

Vera Van Stone Fogg Retrospective

By Mary Gow

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Photo by Chip Allen Natvig

Studio Place Arts Director Sue Higby hangs a piece of art by Vermont artist Vera Van Stone Fogg for the upcoming exhibit at the downtown Barre location.

Vera Van Stone Fogg's watercolors, pastels, woodcuts, and drawings span a lot of years. In fact, counting drawings she did as a child, her creativity extends almost to a full century. A consummate artist, Fogg is now approaching her 102nd birthday – and she is still making art.

Next week, Studio Place Arts presents a lifetime retrospective exhibition of Vera Van Stone Fogg's work. Beginning Monday and continuing through Saturday, Jan. 10, the show features selections from her family's extensive personal collection.

“All of us at SPA are very excited about this lifetime retrospective. We are honored to share the talents that Vera has shared with others throughout her life,” said Sue Higby, executive director of SPA. “Vera is new to our neighborhood and we are very pleased that she is now part of the SPA community.”

Longtime residents of Rochester, New York, Fogg and her husband Jack are at the Gary Home in Montpelier to stay close to family in central Vermont. The couple celebrates their 76th wedding anniversary this week.

“My mother was an artist from the beginning,” said Karen Saudek of East Montpelier, Fogg's daughter, noting that a family photograph shows her mother at four or five years old, intently drawing a picture.

Fogg studied at the Art Student's League in New York and later with artist Robert Brackman. A member of the Genesee Group and the Rochester Art Club, Fogg exhibited regularly in western New York.

In the early 1930s, talented and enthusiastic, Fogg started working in advertising for a department store in Rochester, initially in an apprentice-type arrangement. Prominent stores of the time often had in house art departments for designing their newspaper ads. From that beginning she soon moved to a job with Sears Roebuck.

"I was young and eager, and I wanted experience" Fogg said. "I did everything they needed for their ads — kitchenware, hardware, fashion. I was especially interested in fashion."

Her flair for couture is evident in her watercolors and drawings of long, slim women's suits and dresses in vogue then. She notes that her assignments also included less glamorous subjects including garbage cans. After her day job, she would have dinner and then go to art classes.

"I was going to night classes for life drawing. That was for pleasure," she said

In 1939, Vera and Jack Fogg married. Their family and experiences together offered worlds of new subjects for paintings and drawing.

"Dad was a scientist at Kodak and a sailor, Mom was an artist. They supported each other so well in what they did and have always appreciated each other so much," said Saudek. "She never had to be the corporate wife, she was the painter. As we grew up, we knew where mother was. She was painting."

Probably the majority of Fogg's works are in watercolor — although other media are also well represented.

"Watercolor is so alive, it has to be able to flow," said Fogg.

Through the decades, Fogg's watercolors were always by her side. With them she explored and reflected on many of the places of the family's experiences. At Lake Ontario, as her husband worked on their sailboat, she painted the lake, the regattas, the boatyard, the docks. In Maine, on Martha's Vineyard, and in Gloucester, she captured intimate details and sweeping landscapes.

The family's log cabin on Lake Canandaigua, New York has been an endless inspiration with its views, pond, flowers, and wildlife. Like Monet, Fogg has examined different scenes there in different seasons and from different perspectives. A series of her paintings of the long road leading to the cabin are especially compelling.

Fogg's family members have long been her models for portraits.

"One of the things I remember sitting for her — often. It was such fun to watch her," said Saudek. "When you look at an artist's self portrait you see the intensity — you can see right into

the artist's eyes. That's what it was like to have her do your portrait — you'd be sitting there for hours with this woman who was transformed from your mom into who she really was. She was sort of in a different world," said Saudek.

Another group of Fogg's works that are especially striking are her woodcut prints, many that she created as annual family Christmas cards and bookplates. Beyond the selections in the show, many more can be seen in two handsome volumes that document the family's collection of Fogg's art. The books, each with over 200 pages of excellent photographs of her work, were designed by her son Jack Fogg. These volumes will also be at the show, offering additional insight into Vera Van Stone Fogg's remarkable artistic lifetime.

Info

Vera Van Stone Fogg: A Lifetime Retrospective Exhibit featuring paintings, pastels, drawings and block prints by a prolific, talented artist of nearly 102 years of age.

Main Floor Gallery

January 5 –10, 2015

Opening Reception: Monday, Jan. 5, 2 – 4 p.m.

Closing Reception: Saturday, Jan. 10, 3 – 5 p.m.

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