing above mountains and fields of grass. He also made a sound bath.

Monica Cohen, who has lived in Ellenville for 36 years and is inspired by its natural beauty and diversity, painted Canal Street in Ellenville, with a child watching a hang glider overhead. She previously made backdrops for school plays and pen and ink drawings, that she said helped her work on this project. This piece started with a photo taken at 6:30 a.m.

"I saw a lot of movement, a lot of people. It was kind of drizzling, so there was some shadows on the floor next to the pharmacy," she said. "It became interesting with the texture of the panel, because the panel didn't have a soft surface."

A central part of the exhibit was The Art of Tea Ceremony, held inside Box 18. Constructed by Japanese carpenter Kunihiro Ikezawa, Squires said that the time it took to create that one "special box" was the same amount of time as it took to construct all of the other boxes featured in the show.

The idea was proposed by EunYoung Sebazco from Kinka NYC, who offered hand-whisked matcha and "a space to pause." She describes the space as "a contemplative, minimal structure that invites stillness and presence."

"Rooted in tradition but grounded in the present, the tea ceremony will engage participants with the spirit of wa, kei, sei, jaku – harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility," she said. "The enclosed space of the box will enhance this experience, creating a soft boundary between everyday life and a ritual of care."

In the future, Squires hopes to continue hosting events and workshops, and to expand her reach with locations in California and Japan.

Inn Way Side Art Co-op is at 7 Liberty Square, Ellenville. The UAW additions are a mix of permanent and temporary installations – most of the metal, stone, and wood sculptures will be staying in the front and back yards, while the murals will be relocated inside on September 6. Then, they'll come back out for the holiday season.