

The RIVERDALE PRESS



A gallery with 'a purpose' opens with an homage to the environment

By Kate Pastor
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Dozens of local art lovers strolled around Riverdale's newest gallery over the weekend to help kick off what founders hope will be a long, successful endeavor.

Located on Moshulu Avenue near West 256th Street, Elisa Tucci Contemporary Art officially opened its doors on Sept. 26 with the inaugural exhibit, "Beauty, Mystery, Nature Transformed."

The gallery is the latest achievement in the lives of two successful women, Riverdale resident Lisa Cooper and Manhattan resident Joan Daidone, both marketing and media professionals who have previously worked at places like IBM, Microsoft and Mercedes-Benz, but who say they decided to dedicate their lives more fully to their passion — the healing power of art.

Believing their newest project would be buoyed by their advertising know-how and philanthropic histories, the pair set out to open a gallery that would serve a purpose greater than just lining their pockets with cash. The hope, Ms. Cooper explained, is to display artwork that can help "heal their audience," while also funding art programs for the less fortunate. Five percent of the profits from each sale will be donated to charity.

Ms. Cooper, who grew up in Riverdale and attended JHS 141 and the Fieldston School, has been an active volunteer and supporter of Free Arts NYC, a non-profit organization that works with children and their families in the South Bronx to provide education arts and mentoring programs. Some proceeds will be directed there, while others will go to Niños del Lago, a humanitarian education project in Guatemala for which Ms. Daidone serves on the international advisory board.

With no particular genre or medium as the overriding theme in the exhibit, the women were interested instead in selecting art that provoked emotion.

"We believe that art is healing and transformative, and the more you stand in front of it, the more it transforms your life," said Ms. Cooper.

The current exhibit on display pays homage to the beauty and mystery of environment, and features a range of artworks in a variety of media. The works of one Riverdale resident and several Westchester residents are featured in the show.

Among the artwork on display is a series of watercolors — oil and ink on wood — by Hawaii resident Carol Bennett; Miriam Brumer's "Second Visitor," made from acrylic and marker on mylar, which looks like a giant doodle up close and a multi-colored tentacle growth from just a few steps back; and the pine sculpture, "Cambium," by Jon DePreter, inspired by the way insects eat away at trees. There is also an entire wall covered by the paintings of Riverdale artist Carole Naggar, who combines techniques, materials and visual language of different cultures.

The gallery is now representing 12 artists, said Ms. Cooper, but she's hoping to grow that list. Until recently, she said, she was showing the art out of her Riverdale home, but the business partners realized they needed a bigger space if



ROBERTO FERREIRA and his son Khai take in the art at the newly opened Elisa Tucci Contemporary Art Gallery on Moshulu Avenue.

Photo by Joshua Bright

the project was to really take off.

With the exception of Wave Hill and a few other galleries in Riverdale, Ms. Cooper said, "I don't think there's an enormous amount of culture that's either been here or been supported here."

Already, she said, she has received ample affirmation from local residents that her gallery is filling both "a need and want for the community."

"I'm glad to know there's something alive in the area," said Roberto Ferreira, who was walking down Moshulu Avenue, stroller in hand, on Monday, when he noticed the gallery. "I said I have to go because I've been waiting for this," he said.

Lillian Master, a local artist who also stopped into the gallery on Monday, said, "I'm really happy that they have something like this Riverdale," adding, "I'm looking forward to being a regular there."

"Beauty, Mystery, Nature Transformed," is on display through Nov. 2. Elisa Tucci Contemporary Art, located at 5622 Moshulu Ave., is open Thursdays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sundays, from noon to 4 p.m.; and by appointment. For more information or to set up an appointment for a private viewing, contact Lisa Cooper at 212-729-4974 or e-mail lisa@elisaart.com.

RIVERDALE RESIDENT Carole Naggar's "Palimpsest," above, is part of the new exhibit, "Beauty, Mystery, Nature Transformed."

BELOW, Carol Bennett's oil and ink on wood, "Shield." Below at right, Rosalind Schneider's "Garden 1."

