

Inaugural First Fridays Artswalk Will Kickoff on May 4th

[PITTSFIELD, MA] Shortly after earning its designation as one of the five original state-recognized cultural districts by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, downtown Pittsfield's newly minted Upstreet Cultural District will strut its stuff with the kickoff of a monthly visual arts event known as "First Fridays Artswalk". The inaugural event on Friday, May 4, 5-8PM, will consist of exhibits and related programming hosted by over 20 well-known downtown venues.

After several months of diligent planning and organizing, the "First Fridays Artswalk" Committee is pleased to announce a full evening of visual arts excitement for the arts appreciator.

Alchemy Initiative will celebrate the launch of its new gallery space, the Brick Gallery, located in the lower level of the former Notre Dame church at 40 Melville Street, with new work inspired by the coming of Spring by studio artists Crispina French and Diane Firtell. French (crispina.com) will feature Spring and Summer garments made from recycled t-shirts and sweatshirts. Firtell's pieces in this show are the result of a weekly experiment to explore the possibilities of a single bouquet. (www.dianefirtell.com)

At Art On No, it will be time again for the collaborative's popular Spring Opening. The 5th annual event will showcase the newly refurbished "Art On No Gallery" and feature artists' open studios, delicious food and beverages, music, great company, and a chance to meet the 19 fabulous artists. The second floor at 311 North Street will be the scene of the festivities.

The impressive work by the artists of the Berkshire Carousel project will be on display in the Berkshire Carousel Gallery at 170 North Street. Historic scenes painted specifically for the project include the Red Lion Inn, Blantyre Castle, Balance Rock in Lanesborough, and many others, all of which will be displayed on the finished carousel. Exhibiting artists include Teri Davis, Robert Hill, and Sally Tiska Rice. Also in the Gallery, a Pittsfield history exhibit will be viewable. (www.berkshirecarousel.com)

Berkshire Community College's (BCC) gallery at the Intermodal Transportation Center on the corner of North Street and Columbus Avenue will host abstract artist Daniel Brody. Working in ink on paper and acrylic on unstretched canvas, with a color palette ranging from black and white to bright primary colors, Daniel Brody creates abstract works that explode and blossom with biomorphic shapes.

Berkshire Museum's galleries, exhibiting fine art from contemporary sculpture, paintings, and photography to the magnificent paintings of the Hudson River School, will be open during the "First Fridays Artswalk". Discount coupons for Museum admission during "First Fridays" will be available at the participating "Artswalk" venues. 39 South St., Pittsfield. For more information visit www.berkshireremuseum.org or call 413-443-7171 ext. 10.

Several oils from a series of paintings of rare fowl by Marion Grant (gallery-25.com/artists/marion-grant) of Richmond will be on view during the month of May in the Berkshire Medical Center. The

exhibition features several carefully rendered studies of domesticated birds, such as the Silver-Laced Wyandotte and Golden Campene chickens. Grant's show at BMC follows on the heels of her "Roots, Fruits, and Greens" show at Gallery 25.

Brix Wine Bar & Bistro will show work by Berkshire native Kate Knapp. Knapp's distinctive work is bold, passionate, and strongly influenced by color and light, reflecting her intimate relationship with nature. Knapp works and exhibits from her studio in Housatonic (Front St. Gallery), where she also teaches. For more information about the artist and to preview her work, go to www.kateknappartist.com.

The Colonial Theatre lobby, 111 South Street, will feature the photography of Nicholas Whitman. (www.nwphoto.com) Whitman will be in attendance as artist and curator to showcase a display of his work and copies of his book, "The Colonial Theatre: A Pittsfield Resurrection", which documents the history and restoration of The Colonial Theatre. "...Whitman's book doubtlessly will make its way to libraries and coffee tables throughout the area and in many other places where the architecture of old theaters is cherished..." –Richard Houdek, The Berkshire Eagle

Empty Set Projects, 150 South St., will open its doors to the public. Empty Set is the studio of artists Monika Pizzichemi, Michael McKay, and Marcel Bova. Works completed and in progress to be shown include paintings by McKay and Bova with photographs and mixed-media sculpture by Pizzichemi. The space is also home to the "Big Sale" where you can purchase "Greatest Fear \$2.79" or "Geniune Irony .19 cents/Lb".

