

COMMUNITY

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A new art site

Former Greenport gallery moves to Riverhead



Five years ago, Orient architect Glynis Berry was operating a tiny, upscale art gallery in Greenport, in the heart of what was rapidly becoming a booming tourist town. The growth and vitality of Greenport Village over the past decade were partly a result of its thriving arts district — marked by the proliferation of art galleries along its scenic waterfront streets.

by
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"We decided to try Riverhead," she said last week at her new gallery on West Main Street, opposite the Riverhead Dodge auto dealership.

But Ms. Berry has no regrets. The new home for her gallery, Art Sites, dwarfs its former space. She and Mr. Ariizumi converted a 1,800-square-foot garage — once a Willys dealership — into a bright, airy gallery and office space for their architectural practice. It sits on two acres of land overlooking the Peconic River, a hidden jewel, Ms. Berry notes. "From the street, you'd never even know it was there," she says, somewhat bemused. "We were amazed."

The couple's office and workshop, at the back of the space, has expansive views of the riverfront.

"There is great potential here," she says of Riverhead. "It's where the two forks converge, after all."

"A lot of artists are going to be inspired by the back yard," said Lillian Ball, the artist whose photographs and video installations are on exhibit at Art Sites for the month of August.

Inspiration drawn from the natural environment is exactly what motivated Ms. Ball's current exhibit. The wetlands adjacent to Kenny's Beach in Southold, where Ms. Ball lives — or, more accurately, her passion to preserve them — are what inspired Ms. Ball to create art again, after a hiatus spent being consumed by a long battle to preserve a 12-acre "globally rare intertidal swale" wetland situated between Great Pond and the Sound. The struggle continues, but Ms. Ball began to document it with photography and video. The poster-size color photographs on display in her exhibit at Art Sites this month were mostly shot in an area known as the Harper Preserve, which was acquired for preservation by the Peconic Land Trust.

The natural beauty of the wetlands and Ms. Ball's fight to preserve what's left of them are both evident in the artist's work, which depicts rare and endangered flora and fauna juxtaposed with haunting images of impending development, such as pink surveyor's tape marking property boundaries and bales of hay placed to delineate the limit of wetlands and mark the limit of permissible land-clearing. In addition to the still color photos, Ms. Ball has three video installations on exhibit at Art Sites. One, a 16-minute collection of videos called "Leap of Faith" — after which the show is titled — is projected onto an area of fine, white sand arranged in a circle on the gallery floor and shows the Harper Preserve from several different perspectives: the botanist's, the builder's, the bureaucrat's, even a box turtle's. Another video, about the nesting piping plover, is viewed inside a box placed in a small pile of rocks. A third, titled "Cranberry Tide," is on view within a huge hourglass — representing a theme of the show, time is running out — that was custom-built by Ms. Ball for the exhibit.

The artist's message is strong and clear: "These are not just pretty pictures that are interesting to look at," she says emphatically about her images, portraying rare species like the Iris Prismatica, known as slender blue flag, next to pink surveyor's tape, both fluttering daintily in the breeze. "What they're about is much bigger than that," the artist says.

The natural beauty of the riverfront behind the gallery and the environmental sensitivity of Ms. Berry and Mr. Ariizumi as architects are what attracted Ms. Ball to Art Sites.

Ms. Ball's exhibit is on view at Art Sites through Aug. 27. The gallery is open to the public Thursday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m., and by appointment.



Suffolk Times photos by Barbarawellen Koch

Top left: Art Sites Gallery owners Glynis Berry and husband Hideaki Ariizumi on West Main Street in Riverhead. Above: Artist Lillian Ball in front of 'Invasion' diptych, 2005: winter and summer views of the same wetland and its invasive species.