

Homegrown images at Gallery in the Park

By MARY LEGRAND

As the old saying goes, home is where the heart is.

Artist Susan Stillman of White Plains takes the concept of home being close to one's emotions very seriously. Her business is executing paintings of houses, mostly by commission from homeowners in Westchester County.

But her professional work has a noncommissioned side as well, and a number of those pieces will be on view at the Gallery in the Park, Ward Pound Ridge Reservation in Cross River, beginning Sunday, March 25, and running through June 3.

A reception celebrating the opening of "The Color of Light" is open to the public on March 25 from 2 to 4 p.m. The Gallery in the Park is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The exhibit will feature paintings that reflect Ms. Stillman's fascination with what she calls "the transformative effects of color on ordinary scenes."

Her large-scale paintings are drawn from familiar suburban views as well as from her travels in England, Wales and along America's northeastern shore.

"What I'm showing at Ward Pound Ridge is the personal work that I do," she said. "It's all based on landscape, and much or most is from here in Westchester."

'The Color of Light,' refers to the 'changes that light makes to everything we see, that ephemeral quality that changes instantly.'

The exhibition features "a lot of work that shows my neighborhood in White Plains," Ms. Stillman said. "Many of the small paintings are based on my walks, fragmentary pieces of architecture or foliage. They're typically not grand, but smaller statements."

Inspired by artists such as George Bellows and Edward Hopper, she makes use of vigorous brushstrokes, intense hues and a passion for the structure of nature and architecture.

Ms. Stillman said the exhibition title, "The Color of Light," refers to the "changes that light makes to everything we see, that ephemeral quality that changes instantly." She also referred to the "magic hour," the time when the sun is close to setting and there's a soft wash of color over everything.

A recipient of a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, Ms. Stillman earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Brooklyn College. Her work has been published in The New York Times, New York and Esquire magazines and various Conde Nast and Hearst publications, and she has been a faculty member of the Par-



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN STILLMAN



Above, artist Susan Stillman in front of one of her home portraits. Left, "Shadows," by artist Susan Stillman.

sons School of Design since 1983.

Known for her home portraits, Ms. Stillman works from sketches, photographs, interviews and personal observations to interpret not just the exterior of the home she is depicting but to "capture the personality of the home and its inhabitants as well," she said.

Like portraits of people, home portraits "freeze a subject in a particular moment," Ms. Stillman said. "I take a lot of photographs from different angles to make sure there's plenty to work with in the painting. We take liberties, show things that don't show in the photographs, readjust the perspective. It's a way of showing the home in its best light."

The interplay of shadow and light is an important component of both her

house portraits and her fine-art work, Ms. Stillman said. "I try to show shadow and light on a beautiful day in the finished pieces, and, for the home portraits, the homeowners choose the season that they want the portrait to be in."

Ms. Stillman mentioned that a few of her clients have commissioned portraits of not just one but multiple houses, or versions of the same house in different seasons or years.

"One of my favorite customers, a gentleman from out west, commissioned me to paint all three of his houses and gave the portraits to his wife for their 25th anniversary," she said. "That was a lovely present, I thought, and it was particularly meaningful because it was around the time of my own 25th anniversary."

"The Color of Light" will be on view daily through June 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission to the Gallery in the Park is free of charge, with parking \$5 with a Westchester County park pass.

Call 864-7317 or go to westchester.gov.com/parks for more information.

Ms. Stillman said she is a big fan of the entire county, as well as Westchester's parks and recreation facilities. This is at least the second time Ms. Stillman has had an exhibition at Ward Pound Ridge.

"I actually had a show there several years ago," she said. "My husband, David, and I enjoy using the park and are up here rather often. We hike here and find it just a beautiful place. I have a painting of the park springhouse in the show."

Living in Westchester is the best of both worlds for many residents, Ms. Stillman said.

"I've lived pretty much my whole life in Westchester, having grown up in Eastchester, and have lived in White Plains for over 20 years," she said. "I love that Westchester's so close to the city but that we are able to access the trees, the outdoors, the parks here."

"I can walk to the train, but I love my neighborhood in White Plains and my neighbors," she said. "We're very deeply rooted here."

All paintings exhibited in "The Color of Light" are available for purchase, Ms. Stillman said, adding that information about her work is available at susanstillman.com/homeportraits and susanstillman.com/fineart.