Ferrin Gallery, 437 North Street, will preview COVET ART + OBJECTS, one segment of a summer-long series of exhibitions and programs based on contemporary artists creating new works in response to museum collections. The projects in COVET range from simple updates of content by changing a cast of characters or details in a painting; the recreation of an object using new technology; and conceptual perspectives that focus on details drawn from conversations with curators. COVET artist Michael Allen Lowe will be in the gallery for the preview. (ferringallery.com)

Printmaker and figure artist Michael Vincent Bushy (gallery-25.com/artists/michael-vincent-bushy) will be exhibiting "Bones & Bodies", a collection of figure drawings and anatomical prints at Gallery 25, 25 Union Street. The drawings are primarily in charcoal and deal with the figure, both as a study and a narrative device. Potentially furthering the narratives, the artist will also be exhibiting several anatomical block prints.

The Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, 28 Renne Avenue, will be hosting the annual Berkshire Art Association Fellowship Show. This exhibit features work by Berkshire County students enrolled as art majors at any college in the country, as well as to non-residents currently studying art at a Berkshire County college. \$4000 in scholarships have been awarded this year by the BAA. (www.berkshireartassociation.org)

Mad Macs, Inc., a local store that sells and supports Apple branded computers and compatible products, will present the work of Sally Tiska Rice (sallytiskarice.com) in the Mad Macs Digital Gallery at 21 Union Street. In addition to her traditional paintings, Tiska Rice will also be presenting a series of paintings that focus on the mixture of modern technical items in traditional and non-traditional settings.

Kathryn Jensen will show her paintings of Western Massachusetts at the Marketplace Café, 53 North Street. Jensen's paintings feature traditional rural buildings against the hills and waterways of Western Massachusetts. Jensen is the recent publisher of a small book celebrating the region, "Between Two Cities: the Hilltowns in Art and Poetry", and chairs the Cummington Cultural Council. (www.ourmarketplacecafe.com)

Miller Supply, located at 205 West St., Pittsfield, MA, will be displaying a variety of works by artists showing in the "First Fridays Artswalk". Many of the artists participating in the program during the month will exhibit one piece each of their artwork along with information on the location of their current show. This format will continue during subsequent months and participating artists are encouraged to contact Stephen Miller for more details (413) 442-6988.

Paul Rich and Sons Home Furnishings and Design presents a window exhibition of new paintings by local artist Joanie Ciolfi. Ciolfi's paintings are gorgeously expressive oils, which push realistic subject matter towards the brink of abstraction. The pieces are vibrant and atmospheric and painted with distinctive rhythms to create dramatic works of art. Her use of simple images and a powerful interplay of light convey a wonderful sense of stillness and understated beauty.

Peg Dotchin will show a collection of paintings of children at TREEHOUSE, 305 North Street. The exhibit, entitled "All the Children", translates and explores the universal language of children, which goes beyond what they cannot say and is expressed through a direct gaze that suggests an inner strength and determination. Dotchin comes to TREEHOUSE as a long time studio artist from the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts.

Other venues slated to participate include Bagels Too, Pateez Boutique, Paul Rich and Sons, Shawn's Barber Shop, Spice Dragon, Steven Valenti Clothing for Men, The Lantern Restaurant, and Y Bar.

More information concerning "First Fridays Artswalk" may be found on the program's website (firstfridaysartswalk.com) or by contacting "First Fridays Artswalk" Lead Coordinator, Leo Mazzeo at 413-281-6665 or via info@firstfridaysartswalk.com.