

FINE ART

‘Double Visions’ exhibit showcases twice the talent



“A Journey of memories of Balboa Island CA” by Christine Seo. Courtesy photo

Janet Purcell - For The Star-Ledger

“Double Visions,” the current exhibition in the A-Space Gallery at New Hope Arts Center in Pennsylvania, offers visitors the opportunity to see through the eyes, the imaginations and the creative spirits of two artists, Christie Seo and Aurelle Purdy Sprout. It allows us to see not only what has arrested their attention, but also how each’s unique creativity transformed that vision into artworks on paper and canvas.

Seo and Sprout both came to this region from away, met in a community-based art group and soon discovered similarities in their vastly different backgrounds. Sprout grew up in Pittsburgh, spent time in California and in Lancaster,

Pennsylvania. She lives now in Lambertville. Seo was born and raised in Seoul, Korea, and immigrated to California before coming to live in Burlington County.

A major similarity they share is each has been a successful art educator. Sprout taught art in Montgomery Township's public schools and other public and private schools. She also served as artist-in-residence for dance at Franklin and Marshall College. Seo was a sought-after art instructor at the Fine Arts Academy she founded in Korea. Both say during the time they taught art, their own art was set aside. In recent years, however, each has resumed her painting career, exhibiting widely, and being honored with prestigious awards and opportunities.

Although their painting styles are different, you will readily see both artists share an inherent love of the outdoors, of nature and its inhabitants.

Sprout is exhibiting two distinctly different painting styles in this exhibit.

"Entanglement" is a dramatic work painted with acrylics to which she added rice paper and markers. In it, a nude figure hides her face and wraps her arms and legs as if protecting herself from the circles of threat that surround her. "It was created to express my consternation, frustration and concern over our current political scene and the manner in which COVID-19 was being handled," she says.

"Summersound," a painting she created using acrylics and rice paper, puts into visual form a more peaceful time when she says she was "mesmerized by the calls of cicadas, crickets and who-knows-what." It is, in her words, "the embodiment of sound."

In "Soon the Sunset," rendered in a traditional manner, she takes us out with her where she lives and shows us the myriad colors she found late one day as she was painting alone during the COVID isolation. "I was struck with how the lowering sunlight touched tall grass flumes," she says. "And all this was happening while a barred owl resounded in the distance."

Her strong connection to Earth and all its inhabitants carries through the entire collection of Sprout's paintings on exhibit, but possibly no more so than "Beechtree Beauty" about which she says, "When photographing sheep at Beechtree Farm, this delightful ewe surprised me by staring at me so charmingly that I felt I had to paint her."

Seo, who is known for her exquisite paintings of horses, has included several in this exhibit. “I don’t race, nor jump, nor dressage. But the horse is the spirit animal that liberated my art and my soul,” she says. “I know I was born and meant all along to paint. But not ride. To be one with them in capturing their exquisite beauty, undeniable force and pure hearts with my rough, strong brush strokes and combination of brights and darks.”

In “Horse in the cherry blossom,” a black horse is hidden in an arrangement of cherry blossoms amid a multitude of pink and white beads Seo added to the painted blooms — a celebratory still life.

In “Gather early in the morning” a dark horse pulls a carriage carrying people amid other horse-drawn carriages past low buildings and one that stands majestically above the others. But, unlike her many horse portraits rendered with loving detail, in this painting the horses are loosely portrayed, as are the people and the entire scene. In this, it is light she is rendering — and expertly so.

In “Lighthouse and big waves” she draws our vision through a suggested nine-pane window to the intense light streaming from a suggested lighthouse and couples it with the power of darkness and light on a big cresting splashing wave.

And in “A Journey of memories of Balboa Island CA,” she adds color to her rendering of light in a peaceful painting of flowers blooming along a light-washed pathway, tables under open umbrellas, and the façade of an outdoor restaurant.

This is a joyful exhibit blending the creative spirits and expertise of two accomplished artists. And when you come to visit this show in the New Hope Art Center’s A-Space Gallery, be sure to visit “Ancestral Intersection,” an invitational art exhibition upstairs highlighting how an artist’s personal ancestry or connection to humanity influences and inspires their work. The regional artists featured in the show come from various cultural/ethnic backgrounds to reflect the nature of the population in the United States. You’ll find this exhibit pairs well with that of the “Double Visions” exhibit artists, Christine Seo and Aurelle Purdy Sprout.