

It's 'Amore!'

Love adorns SPA walls

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Stefan Hard / Staff Photo

North Craftsbury artist Theodore Ceraldi's 2010 piece, "John" in wood with oil finish, is in the foreground at Studio Place Arts' main floor gallery. In the background are three oil on canvas works by Barre artist Evzen Jurasek. From left are "Hana 1," "Self Portrait" and "Hana 2."

Love is in the air. At Studio Place Arts, love is also on the walls and standing on the floor.

This week, "Amore!" opens at SPA. In paintings, sculptures, prints and assemblages, artists explore love. "Amore!" in the Main Floor Gallery is accompanied by two shows upstairs. Cecelia Kane's self-portrait series: "How Am I Feeling Today?" is on the second floor; another flight up, Ann Young's paintings "Autumn Pond Abstract" transform the third floor space into, well, an autumn pond.

With works by over two dozen artists, "Amore!" considers a magnificent range of emotion.

“Family love pieces, passionate love pieces, best friends love pieces, pieces that talk about the magic of love itself — that idea of conjuring love,” are all in the show, said Sue Higby, executive director of SPA.

“It is interesting that the show is not just about how artists use their favorite media to describe an emotion — they are sharing something that’s very close to them,” said Higby, noting that among the more than three dozen pieces in the show are several that are not for sale, but on loan by the artists.

A towering installation by Carolyn Enz-Hack of Thetford Center stands in the center of the gallery. Cyclone-like, a swirl of metal lath encircles a pair of topsy turvy figures in “Yeah, Amore.”

Thirty four years of Valentines made by Stephen Conant of Burlington for his wife Mags are displayed in and around an antique cabinet in “Simple Gifts 1978-2014 A Valentine’s Day Tradition.” Every year Conant gives his wife a heart, and every one is different and amazing. Most are metal — a brass heart bowl, a steel cubist heart, silver hearts, a heart twisted from a giant wrench, one made of stacked pennies. The artist, founder of Conant Metal and Light, knows his way with these materials. But there are others — fabric hearts, one made of Styrofoam covered in gold leaf, a glass heart, and more. It’s an intimate and lovely collection.

“The Love of Long-time Friends: Three Women of Castelveccio” comprises three portraits by Jeneane Lunn of Montpelier. Lunn visits and paints in Italy frequently. These women who she met and painted there radiate the warmth of great friendship.

The range of love in “Amore!” is fabulous. A trio of paintings by Evzen Jurasek of Barre include a self portrait and two of his wife and muse Hana. In “A Place in My Heart,” Marie Davis of Burlington celebrates love of home, with a tiny comfy scene — complete with a lamp that lights — inside an opened colorful polymer heart. Sculptor Heather Ritchie of Barre has three stone hearts in the show — including “Hometown Heart” in Barre grey.

While “Amore!” presents many artists’ examination and expressions of one emotion, SPA Second Floor Gallery exhibition presents one artist’s exploration of many days’ emotions.

Artist Cecelia Kane’s series “How Am I Feeling Today?” includes dozens of her daily self-portraits printed on antique family handkerchiefs. In each one, the word expressing her feeling is written across her forehead. She has also quilted, embroidered, and beaded these individual pieces.

“This work is a study of identity based on 89 photos, one per day, that I took in 2009, staring in my bathroom mirror, asking the questions, ‘Am I my fleeting thoughts?’ ‘Am I my changing emotions?’ Each is a portrait of an elusive feeling, titled by the day and the feeling of the moment,” explains Kane in her artist’s statement.

Ann Young's "Autumn Pond Abstract" was inspired by her paddling through the leaves and lily pads of a calm pond. She brings the colors and details of the season and changing life to this series. The installation includes 50 or so small square paintings arranged in a long line that stretches all the way around the gallery — like the pond's water level. In the main space, they are punctuated by a few larger works of the same subject. Altogether, they bring the calm and vibrancy of the pond into SPA.

A free public reception will be held 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24. "Amore!" love and art combine to benefit SPA programs, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12. Enjoy chocolate, art and some of the greatest love songs of all times presented by DJ Fred Wilber of Buch Spieler Music. Tickets are \$25, \$15 in advance.

Studio Place Arts

Studio Place Arts presents "Amore!" exploring love and passion through art, through Feb. 21, at SPA, 201 N. Main St. in Barre. Also on exhibit are "How Am I Feeling Today?" by Cecelia Kane (Second Floor Gallery), and "Autumn Pond Abstract," paintings by Ann Young (Third Floor Gallery). Gallery hours are: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, noon to 4 p.m. Saturday; call 802-479-7069, 802.479.7069. A free public reception will be held 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24.