

Studio Place Arts: 'Sheltered in Place, Artists Reveal'

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Meri Stiles: "Eyes and Thoughts Abound" (Courtesy Studio Place Arts)

BARRE — The second of three scheduled "Shelter in Place" online exhibits opened this week on the Studio Place Arts (SPA) website and through its social media sites. Participating artists include: Anne Cummings, John Douglas, Martha Elmes, Naomi Hartov,

Holly Hauser, Meg Miller, Orah Moore, Ryan Sarah Murphy, Meri Stiles, Janet and Manny Van Fleet, Dana Walrath and Ann Young.

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John Douglas: "Black House" (Courtesy Studio Place Arts)

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The “Shelter in Place” shows are absorbing because “they involve artists’ reactions to these topical issues while practicing their art during the pandemic,” according to Sue Higby, SPA’s executive director, “involving improvised partnerships, work space, and materials. Plus, artists are finding voice through our Freedom of Expression Policy, which is the only gallery policy of its kind in the state.”

Cultural anthropologist and artist Dana Walrath is showing two pencil drawings, “COVID Lessons 1 & 2,” that help to reveal the linguistic choices made early in the pandemic that she feels have contributed to the spread of the virus. She notes, “Given that physical, not social, distance slows the spread of a contagious disease, why then, is the term ‘social distancing’ so sticky? Perhaps because social distancing captures deeply felt unspoken beliefs that threaten our collective health. For over a century, linguists have known that language not only reflects, but it creates our world view.”

John Douglas is also exhibiting two works in the show. One digital work, “Black House,” includes his words “In the old days, the white house was where the master lived on a plantation and the slaves knew it ... perhaps we could call it something else these days.” Douglas began looking through the viewfinder more than 50 years ago, making films in Mississippi and during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago and then in North Vietnam in 1969 with Newsreel. He has continued work in film, video, computer modeling and animation, and most recently digital photography.

According to Meg Miller, a retired art instructor, the hurriedly painted self-portrait “White Privilege” confronts her “discomfort with inequality” in what she sees as “two horrific pandemics: COVID-19 and the 400-plus year pandemic of racism in this country.” In her painting, Miller stands wearing a face mask and a weary expression in front of a slim line of bright yellow paint, paying tribute to the recent addition of the lettering “Black Lives Matter” in front of the State House.

The digital shows “Shelter in Place” 1 and 2 can be viewed on the Studio Place Arts website www.studioplacearts.com and the next SPA show in the series will be launched July 10.