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'INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS AND FREE'

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

ON THE VERGE* and *FORGOTTEN SPACES

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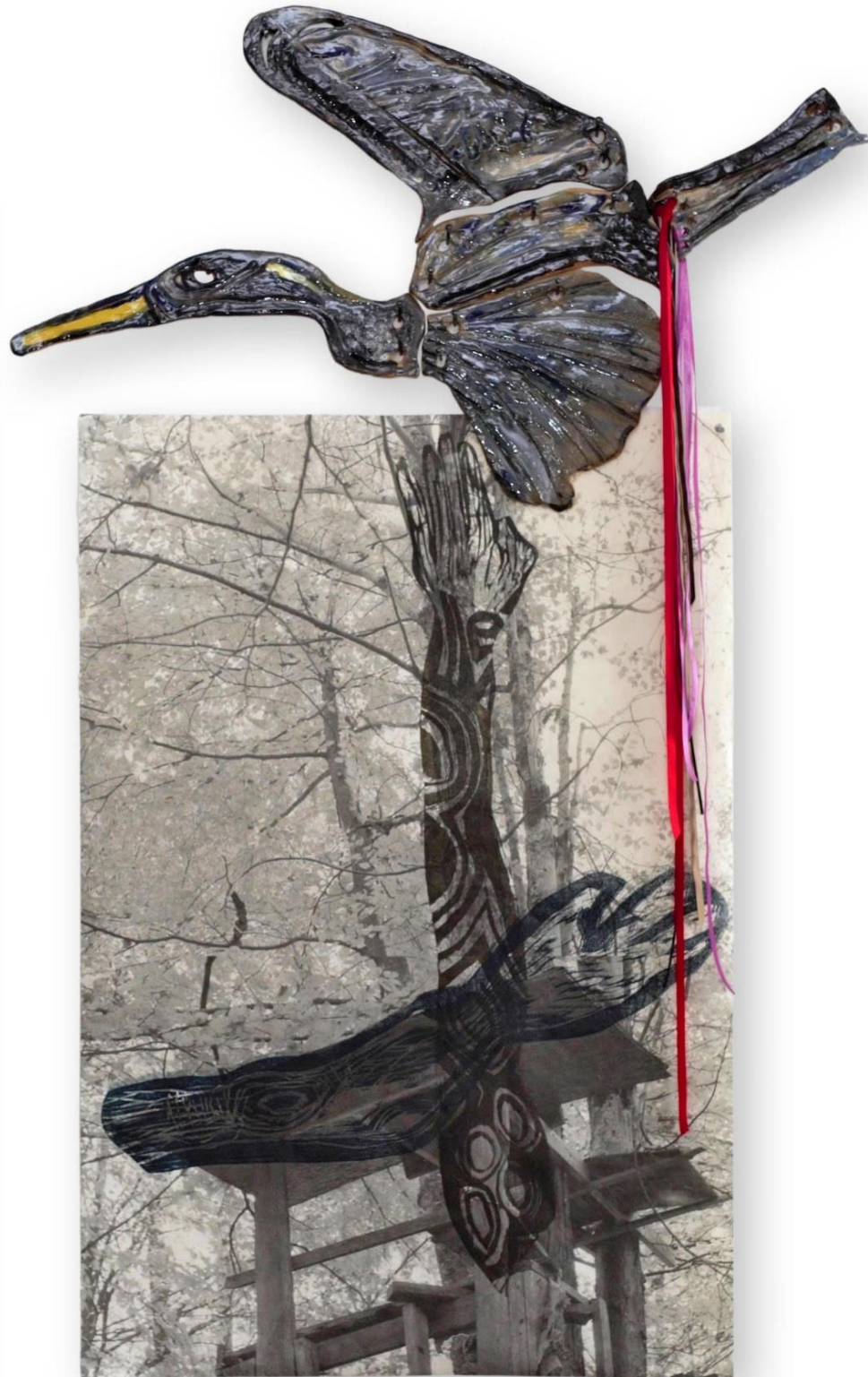
Two group shows opened in February in Delaware County -- *On the Verge* at the Bushel Collective Space in Delhi (February 3-March 10) and *Forgotten Spaces* (February 17-April 13) at the Walt Meade Gallery of the Roxbury Arts Center. Both shows resulted from open calls to local artists from the incredibly vibrant arts scene in the Western Catskills.

The Bushel exhibition focused on frameworks of time in both historical and current conceptualizations, as well as seasonal and ecological approaches to time. Jeri Coppola's silver prints and neon lights piece welcomed me to this multimedia exhibit featuring films, videos, watercolor, mixed media, oil, earthenware and even a toxic mixture of mud and detritus. For example, the Kailey Maher piece (*Sentience of Time*) hanging from the ceiling on one thread seemed to hold time in limbo, asking the visitor to hold their breath lest they gasp too hard and shatter the fragile earthenware spiderweb orbs. Images of cityscapes and fantastic universes (Mark Strodl, *Meditation 2*, video) intermingled with delicate ephemeral watercolor flora of the region (GG Stankiewicz, *Winterberry I - III*). The rich and varied interpretations of the theme offered by the eleven artists evoked a sensation of promise and inevitability.

"The show is endless," remarked Kathleen Hayek, local artist from Walton.

Forgotten Spaces, at the Roxbury Arts Gallery, has a similar timeless feel. The focus in this exhibit is the effect of time on the spaces we inhabit or those that no longer exist. How have these structures, both metaphorical and literal, reflected our growth, our decay, our deaths, and our grief? Lauren Whritner's eerie soundscape invited us to find a new meaning in familiar landscapes. This collection included prints, fabric, oils, videos, watercolor, and stoneware.

Jody Isaacson combined media in her audacious sculpture, *Aubade*, that seemed to ascend in one piece, uniting the separate components of stoneware, ribbons, inkjet on kozo, and woodcut. These different and unique materials merge to create a surprising sensation of flight.



Jody Isaacson: *Aubade*, 2024, stoneware, ribbons, inkjet on kozo, woodcut

In a nearby corner, two pieces, Joseph Damone's stark white photo, *Winter Barn*, and Tabitha Gilmore-Barnes' fiber-tapestry, *GRIEF*, seemed tucked away as if the curators didn't want the guests to experience the isolating sadness of spaces that have deliberately been forgotten. I moved away, looking for respite in Timothy Cleary's video, *All Visitors*. As I was guided through an empty-stalled barn to a wooded sunlit field just outside the door, the rays of the sun occasionally obscured the goal, and a small bird flitted about. The exit remained out of reach. I turned to another wall. The young woman in Jessica Farrell's *Ascent (of an evening star)*, a vivid acrylic on wood painting, looked wistfully out at the viewer: is she trying to escape the small town behind her?



Jessica Farrell: *Ascent (of an evening star)*, 2023, acrylic on wood panel, 24" x 36"

It was difficult to fully embrace the atmosphere and the collective effect at the Roxbury opening because of the huge crowd of artists, fans, and well-wishers. Both exhibits were so full of visual, tactile, and auditory experiences that I was overwhelmed with appreciation for the opportunity to share this space and time with others from the area.

Many of the artists in both groups are transplants from other regions of the country, most frequently the New York City area. As more and more talent migrates to the welcoming hills of the Western Catskills, we can expect more shows of this caliber.