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Silas Marder Gallery emerging as a new cultural center

By Pat Rogers



It happened slowly and with little fanfare, but the Silas Marder Gallery has quietly become a cultural hot spot for those in the know and seekers of the sophisticated leading edge of the art scene.

This year's slate of garden lectures, challenging art exhibits, regular Friday night film screenings, live honey bee demonstrations and occasional book signings has transformed the Bridgehampton gallery into a place where culture flourishes.

Events are scheduled so activities don't overlap. Gardening lectures are held on specific Saturday

mornings at 10 a.m. Upcoming talks focus on hydrangea, fall garden color and pruning, harvest wreath making and more. The series launched in June with talks on orchids, mixed containers, growing edibles and roses.

Films are screened outside on Friday nights at nightfall, and no earlier than 9 p.m. Beach chairs, blankets and picnics are encouraged. The screenings are free. This is the third year a full summer schedule of screenings is being offered.

Art openings are held Saturday evenings and can feature such eclectic offerings as live honey bee demonstrations and talks by local beekeepers.

The outdoor screenings started when the gallery first opened five years ago. Movies were shown after art openings, with viewers sitting on hay bales or chairs while a bonfire flickered nearby. Films were then separated from art openings and offered as freestanding events. About three movies were shown per summer until the series expanded into a weekly event, Mr. Marder said.

This summer's screenings launched last Friday night with Alan Pakula's "All the President's Men." This Friday's feature will be "Jules and Jim," a 1962 French film directed by Francois Truffaut about the evolution of a long-term love triangle that starts in Paris in 1912 and winds its way to post-World War I Germany.

Upcoming films include Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho," Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" directed by George Roy Hill. The schedule also includes "Cat On a Hot Tin Roof," "West Side Story," "Dog Day Afternoon," "Saturday Night Fever" and "Blow Up" by Michelangelo Antonioni.

Moviegoers bring beach chairs, blankets and even comforts like small tables. The gently sloping ground simulates stadium seating and guarantees clear sight lines for everyone, Mr. Marder said.

Watching movies outside is a unique experience that no one should miss, Mr. Marder said. “There’s an element of the unknown when you watch a movie outside. There are the ambient sounds and the unexpected ways they mix with the film ... There’s no comparison to watching a film crunched in a seat in an over-air conditioned room. It’s a completely different experience. There’s an element of chance. Anything can happen outdoors. You just have to go and take the chance and have the experience.”

Films have been part of the gallery owner’s vision since he opened the space. Art films, video projections, music videos or animated shorts have been part of every exhibition. A separate room tucked behind the first floor gallery space has been set aside for these pieces.

Short films have included Johnny Cash’s music video, “Hurt.” Showing now is Pearl Jam’s 1998 animated short, “Do the Evolution,” offered in conjunction with the group show, “Friend or Foe,” which opened on Saturday.

“I think the short films and videos help people have a deeper understanding of the theme of the show and the artwork they see,” he said. “Movies and films can be more accessible than art and can help with self-reflection. Art should be for everyone. It shouldn’t matter if it’s from pop culture. Everyone should be able to find something they like or can relate to. Anything that gets someone a step closer to the paintings is a great thing.”

Sometimes video pieces are an integral part of show. Jacco Olivier’s animation on DVD, “Whale,” was looped during last year’s show, “Giganticism.” It was loaned by the Marianne Boesky Gallery in Chelsea.

Collaborating with New York galleries is another way the Silas Marder Gallery is extending its artistic reach. Last year, the gallery presented “Pace Prints,” which pulled from the Pace Gallery’s extensive collection. This year, the Pace Gallery is loaning large works for an outdoor summer sculpture show on the grounds of the Silas Marder Gallery.

The mix will include works by Louise Nevelson, Joel Shapiro and Kiki Smith. Ms. Smith is exhibiting prints as part of the “Friend or Foe” show.

This year’s edition of SCOPE Hamptons was originally supposed to be presented at the Silas Marder Gallery from July 22 to 25, but the SCOPE website doesn’t list the venue or any specific schedule for the show, and calls to the SCOPE office were not returned by press time.

The move to include gardening lectures was an outgrowth of Mr. Marder’s move into landscape design and designing two new outdoor furniture lines for the Marder’s Nursery and Garden Shop complex. In both kinds of design, Mr. Marder relies on an intuitive sense of how to arrange space with intention. Beauty is the result of arranging the details, he said. Intention is everything.

“Everything has to fit together,” he said of creating landscape designs for clients. “It’s all part of one story that works together to build a single point of view.”

These same skills are put to use when Mr. Marder curates and hangs the art shows in the two-story gallery. They are also in play in the way the outdoor gardens complement the exhibition spaces.

The Silas Marder Gallery is located at 120 Snake Hollow Road, Bridgehampton. “Friend or Foe,” on view through July 31, includes artwork by Jessica Benjamin, Jon Pylypchuk, Kiki Smith, Cory Barber, Mica I. Marder, Tucker Marder and Joseph Saunders. For information or an event schedule, visit silasmardergallery.com or call 631-702-2306.

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