

Westport News

News

Art Town: Westport Library builds community, 'Piece by Piece,' with new art exhibit

Miggs Burroughs and Ann Chernow, Aug. 18, 2021



Participating artists and Westport Library staff move in for a closer look after the unveiling of the 5 foot by 12 foot collaborative work of art, inspired by Keith Haring, now on display at the library through Sept. 28, 2021. Miggs Burroughs/ Contributed

On the evening of July 9, over 100 members of the Artists Collective and Westport Library staff gathered in front of the library's South

Gallery wall to witness the unveiling of a truly remarkable piece of art. Actually, there were 60 remarkable pieces of art to be revealed that night — assembled piece by piece, to create an amazing 5 foot by 12 foot mosaic of talent and diversity.

Conceived by collective member Susan Fehlinger, in collaboration with Amy Kaplan, Michael Brennecke and Tom Bernsten, “Piece by Piece” is based on an untitled work of art by Keith Haring from 1985, celebrating community as well as individuality.

As Susan explains it, a grid of 60 squares was imposed onto a digital version of the Keith Haring art, and then each collective artist who signed up for the project was given a small color print of one of those squares, plus a 12-inch-by-12-inch square panel on which to recreate their assigned section of the Haring art, to be rendered in their own unique style and medium.

The diabolical twist to all this was that, until the unveiling, none of the artists actually knew which artist’s work was being recreated, or where their particular panel fit into the entire grid.

Each artist was encouraged to stay within the general palette of the sample they were given, and to render the heavy black lines as accurately as possible so the continuity of the larger piece would be preserved.

“The message of the work, is that by combining everyone’s individuality we can cultivate strength and vitality as a community,” Kaplan said.

“At the library, we demonstrate our deep commitment to the local arts community through our exhibits and arts programming,” said exhibit curator, Carole Erger-Fass. “The Artists Collective of Westport’s ‘Piece by Piece,’ and its companion exhibit ‘Community,’ are the perfect visual reminders of just how strong that bond is. The 60 individual pieces assembled into one large whole celebrates both the reemergence of the arts, and the reopening of our gallery spaces to the public, as COVID restrictions lifted.”

“What better way to re-open the Library galleries and reinforce our commitment to the Westport arts community than with an exhibit on the theme of ‘Community’?” said Bill Harmer, executive director of the Westport Library. “ ‘Piece by Piece’ is a perfect visual representation of how important our arts community is and the community at large is coming back together. If you haven’t bought a piece yet, just a reminder that you can purchase a square on our website (www.westportlibrary.org/shop) for \$100, which benefits the Library and the artist.”

Better yet, come in and see this wonderful artistic achievement in person, which will be on display until Sept. 28.

And while you are visiting, take a look in the Sheffer and Jesup Galleries, where you will find a group show by the Artists Collective also based on the theme of ‘Community,’ but each of the 90 pieces submitted is the artist’s own original piece of art.

Miggs Burroughs is a lifelong Westport resident and full-time graphic artist since 1972. He is co-founder of The Artists Collective of Westport and a member of the Westport Arts Advisory Committee, among other accomplishments.

Ann Chernow has been a Westport resident since 1968. Her artwork has been exhibited locally and worldwide. Chernow is an honorary member of the Artists Collective of Westport, member of the Westport Museum Committee and other arts organizations.

Written By Miggs Burroughs and Ann Chernow

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