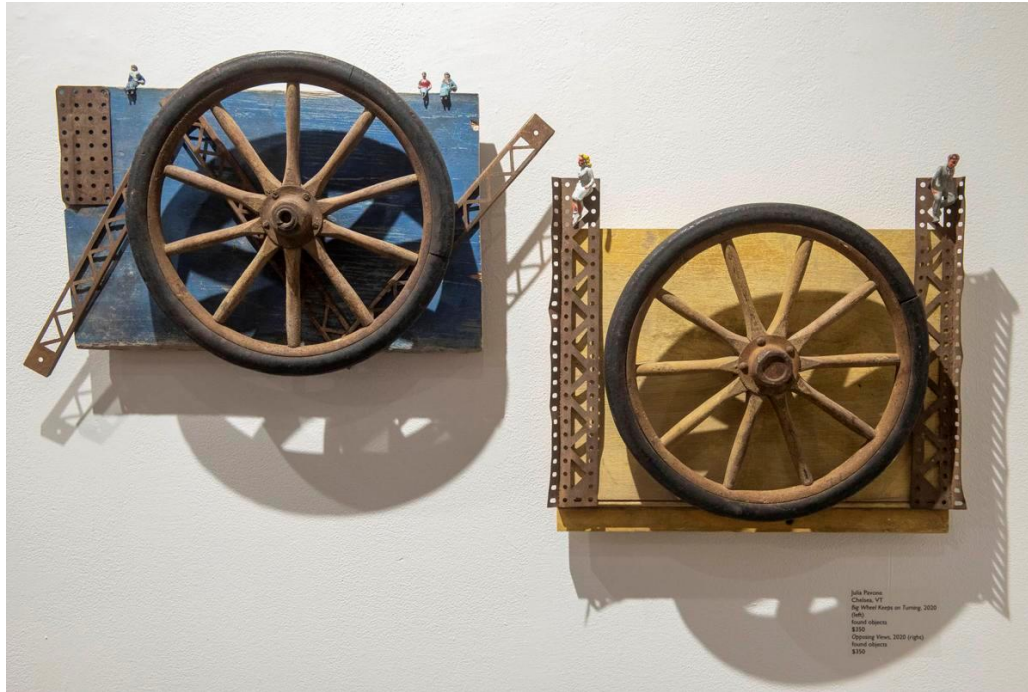


‘Rolling On’ at SPA: Art that keeps the world moving

By Mary Gow Arts Correspondent, *The Times Argus*, January 30, 2021



Julia Pavone: “Big Wheels Keep on Turning” and “Opposing Views”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

Wheels roll, seedpods burst with color, handcrafted art books beckon, and an intricate thread installation considers “Contact Tracing.” The four exhibitions that opened last week at Studio Place Arts in Barre offer a beautifully fitting start to this year, each one with much to explore and savor.

“Rolling On,” a salute to the wheel, with two and three-dimensional work by 20 artists, fills SPA’s Main Floor Gallery. On the second floor, extraordinary one-

of-a-kind volumes by 11 artists of the Book Lab group are presented in “Consider the Book.” Brilliant quilted textile compositions by Marya Lowe, of Jericho, radiate life in her “Seedpods: Promises of the Future” in the Third Floor Gallery. Mardi Gras-colored threads spread out in circles proportionate to the exponential spread of the COVID-19 virus in Tuyen My Nguyen’s “Contact Tracing” in SPA’s compact Quick Change Gallery.

Each exhibition offers connections for our unusual time — the reliable inevitability of time rolling on, unexpected journeys found in books, the hope innate in seedpods, and the mind-bogglingly rapid spread of the of the coronavirus.

“‘Rolling On’ gives a nod to one of the earliest inventions of humankind,” explained Sue Higby, executive director of SPA, noting that the show includes a rich variety of forms of art as artists painted, photographed and sculpted wheels, also reusing, adapting and considering them in fresh ways.

Two sculptures in the center of the gallery transport the viewer to Carrara, Italy. Sculptor Giuliano Cecchinelli carved a black granite eight-spoked wheel with engraving along its rim reading “Fortitudo Mea in Rota.”

Carrara, Cecchinelli’s hometown and source of famed marble, uses the eight-spoked wheel as its emblem, recalling the vital work of sturdy wagon wheels in transporting stone from mountain quarries. The words featured on Carrara’s coat of arms translate to “my strength from the wheel.”

In B. Amore’s “Nearly Off the Edge,” an aged metal wheel, perhaps cast iron, with three gracefully curved spokes stands upright atop a limestone pedestal. Amore brought the wheel back from Carrara, where she has taught workshops.

Bicycle tires, wagon wheels, wheels of fortune, hot rod tires, tinker toy wheels, fantastical wheels and more rolled in for the show.

There’s lots of wit and fun, including with the tiny wooden furniture caster in “Good Roll Model” by Lynda Kynsley. Hasso Ewing’s plaster sculpture of a young bicyclist in daffodil yellow dress and pale blue mask exuberantly pedals through SPA’s front window, hair flying.

Political and social commentary are also on a roll including in Rob Millard-Mendez’s “TRQJAN HORSE” as a familiar visage, carved in wood, stands on its cart ready to be rolled in to the unsuspecting. Viewers who open its door perhaps find the source of a conspiracy hawker.

Aaron Stein’s “Paradise Paved” with its Firestone tire and Hot Wheels Loop-D-Loop (the little car usually makes it) may bring to mind Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi” and questions about the sustainability of the American dreams.

Upstairs, the group show “Consider the Book” draws viewers into the beauty and diversity of artist books. These nearly 30 handcrafted books range from stunning little volumes drawing inspiration from nature to tunnel books with moveable panels to a bowl of rounded-pebble books.

In Dorsey Hogg’s “Tapestry 1970,” repurposed old Encyclopedia Americana pages, rolled into cylinders, emerge as a textile-like wall hanging of text and color. Miniature vanity license plates come together in Carolyn Shattuck’s “Licensing” with CRZYMOM from Tennessee at the top, and JUDG NOT from Wisconsin at the bottom. A dozen other plates suggest glimpses of a multi-tasking everywoman.

Several are simply breathtaking including Judy Sgantas’s pop-up natural history piece, “The Moth and the Butterfly ” and Marcia Vogler’s “Full of Birds” as the flock of birds fly on pages and beyond.



Dorsey Hogg: “Tapestry 1970” in “Consider the Book” at SPA, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo

In the tiny Quick Change Gallery, taut strings of Tuyen My Nguyen’s “Contact Tracing” illuminate how quickly the

COVID-19 virus spreads and the vast numbers who need to be reached by contact tracers in an outbreak. Nguyen drew particularly from New Orleans, an early COVID-19 hotspot, where infections surged after 2020 Mardi Gras public celebrations.

The Third Floor Gallery bursts with color in Marya Lowe’s “Seedpods: Promises of the Future.”

“A traditional quilter gone rogue to textile art in 2007, I am still grounded in beautiful fabric, but my process has changed dramatically. I use fabric now, not as raw material for construction, but as a tool for expression,” Lowe says in her artist’s statement.

Her compositions, abstracted seedpod shapes that grew out of her work with the traditional double wedding ring pattern, are vibrant and compelling seen from a distance. Colors, contrasts and curved forms work together. Up close, the individual bits of printed fabric and variety of over stitching pattern offer layers of surprises and discovery.

Lowe notes in her statement that like the wedding-ring theme, “the seedpod shape continued to ground the theme of comfort and inclusion. As the seeds began to dot the compositions, the parallel theme of hope and promise for the future emerged.”

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