

Woolwich curator's new destination gallery veers far from 'lighthouses and landscapes'

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By Eric Russell

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Sarah Bouchard at her art gallery in Woolwich. *Derek Davis/Staff Photographer*

WOOLWICH — Sarah Bouchard's new art gallery, located a few miles off Route 1 in the woods of this Midcoast community, is not likely to get much, if any, drive-by or foot traffic.

Those who are interested in the work displayed there will need to seek it out, but Bouchard is hopeful they will.

"It is a big risk," she said recently from inside the space, a converted garage that is attached to her home by a covered breezeway. "But this is what I want to do, and I take the role of curating very seriously."

Bouchard is an artist herself and worked in other people's galleries for years, building relationships with a formidable slate of artists. In April 2020, when the pandemic hit, she lost her position at Corey Daniels Gallery in Wells and "did a complete reevaluation of my life."

“I’ve always thought about opening my own space. It’s been a dream of mine,” she said.

Bouchard initially got the itch as a student at the University of Maine at Farmington when she curated her first show under the guidance of Sarah Maline, associate professor art history and gallery director.

She said the things she learned from Maline, especially about how to display work so that nothing else distracts from it, have been put to use in her own gallery.

Initially, she thought about opening in Portland or somewhere with more visibility, but after talking to some people in the arts community, she opted for a less conventional approach. She spent about \$75,000 to renovate the space above her garage.

What once was envisioned as an in-law apartment is now a sparse, high-ceilinged, white-walled gallery showcasing work from Maine artists. The inaugural exhibit, “A Gallery of Aces,” is on display now.

The six contemporary artists chosen for the first exhibit, whose work will be available for purchase, are all renowned and have been exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the state and beyond. They are: Josefina Auslender, an Argentinian artist now living in Maine; digital artist Michael Mansfield; painter Dozier Bell of Waldoboro and her husband, Ken Greenleaf; and Kate Russo, a painter and daughter of author Richard Russo, and her husband, Tom Butler.

Greenleaf said he got to know Bouchard through her work at Corey Daniels Gallery and said he was impressed by how seriously she approached her job.

“I’m not necessarily someone who’s hungry to show anymore because I’ve been doing it for such a long time,” he said. “So, when I’m looking for relationships, it’s about trust. I want to work with someone who has the gumption, the strength and the background to make a gallery work.”

Bell said she, too, was drawn to Bouchard’s aesthetic, which is similar to her own.

“The people I’ve worked with and been happy with, they like art and artists and are not necessarily as concerned with the business side of things,” Bell said. “She’s definitely not catering to a market, but instead is showing what she likes, and I think others like that approach as well.”

Now that Bouchard’s space has opened, Greenleaf said he’s even more impressed. He’s never seen anything like it, at least in Maine.

“Many galleries, it’s about the building or the location, but this is all about the artwork,” he said.

Bouchard said she envisions five exhibits each year from April through October. The next three exhibits will be solo, and the final exhibit of 2022 will offer a similar mix of artists as the current display.

Bell's work will be featured in the gallery's first solo exhibit later this month.

People inquiring about another gallery "filled with lighthouses and landscapes" are likely going to be disappointed, Bouchard said, but she she wants a gallery free of pretense. Visits are by appointment only, although since Bouchard lives on the premises, she hopes to accommodate art enthusiasts on their terms. No purchases are required to visit.

"My commute is great," she said, adding that the flexibility allows her to create her own work as well, although she won't exhibit her pieces at the gallery.

For more information about the gallery, located at 13 Nequasset Pines Road in Woolwich, go to sarahbouchardgallery.com.

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