

SPA expands Studio Residency Program

Staff Report, Published in *The Times Argus/Rutland Herald*, Sept. 11-12, 2021



One of the recipients of the SPA Studio Residency Program award is Montpelier artist Michelle Lesnak. Courtesy of Studio Place

Studio Place Arts (SPA) has selected two local artists, Michelle Lesnak, of Montpelier, and Tracey Hambleton, of East Montpelier, for its annual competitively awarded Studio Residency Program.

The SPA Studio Residency Program has offered a small studio in the art center to an emerging artist from the community for one year, free of charge, since 2015. At the conclusion of the residency, artists have shared their work in an exhibition at SPA.

There are two artists involved in the Studio Residency Program in 2021-22 because of the addition of a studio on short-term loan provided by an artist who has new family responsibilities. The program has involved six artists to date, including: Shannon Lee Gilmour, Athena Petra Tasiopoulos, Hannah Morris, Tuyen My Nguyen, Autumn Tomlinson and Austin Furtak-Cole.



Plein air painter Tracey Hambleton is one of the recipients of the SPA Studio Residency Award this year. Courtesy of Studio Place

Lesnak, a painter and assemblage artist, will explore new forms during the residency. For example, she will paint introspective windows through which she makes observations, which are adorned with lacey curtains made from everyday fibers like paper bags and mailing labels. As a trained and practicing art therapist, Lesnak hopes to coordinate an art group at SPA with local health providers, care givers, medical professionals, and others who have been on the front lines during the pandemic.

Hambleton, a plein-air painter and history buff, will be seen around Barre during her SPA residency, throughout the seasons, creating studies and paintings of everyday places and iconic industrial structures. As the project manager for the Marshfield Story Project with the Marshfield Historical Society and Jaquith Public Library, she has been collecting oral histories of Marshfield residents and archiving historical photographs. Her skills and interest in the history of a working city like Barre promise a fascinating exhibition.

“Our plan has been to bring people in contact with working artists in a variety of ways in order to foster lifelong creativity,” Sue Higby, SPA executive director, explained. Both Lesnak and Hambleton are outstanding ambassadors for the arts at a time when people young and old will benefit from their restorative and inspirational qualities.”

The recipient of the 2020-21 SPA Studio Residency Program award, Furtak-Cole, will be exhibiting a group of drawings in his exhibit, “Moves,” Sept. 15-Oct. 30.

Go online to www.studioplacearts.com for more information.