

Grenning starts academy for arts

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of the Florence Academy comes in to teach an introductory master class on sight size technique. This caliber of instructor is indicative of the approach Grenning takes in her school, which she sees as a continuation of the community surrounding her gallery.

"It's just a natural extension. A lot of young artists come in and say 'wow, I want to know how to do that,' and I have painters coming in with this unbelievable wealth of knowledge," says Grenning.

The artists shown in the gallery, explains Grenning, are mostly under 40 and take a fresh approach to the visual arts. This fresh approach is a look to the past, and many of the artists, along with the classes in the academy, embrace the traditional passing-down of techniques and skills from master to stu-

dent. Grenning explains that this is because "the younger generation is interested in traditions that go back to the Greeks that have kind of been set aside by the modern art movement."

Grenning explained that she tends towards an approach she calls Poetic Realism, or "putting down what's essential to the subject, like a good poem." Having this particular focus on the content of the gallery, Grenning has attracted many artists that stick with her. Having these artists around, and hosting artists in the area, Grenning explained, "We're using the building as a place to get together...it's the natural expansion of the community, to bring the painters with these skills together."

Grenning, who herself had a technical arts education, explains that much of the influence for both the gallery and academy comes from the Flor-

ence Academy of Art, which was founded as a reaction to the lack of technical emphasis in most arts education. One artist trained in that school, 22-year old sculptor Cody Swanson, has works on display in the Sculpture Showroom, which serves as the subject for students in the sculpture drawing class.

Working from another artist's sculpture, explains Shelford as he layers charcoal on his drawing, "Helps me reach a deeper understanding of the work and gain insight into how the sculptor conceptualized the piece. It's been educational for me."

"[The artists] trained in this technique, then they sculpted, and we can draw from their sculptures," adds Grenning.

And as an added incentive, Grenning has offered to show selected student works in a special show, which Shelford sees as a positive influence on the class by encouraging students

to, "think of making a work of art that is beautiful and not just a student exercise."

Grenning is also offering one free seat to a selected student from Pierson High School.

"My ache, and the ache that created this business" says Grenning, "is that when I was a student I wanted to learn the punctuation of painting and drawing, it was not presented to me." The Academy has a very specific approach in order to fulfill this need. "It's a specific set of tools that one can impart. You take these skills and then you go out and create."

Further information on the Grenning Gallery, the Sag Harbor Fine Arts Academy and the Grenning Sculpture Showroom can be found at www.grenning-gallery.com. For more information on classes, call the gallery at (631)-725-8469 or contact via e-mail at info@grenninggallery.com.

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LAURA GRENNING

GRENNING GALLERY

Meeting a Desire to Learn Art

BY PETER NEELY

The Grenning Gallery Sculpture Showroom on Washington Street is lit up on Friday night. The seemingly traditional gallery space - with lights tracked around the ceilings, gold and black-framed oils lining the walls, and bronze statues dotting the floor - doubles as more than a gallery; it also serves as a classroom and studio.

The space opened on the first of September and is home to the Sag Harbor Fine Arts Academy, which hosts three students Friday night. The students are positioned behind easels, with clipped up drawing paper and charcoal in hand, drawing from impressive, bronze sculptures. They set themselves behind their easels and begin to scratch charcoal on paper, working with contours and shape to build their drawings; using eye-line sighting with their pencils to make sense of angles and ratios and balance the compositions. There are sounds of charcoal on paper and violins and cellos over the stereo.

Instructor and artist, Thomas Shel-

A new academy emerges where artists are the teachers

ford, is teaching students a technique in which drawings are built up in stages. The technical approach mirrors 19th century academic drawing methods, allowing students to solidify their technical background. "It gives artists a toolkit to express themselves," explains Shelford, who described the approach as, "standing on the shoulders of giants."

"Now, when you start layering details on, you can be confident that it's going to fit," explains Shelford to student Heather Peterson, while both stand behind her partially finished drawing that is beginning to take the form of sculptor Cody Swanson's "Eve."

Peterson, who expressed her initial concern in having had no fine arts background, explains that after ending up in the class she has been making progress. "Something clicked at the end of last class," Peterson says.

"So far so good."

Yet, this sculpture drawing workshop is only one of a number of classes to be at the Academy, which is a new venture for proprietor Laura Grenning, who has run her successful gallery on Main Street for the past ten years and has attracted a community of committed artists and clients. The idea for the new space and Academy, explains Grenning, "evolved from people wanting to know how to paint and draw, and the artists being here and being available."

The school offers two classes currently and has a schedule of upcoming classes and events. In addition to the sculpture drawing workshop taking place on Fridays, there is a figure drawing class on Wednesday nights, which is a drop in class where students can sit and draw for three hours with no instruction. "And if that picks up, we will get a teacher," said Grenning, who added, "It's fun and it's relaxed."

In an upcoming workshop on January 5 and 6, Artist Stephen Bauman

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