



DELANVAN ART GALLERY

April 8, 2010

To: Artists, Friends, Patrons, Staff, and Supporters:

As Director it is my task to inform you that Delavan Art Gallery is closing at the end of our current exhibit, “The Color of Spring”, on Saturday, May 1, 2010. This culminates nearly seven years of operation, fifty-four major exhibits for the work of one hundred eighty-six area artists in individual shows, fifteen group and special shows for upwards of two hundred twenty artists, and seven shows of the elementary students from two of our neighborhood schools (Blodgett and Seymour Magnet). Through all of these exhibitions we have had the pleasure of hanging or displaying nearly ten thousand pieces of artwork.

For the future, we are planning to turn the gallery space into five smaller art related areas. Tentative names for the spaces are “The Art Shops at Delavan Center” or “The Art Shops on West Fayette St.” While none of the plans are concrete, one of the spaces may be rented by current Gallery Manager, Caroline Szozda McGowan, with the plan to be opening sometime during the summer. In addition, one of the other newly-created spaces may serve as a general display space for special art displays and other art related events.

The decision to close Delavan Art Gallery has been long in coming and has been most difficult to make. While we are a for-profit gallery, we have been, in reality, a “double bottom line” enterprise. We have measured our success both by money and by the achievement of less quantifiable goals related to enhancing opportunities for area visual artists. Thus, from the onset, we stated that our mission was “to show and sell the fine art of area artists in the best possible setting”. Thus, while economic considerations are certainly a part of the decision, they are by no means the only part. Nearly seven years of intensive effort in the arts is a long time. It is now time to explore new horizons.

To put it briefly in context, at the time I conceived the idea of creating a gallery in 2001, several existing art galleries in Syracuse had recently closed, or were about to do so. I also knew that there were many fine visual artists in the central New York area whose work should not only be seen, but also sold so that they could make more of their living at their art. Thus, in designing the gallery, having observed the art scene for three decades, I felt that a new approach should be tried. The gallery was designed both physically and operationally to achieve the above goals.

In reviewing the history I feel very good about what we were able to accomplish in our time of operation. We’ve provided a superior space for area artists to show their work—and we’ve sold a lot of it. This exposure and these sales have helped many area artists. In addition, from the beginning the gallery became a meeting place for artists, their friends and supporters, and the larger community. The gallery has clearly enabled area residents, as well as visitors to the area, to see the high quality of art produced by our central New York area artists. The various cultural events—including artist talks and presentations, music, poetry readings, and theater—

brought many people into the gallery who might not otherwise have visited, as did the fundraisers, recognitions, parties, and weddings.

Each of the fifty-four exhibits has required a process of selection of theme, artists, and artwork; placement of the hanging panels; placement of art; hanging of the art work; labeling; lighting; openings with food and beverages; parking; staffing; selling; takedown; and return to the artist or delivery to a buyer. From the beginning the curatorial decisions were a joint effort performed by Caroline Szozda McGowan, Gallery Manager, and me. (We were also assisted in this task from time to time by the many able employees, volunteers, and interns we've had over the years.) As a result of our processes I can truly and honestly say that I have liked every show we put up. We have been continuously energized by so much: the area artists, their work, the patrons, and visitors—many of whom have become regulars, the elementary students, the concept shows such as the “Fashion Fashion,” the “Wrapping Contest,” “Shadows,” and the “Wild Card” area.

With a truly remarkable staff we did so much and, I hope and think, made a positive contribution to the visual arts and to the community. Each person will, of course, judge the outcomes from their own perspective and definition of success. Perhaps some will say that we should have done this or that differently. Fair enough, go for it.

However, the money side of things was more difficult. While we had many very loyal supporters, which we are most grateful for, and we sold a lot of work, the numbers still did not work out. In the long run that's got to sway things.

Speaking personally, it is hard, indeed painful, to close. One of my criteria from the beginning is that in working we must have fun or we can't do it. We did. I believe I speak for all of us when I say that the operation of the gallery has been exhilarating and educational—indeed inspiring—as we conceived each show, installed the work, and met the people. But now it's time to make a change. As the owner of Delavan Center I will continue to operate the building with its mixed uses of businesses and artists' studios. Over the course of time we have considered many good ideas for shows, some of which we were able to achieve. However, there are still many more “on the table” which beg to be done. I hope to be able to work on some of these ideas and be involved in area art activities in the future. In the words of AAAArnold, “I'll be baaaack.”

Many, many thank you's are due:

To the artists of the area who have been so supportive of the gallery since opening in 2003—through their participation in shows, attendance at openings, purchases of other artists' artwork, encouragement, suggestions, and creativity.

To the patrons, residents and visitors to this area who have enabled us to carry on through the years.

To my marvelous gallery staff over the years (past and present - in order of hiring):

Caroline Szozda McGowan, Gallery Manager

Amy Bartell, PR Coordinator
Courtney Rile, PR & Marketing
Roslyn Esperon, Gallery Assistant
Amy Komar, Gallery Assistant
Gloria Romeo, PR Coordinator
Jessica Heckman, Marketing Coordinator
Kathy Simpson, Assistant Manager

To the building staff who have been so helpful in so many ways:

Terry Delavan for her help with openings
Debbie Durr for her advice and help with openings
Jerry Durr for his help at openings
Jerry Hill for his help in setting up panels
Reginald Sanford for all of the things he did to make the gallery sparkle

To some of the more recent volunteers who have helped with the openings and other events:
Christine Chansamone, Cathy Craig, Holly Delavan, Debbie Durr, Jerry Durr, Katie Calak,
Lacey McKinney, Megan Murad, Phil Parsons, Kathy Simpson, and Jojo Siu.

To the many interns and other volunteers who have been so helpful.

To the media, for helping us in the constant effort to increase knowledge of the arts in Central New York.

Syracuse Post-Standard
Syracuse Post-Standard – Stars and Neighbors section specifically
The Scotsman/Pennysaver
The Eagle Newspapers
The Syracuse New Times
WCNY
WRVO

To our loyal artists and friends, who are so numerous that to attempt to list them, would be to omit many equally deserving people.

AND, a special thanks to my wife, Terry, for all of her efforts in helping with food purchases, staffing openings, and advice.

Yours most sincerely,

Bill Delavan, Gallery Director